



**PLAN**  
INTERNATIONAL

Bringing hearts and minds  
together for children



# CHILD PROTECTION

**SAY YES! TO KEEPING CHILDREN SAFE**

We apply the rights based approach in working towards the overall goal of our Country Strategy 2016-2020 goal: *'Boys and girls, especially adolescent girls from marginalised communities, have increased opportunities, access to quality services and capacity to lead their own development.'*

This goal is aligned with the Government of Kenya's Vision 2030 and will be achieved through five interrelated strategic objectives: child protection, improved access to basic education and early childhood development, quality health, youth employability and enhanced economic opportunities and, resilience building through disaster risk management.

Our objectives and interventions aim to address underlying causes and consequences of child rights violations and barriers that prevent children from reaching their full potential.

We expand our work through working with partners, involving our target groups in development processes, using gender sensitive approaches, lobbying and advocacy, social accountability, ICT4D and the media.

## CHILD PROTECTION

### THE SITUATION AS IT IS

**One of the biggest child rights violations in Kenya is the right to adequate protection.**

**Violence and sexual abuse is widespread among Kenyan families, and mostly rampant among the marginalised.**

Of the female survivors who reported violations against them at the Gender Violence Recovery Centre (GVRC) in Nairobi, children accounted for 51 per cent. Sadly, only 24 per cent of acts of violence against boys and girls get reported and investigated.

Plan International's Child Rights Situational Analysis (2015) highlighted other forms of abuse as neglect, physical abuse including corporal punishment (both at home and school), emotional abuse caused by stigmatisation especially of people with various forms of disability, and children orphaned by HIV and AIDS.

Other demeaning forms of abuse such as Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting. (FGM/C), Gender Based Violence (GBV) and child/forced marriage are still rampant.

Abuse and violence affect more girls than boys and these are perpetuated by traditional norms and beliefs.

Girls in particular are exposed to FGM/C and consequences of child marriage which in effect deny them the right to education among others.

Like in other child abuse and violation cases, poverty, and harmful cultural practices are to blame along with low levels of education. Despite government legislation that abolishes child labour and exploitation, this practice still goes on due to high rates of poverty.

Other forms of child violations include child labour, lack of birth registration and child exploitation.

Exclusion based on disability and 'difference' is still reported among Kenyan communities. Children are defined and judged by what they lack rather than by what they have.

Children with disabilities are often regarded as inferior, exposing them to increased vulnerability. Discrimination based on disability has manifested itself in marginalisation from resources and decision-making, and even infanticide. The weak implementation of the Disability Act and community attitudes are the major reasons why discrimination against children with disability continues.

Plan International Kenya has been at the forefront in contributing towards the realisation of children rights in Kenya.

**21%** Prevalence of FGM/C in Kenya (KDHS)

**43.3%** Prevalence of child marriages among girls (KDHS)

**1.6%** Prevalence of child marriages among males (Plan International Kenya 2016)

# OUR APPROACH TO CHILD PROTECTION

Plan International is committed to enabling children to achieve their full potential and ensure their overall well-being, which can only be achieved in a protective and conducive environment.

In collaboration with other stakeholders both from the private sector and NGOs, our goal is to ensure that the rights of boys and girls are protected through a functioning Community-based child protection and reporting system. The focus in child protection is to ensure that: there are systems in place to allow boys, girls and families to report incidences of abuse and have them addressed effectively; and, support policy changes in the national child protection management information system (CPMIS) for effective case management.

Plan International implements the child centered development approach underpinned by the UNCRC that places the rights of children at the center of development initiatives. The Child Centered Community Development (CCCD) approach is Plan International's rights based approach to programming.

In the context of child protection, CCCD means empowering children and communities to engage in actions from the grassroots to national level that will protect and respond to all forms of abuse, violence, exploitation and neglect.

## Plan International undertakes the following:

### **Support strengthening of the roles of families and communities through enhanced community child protection structures**

Given Plan International's niche in community level processes, the organisation strengthens community based mechanisms for delivering on child protection especially the family, youth, children; cultural, religious and other non-formal and formal institutions to ensure that these actors are recognised and interlinked with national child protection systems and processes for them to play a more effective role in protecting children. Other potential areas of support are positive parenting and disciplining, gender roles and non-violent masculinity.

### **Facilitate effective child protection and participation in programme units**

For child protection to succeed, children, who are the most affected need to make a contribution in ways that they understand best. This is through children clubs, children assemblies at county levels, national and international levels. Engaging children in dialogue and exchange allows them to learn constructive ways of influencing issues around them.

### **Support legal and policy implementation on child protection**

This entails influencing the regulatory and legislative frameworks for child protection. It is clear that implementation of existing laws and policies are weak across all the counties as cited above. Changes are needed towards more active implementation and enforcement as well as reviews of those frameworks that do not serve children as per global standards. We collaborate with peer agencies as UNICEF, Save the Children, World Vision to work with the duty bearers on enhanced legislative frameworks.

### **Facilitate integration of child protection in other sectors**

This means ensuring that programming within Plan International's projects programmes such as ECCD, education, livelihoods, governance, health, nutrition, disaster risk reduction and management among others are sensitive to child protection concerns in terms of ensuring that the programmes have positive impacts on children and that the interventions contribute to child protection outcomes.

Our child protection programming is designed in a way that recognises the intrinsic knowledge that communities, families, girls and boys bring in contributing to effective child protection.

## WORKING WITH FAMILIES TO PROTECT CHILDREN

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**Ensuring families understand the causes and consequences of violence against children, adopt positive parenting practices and protect their children, including in emergency circumstances.**



Families and caregivers are a key safety net for children. By supporting and prioritising them, we can help ensure they are in a stronger position to create and maintain a positive family environment, and play a critical role in the holistic development of children.

We explore and develop practical approaches to promoting positive family relationships and caregiving with a focus on the early years. This includes exploring and promoting alternatives to violence within families and supporting caregivers to be more resilient in emergency situations.

We work with families and caregivers as active participants in positive parenting to develop a better understanding of the causes and effects of violence against children, including harmful practices. This forms a foundation on which to develop their commitment to tackling violence against children in families.

We also work closely with like-minded partners to support vulnerable families and support them to identify, prevent and respond to incidences of violence in their homes and families, and strengthen them to care for and protect their children in the early years.

## WORKING WITH COMMUNITIES TO PROTECT CHILDREN

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**Ensuring communities understand and take appropriate measures to ensure children's right to protection and promote violence-free communities.**

One of Plan International's key strengths is its close and long-term collaboration with communities and bringing communities together to drive sustainable change. This has helped us gain important insights into how to strengthen community-based child protection mechanisms and how to link them effectively to government mechanisms.

We recognise that communities, families and children themselves are an integral part of any effective child protection system. As such, we focus on bringing the participants together to collaborate in building a long-term protective environment for children in the communities where we work.

We believe that effective child protection requires community members and leaders to be aware of and committed to children's right to protection, and involve the children in their care in the process. It also requires them to identify, prevent and respond to violence against children and to take measures to protect children in emergency situations. We are committed to working with community members to achieving this in the communities where we work.

We also support collective action by community members against harmful practices and discrimination towards specific groups or individuals. We enable community members to monitor issues and advocate for change amongst local and national duty-bearers.



## ENSURING CHILDREN CONTRIBUTE TO THEIR OWN PROTECTION

**Empowering children so they have the ability to protect themselves, advocate for and participate in child protection initiatives.**

We are committed to supporting children to be more knowledgeable, committed and confident to recognise, prevent and seek help for all forms of violence against them, and to make them more aware of the protection services and support mechanisms that are available to them.

Fundamental to our approach is child participation: Encouraging and enabling children to make their views known on the issues that affect them. We encourage adults to listen to children; to all their varied and numerous ways of communicating. In so doing, children utilise their freedom of expression and their views are taken into account when making decisions that affect them.

When children are empowered, they are able to unite against peer to peer violence including gender-based violence

and bullying and mobilise around child protection issues in partnership with civil society and service providers to end violence.

Additionally, we support children and young people by creating opportunities for them to speak out and influence others about their right to protection, and building their confidence to achieve this.

Promoting meaningful and quality participation of children and adolescents is essential to ensuring their growth and development. Children have proved that when they are involved, they can make a difference in the world around them.

They have ideas, experience and insights that enrich adult understanding and make a positive contribution to adult actions.



## WORKING WITH GOVERNMENT TO PROTECT CHILDREN

**Establishing national and county level child protection structures, legislation, policies and budgets and ensuring government institutions have the ability to prevent and respond to violence against children.**

We work in collaboration with national and county authorities to establish, improve and enforce appropriate child protection legislation and policies. We also work in alliance with other civil society organisations to monitor and advocate for comprehensive, integrated child protection systems.

Our aim is for institutions in child-related services such as education, health, social services and judiciary/police services, to be more aware of violence against children and to be better able to identify, prevent and respond to it.

Collectively, we aim to enhance public monitoring and information systems on child protection issues and collaboration and dialogue between communities and child protection services. This includes identifying gaps and ways to improve services.





## THE FUNDAMENTAL ISSUES



## CHILD MARRIAGE

Although the legal age of marriage in Kenya is 18 years and above, 43.3 percent of girls marry before they attain this age.

Child marriage is a fundamental violation of a girl's rights and acts as a deterrent on progress because it deprives society of the potential and innovation that girls contribute. Research suggests that girls married early are exposed to lifetime violence and are entrapped in the cycle of poverty. Child brides often live in isolation, dependent on their husbands and with little access to education, health or protection from violence and abuse.

Most of these marriages are attributed to economic situations, since a majority of the girls we serve have reported feeling pressure from parents or guardians to marry in order to relieve the financial burden.

Take Esther\* for example, who was forced into marriage due to pregnancy after her grandmother advised her to move in with the man who had impregnated her because "...raising a baby as a single parent is difficult."

Esther does not regret her decision as she states that: "Although life is not very good, it is better than living with my grandmother who was struggling for our upkeep."

Plan International Kenya's initiative to tackle child marriage involves:

- Re-enrolling girls back to school,
- Supporting children to exit marriages
- Promoting comprehensive sexuality education and skills through schools.

We advocate for adolescent girls to make informed choices such as when and whom to marry while considering the legal age for marriage and support girls to access reproductive health information and life skills.



## FEMALE GENITAL MUTILATION/CUTTING

Despite the gains made in fighting FGM in Kenya, including outlawing the practice, a number of communities continue to practice the harmful tradition.

In 2001, Kenya enacted the Children's Act, under the provisions of which FGM was criminalised when practiced on girls younger than 18. The practice was made illegal nationwide in September 2011. The 2014 Kenya Demographic Health Survey estimated prevalence among girls and women aged 15 - 19 at 11.4 per cent.

Kenya has seen rates drop to a third of their levels three decades ago through a combination of community engagement and legislation.

While Plan International currently works in 2 counties - Tharaka Nithi and Kajiado - on the elimination of FGM/C, we have partnered with the justice system, legislators and the national Anti-FGM board to strengthen legislation outlawing the practice

We also jointly work with community elders such as the Njuri Ncheke to carry out activities enabling communities to make a coordinated and collective choice to abandon FGM/C.

Our interventions are culturally sensitive and include community conversations and education about human rights and violations against girls whilst raising the importance of education as an alternative to FGM/C and child marriage.

Our participatory approach has led community elders to make public commitment to abandon the practice that has changed the lives of girls such as Gatwiri\* who was circumcised when she was just 10.

Gatwiri narrates her ordeal when on the day she and her elder sister were forcefully circumcised. She tried to scream but someone covered her mouth in the dimly lit room of her parents' house. She bitterly recounts the days she stayed indoors writhing in pain and when, after she went back to school older men treated her like a grown up and tried to lure her into getting married.

She is now 17, is actively involved in Plan International's programmes and continues with her education.



## SEXUAL ABUSE AND EXPLOITATION

Sexual violence against children is a gross violation of children's rights.

Yet most children and families do not report cases of abuse and exploitation because of stigma, fear and lack of trust in the authority.

Cases of sexual violence have been reported in homes, schools and within communities. Increasingly, the internet and mobile phones also put children at risk of sexual violence from adults who turn to the internet to pursue sexual relationships with children. Additionally, there is an increase in the number of circulation of images of child abuse.

Research suggests that sexual violence can have serious short and long-term physical, social and psychological consequences not only for girls or boys, but also for their families and communities.

This includes risks for psychological distress, unintended pregnancy, stigma and discrimination both at home and at school.

Plan International works in collaboration with partners to identify cases of sexual violence against children.

Our interventions include referral to medical institutions, legal and protection services and psychosocial support.

We engage different government sectors - education, justice, health - civil society, community leaders, media, legislators, the private sector, families and children themselves.

Plan International works with communities and the general public to raise awareness about the severity of the issue and address attitudes, norms and practices that are harmful to children.



## CHILDREN LIVING WITH DISABILITIES

Children with single or multiple forms of physical, intellectual or mental impairment can become disabled if environmental and attitudinal barriers deny their human rights, hinder access to basic services and deter equal participation.

Policies and legislations that fail to recognise the legal capacity of children with disabilities are factors that exacerbate their discrimination and exclusion hence increasing their vulnerability to violence, abuse and exploitation.

Plan International therefore works with children with disability in the context of all its works. Our child protection approach recognises that responsive child protection systems should strengthen effective participation and inclusion of these children.

We work with government structures, schools and communities, particularly with parents and caregivers of children living with disabilities to address social attitudes and perceptions.

To encourage development of this group of children, we employ a multifaceted approach which allows capturing the dynamic interplay between other protection needs, rather than addressing disability in isolation.

To encourage inclusivity and access to regular schools, we work with school management structures to enhance child friendly spaces both physically and intellectually.

Further, we support assesment and placement of these children and sensitise families on how to deal with their child's situation with the aim of eliminating feelings of shame or social stigma that inhibit the child's access to services.



## LEADING BY EXAMPLE

**Plan International has put in place Child Protection Standards designed to ensure that child protection measures are integrated into all core systems, processes, practices and activities the organisation engages in.**

Our child protection standards are informed by the principles which underpin the child protection policy ensuring that we, and all who represent us make good on our collective responsibility to do no harm to children who we come into contact with directly or indirectly.

We are keen to minimise the risk to children of exploitation and abuse and ensure that as an organisation we do everything we reasonably can to make our institution 'child safe.'



## CHILD PROTECTION STANDARDS

### 1. The policy in the local context

Plan International's Child Protection Policy (CPP) must be applied locally through the development of country office child protection procedures.

### 2. Awareness, Communication and Education on Plan International's Commitment to Keep Children Safe

Plan International communicates its commitments to keep children safe to all stakeholders, including children in clearly understandable ways. In addition, staff and associates are supported in developing and maintaining the necessary attitudes and knowledge to act in line with the policy and procedures.

### 3. Safe Recruitment, Selection and Engagement with Plan International

Recruitment and engagement processes reflect Plan International's commitment to keep children safe and minimize as far as possible the risk of engaging an individual or organisation unsuitable to work with children.

### 4. Appropriate Behaviour towards Children

Plan International staff, associates and visitors understand appropriate behaviour towards children, what is expected of them in terms of their interaction with children and at all times demonstrate this behaviour so that children are protected from abuse.

### 5. Reporting and Responding to Child Protection Concerns

Plan International ensures that all child protection concerns within the organisation are reported through the management reporting line and responded to in a timely fashion and in a way that safeguards the best interests of children.

### 6. Accountability for Keeping Children Safe

Plan International regularly and consistently evaluates the outcomes and impact of child protection measures to ensure both upward and downward accountability in relation to child protection.

### 7. Keeping Children Safe in Child Sponsorship

Child sponsorship programmes support the best interest of the child. Information on the child and their family and contact between sponsors and children are handled sensitively and appropriately and remains safe for both the child and the adult.

### 8. Publicity, Media and Communications about Children

Publicity, media and communications activities take every precaution to preserve the privacy and dignity of children and to protect them by ensuring they are not harmed or exposed to risk as a result of their involvement with the media or as a result of advocacy campaigns.

### 9. Information Safeguarding & ICT

Plan International ensures that information relating to children is safeguarded and used in ways that respect their privacy and rights and minimises the risks to them of intentional and unintentional harm.

### 10. Safe Child Participation

Plan International ensures that children are kept safe when they participate in projects, events, activities, research and online social networking, and when visiting Plan International offices.

### 11. Working with Partners to Keep Children Safe

Plan International ensures that those organisations with whom it is working to increase its impact have a commitment to child protection. This may be demonstrated by having in place, or developing, child protection practices that are in harmony with Plan International's child protection policy and implementation standards.

### 12. Keeping Children Safe in Programming

Keeping Children Safe is integrated into all phases of Plan International's programming across every thematic area, such that child protection risks and possible negative consequences on children resulting from programme activities are identified, and corresponding mitigating actions put into place and monitored throughout the programme/project cycle.

### 13. Keeping Children Safe in Disasters and Emergencies

Plan International recognises that children's vulnerability dramatically increases during emergencies and ensures that particular attention is given to the increased possibilities of children being intentionally or unintentionally harmed as a result of direct or indirect contact with Plan International Staff, Associates and Visitors.



**ONGOING PROJECTS  
UNDER CHILD PROTECTION**

## ENDING VIOLENCE AGAINST CHILDREN 2014-2017

**Where:** Nairobi, Kilifi, Kwale, Mombasa and Kisumu counties.

This is a project funded by the European Union focusing on ending all forms of violence against children.

The project which ends in 2017 has made significant impact in the target schools culminating in a strong movement of teachers who act as focal persons (Beacons) for child protection and supporting peer education in schools. The project envisions reaching reach 59,000 boys and girls and 1000 teachers in the targets schools in the 5 counties.

**Key Partners:** Ministry of Education, NCCS, DCS, Save the Children, Goal Kenya, Cesvi International, TSC, GVRC, Childline Kenya, Children's Hope Foundation, Karama Youth Group.

## NILINDE: SUPPORT FOR ORPHANS AND VULNERABLE CHILDREN (OVC) 2016-2020

**Where:** Nairobi, Kilifi, Kwale, Mombasa, Lamu and Taita-Taveta counties.

Funded by USAID, Nilinde's goal is to improve welfare and protection of children affected by HIV/AIDS.

Interventions include: Building capacity of households to provide for children under their care; strengthen social systems and structures to improve support to Orphans and Vulnerable Children (OVC); ensure access to HIV prevention, care and treatment services; provision of technical assistance and capacity building; and promoting public and private sector partnership to increase efficiencies and sustain OVC well-being. The project works with 187,057 boys and girls.

**Key Partners:** Ministries of Labor, Social Security and Services, Health, Education, Agriculture, Livestock and Fisheries, U.S. Presidential Initiative, Global Health Initiative, President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR)

## IMPROVED ACCESS TO PROTECTION OF CHILDREN IN SCHOOLS AND COMMUNITIES 2016-2019

**Where:** Kisumu, Homabay and Siaya counties

Funded by Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation, NORAD, the project seeks to ensure improved access to protective and quality school and community environments for children, particularly vulnerable girls and boys.

The project contributes to eliminating all forms of violence against children through supporting the implementation of the National Child Protection System in disadvantaged communities where girls and children with disabilities particularly at risk of violence, including sexual abuse and transactional sex.

This project supports local participation in child protection at multiple levels so that all cases of violence against children are reported and responded to resolutely. The project targets to reach 6,000 boys and girls, 750 peer educators and 600 teachers.

**Key Partners:** GVRC, National Council for Children Services, Department of Children Services, Ministry of Education



## OBLIGATION TO PROTECT: AGENTS OF CHANGE UNITE AGAINST FGM 2013-2017

**Where:** Tharaka Nithi County

This is a project that is funded by the Government of Netherlands and focuses on ending FGM in Tharaka Nithi County.

The project targets 45,000 girls, 50,000 boys, parents, community leaders, political leaders and the circumcisers with information on the need to protect the girls from FGM/C, simplified legislation on FGM/C prevention, protection of girls and the rights of all children to education.

**Key Partners:** Association of European Women Parliamentarian, Kenya Women Parliamentarians

## ENDING CHILD MARRIAGE 2015-2018

**Where:** Homa Bay, Siaya and Kisumu Counties

The initiative seeks to reduce tolerance for, and practice of child marriage by increasing public understanding of its significance as a cause and consequence of child poverty, particularly in relation to the schooling of adolescent girls. The project is intended to catalyse action for quality by tackling child marriages in communities where girls are forced into marriages.

In order to achieve this, we regard highly the support of other key duty bearers to raise awareness on the extent of the practice, to rehabilitate and counsel children in need of care and protection and, to support married adolescent girls by equipping them with life skills for improved livelihood.

## TULINDE WASICHANA WETU 2016 - 2017

**Where:** Siaya and Kisumu Counties

This is a sponsorship funded project targeting 10,000 girls at risk of teenage pregnancies, child marriage and dropping out of school.

The project focusses heavily on ending sexual exploitation of adolescent girls. Plan International works with identified groups in the society who are known to aid perpetration of sexual violence against children such as the 'Boda Boda' (Swahili for commercial motorcycle riders).



## YES I DO - 2016 - 2020

**Where:** Kajiado County

Through funding from the Government of the Netherlands, this project seeks to empower girls and boys with appropriate sexual and reproductive health services and information.

The project focuses on empowerment of girls and boys to claim their sexual and reproductive health rights including when and whom to marry and when and with whom to have children. The project has identified child marriage, FGM/C and teenage pregnancies as issues that need to be addressed. The project will also focus on building economic resilience in families and building sustainable community based child protection structures to protect adolescent girls and boys.

## ADOLESCENT GIRLS' INITIATIVE-KENYA (AGI-K) 2015 - 2017

**Where:** Kibera (Plan International), Wajir (Save the Children)

This project funded by DFID is delivering multi-sectoral interventions in the prevention of violence, education, health and wealth creation for 2,641 girls aged 11 to 14 in Kibera urban informal settlement. The range of interventions is rigorously evaluated through a randomised controlled trial to provide evidence on the most cost effective combinations of interventions. The interventions also seek to support a systemic child protection approach through integrated and coherent measures to strengthen protection against all forms of violence for girls and boys at the community level.

**Key Partners:** Population Council (Lead Agency), Save the Children, African Population and Health and Research Council (APHRC) and Itad.

## TULINDE TUSOME 2014 - 2018

**Where:** Kilifi and Kwale Counties

This 5-year project funded by the Canadian Government's Global Affairs supports intersecting areas of education and child protection targeting 120,000 girls and boys as well as 60,000 women and men.

The project aims to effectively address children's rights and secure the future of children by improving primary education and creating safe spaces within the community, at home and in school. The project empowers children to identify, prevent and respond to school related gender-based violence affecting vulnerable children, particularly girls.

**Key Partners:** Department of Children Services, Ministry of Education, Early Assessment Resource Center and Civil Registration Services.





Child participation is key in child protection and must be authentic and meaningful. It must start with children and young people themselves, on their own terms, within their own realities and in pursuit of their own visions, dreams, hopes and concerns.

A close-up photograph of a young boy with short, dark hair, smiling warmly at the camera. He is wearing a white collared shirt under a maroon vest. He is holding a small, thin object, possibly a piece of wood or a stick, in his right hand. In the background, other children in similar maroon school uniforms are visible, though out of focus. The scene is outdoors with bright, natural light.

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