

# Report on Community Based Child Protection Mechanisms supported by Plan in China<sup>1</sup>

## Introduction

Plan is an international child-centred development organization working in 50 developing countries across Africa, Asia and the Americas. Plan's vision is of a world in which all children realize their full potential in societies that respect people's rights and dignity. In recent years<sup>2</sup> child protection has become a key programming and thematic area for Plan in which it effectively contributes to the realisation of child rights, applying its Child Centred Community Development approach. For Plan International, child protection encompasses the work and activities it undertakes to prevent and respond to all forms of abuse, neglect, exploitation and violence against children. Plan's child protection work incorporates work on child protection in emergencies (CPiE), child protection programming referred to as child protection in development (CPiD) and Plan's policy to safe guard children, "Say Yes! to keeping children safe". Specific child protection programmes and strategies include:

- Strengthening Child Protection Systems, focusing particularly on community based protection mechanisms;
- Building the capacity of parents, communities and professionals to provide protection;
- Developing children's resilience and their capacity to participate in their own protection;
- Integrated advocacy to strengthen legal frameworks and for access to basic and specialist services.

Focussing on community based child protection, Plan's increasing efforts are channelled into establishing and sustaining a variety of local mechanisms, reflecting a specific child rights based situation analysis, aiming at creating protective networks and environments expected to ensure protection of all children and contribute towards strengthening national child protection systems.

This brief report provides an overview of community based child protection mechanisms supported by Plan Indonesia, as a contribution to a regional comparative analysis on community based child protection mechanisms supported by Plan in the Asia region<sup>3</sup>. The overall objective of this comparative analysis is firstly, to increase learning of various structural and functional aspects of the existing community based child protection mechanisms in Plan Asia and secondly, to provide a comprehensive report on their potential for increased impact and sustainability. The specific objectives of the regional study are:

- to provide a broad mapping of the scale and coverage of community-based child protection mechanisms supported by Plan Country Offices across the Asia Region;
- to document various models and approaches in establishing, supporting and promoting such child protection mechanisms, including defining roles and responsibilities of various actors and processes supporting their functionality;
- to document common roles, responsibilities and key activities of these community based child protection mechanisms;
- to analyze identified achievements and gaps of community based child protection mechanisms in different operational contexts, including crisis/emergency, early recovery and longer-term development;

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<sup>1</sup> Kunera Moore, ICPREC (2012)

<sup>2</sup> particularly since 2006

<sup>3</sup> Encompassing an analysis of community based child protection work in 13 out of the 14 countries where Plan works in the region: Bangladesh, Cambodia, China, East Timor, Indonesia, Laos, Myanmar, Nepal, Pakistan, Philippines, Sri Lanka, Thailand and Vietnam. The study did not include Myanmar where Plan's work is more recent and child protection programme work has not yet started.

- to provide a broad overview of lessons learned on key components and processes contributing towards effective child protection and sustainable community based mechanisms.

## Methodology

The comparative analysis study is carried out by a consultancy group<sup>4</sup> in 3 key stages involving data collection, analysis and synthesis:

1. Data collection through a desk review of available information and mapping existing community based child protection mechanisms across Asia (*January – April 2012*).
2. Data collection and participatory analysis through field visits in 5 countries (Cambodia, East Timor, Nepal, Pakistan and Vietnam) using child/user friendly participatory tools, interviews, Focus Group Discussions and observation with all relevant stakeholders (*May – June 2012*)
3. Analysis and Synthesis: comparative analysis of existing models and report writing (*May – September 2012*)

Ethical guidelines have been applied throughout the study, particularly in preparing for, undertaking and following up to the field work to ensure safe, ethical and inclusive participation of girls and boys with attention to issues of: informed consent, assessment of risks, and opportunities to report on protection concerns relevant to Plan's child protection policy.

In countries where the field study did not take place, the report builds upon a mapping exercise conducted by the consultants, based on available country documents<sup>5</sup> and verified and updated by Plan's child protection focal points in each country. These country reports were further informed by primary qualitative data from Plan's child protection programme staff, civil society and/or government partners, as well as adult and child members of community based child protection mechanisms (CBCPMs) using the following two tools: 'H' assessments – undertaken by different stakeholders to share their views on the main strengths and achievements, challenges and weaknesses of their CBCPMs; as well as practical suggestions to improve CBCPMs in their country context. Secondly, Stories of Most Significant Change and Most Significant Challenge (SMSC/C) relating to experiences of community based child protection mechanisms were shared by various stakeholders. The China Plan team organized 5 focus group discussions at community level with teachers and school children. These children are either part of the Children Advisory Board at the schools or are pupils in those schools. Each session had approximately 5 participants (with about 50% girls). As the mechanisms is just starting to operate at the community level, Plan decided not to go through the SMSC/C, but instead, used the H-assessment to gather stories of challenges related to the developing child protection mechanism.

## Brief Introduction to the Country Context

While China has made tremendous strides in social and economic development over the last two decades, it is nonetheless still plagued by striking regional and urban-rural disparities. Because of the uneven economic development, rural China lags far behind urban China in all key human development indicators and the gap has widened significantly since 1997. Two hundred million people, most of whom reside in western China, still live on less than a dollar a day. Other challenges for the country include large-scale migration and a declining child population, especially compared to a growing aging population and lack of sexual/reproductive health education in general.<sup>6</sup> Thirty-four million children live in poverty. Their health is at risk. Children face much pressure under the test-based school system and are unable to obtain good quality holistic education that teaches them basic

<sup>4</sup> ICPREC – International Child Protection Rights and Evaluation Consultants led by Claire O'Kane and Kunera Moore.

<sup>5</sup> Country Strategic Plans, child protection proposals, progress reports, training reports on child protection and CBCPM, minutes from children's gatherings/ initiatives etc.

<sup>6</sup> Plan China, CSPII, page 2

life skills. Poor children, especially the most vulnerable, including girls living in rural areas, orphans, children left behind when their parents migrate, and disabled children, do not receive the protection they are entitled to and are denied the opportunity to participate in making the decisions that affect their lives.<sup>7</sup>

Civil society in China is still young and its role limited. The Chinese government still exerts firm control over civil society, making it very difficult for grassroots organisations to register as legal entities and closely restricting NGOs from soliciting financial support from the public. China's nascent civil society fails to serve as an intermediary which could link marginalised groups, including children living in rural areas, with central, regional or local governments.

A 2010 research report by the National Working Committee on Women and Children shows a high prevalence of sexual, physical, and emotional abuse among children in China's general population. More boys than girls reported physical abuse (64% and 45% respectively) and emotional abuse (66% and 55% respectively). More girls (29%) than boys (22%) reported having been sexually abused, though the proportion of boys is unusually high. These results are consistent with the findings of other organizations.<sup>8</sup> Neglect is common among China's population of 58 million left-behind children, whose parents have gone to cities to work<sup>9</sup>. Many of these children live in poverty under poor adult supervision. These children are more likely to suffer academic and psychosocial challenges, and are also more likely to leave school early. While 98 % of primary school left-behind children complete the 6<sup>th</sup> grade, only 88 % of left-behind 14 year olds still attend school.<sup>10</sup> Meanwhile, social support for children with disabilities (1.74% of Chinese boys and 1.42% of Chinese girls)<sup>11</sup> is very limited in scope, and few rehabilitative services are available to provide support to families - especially in rural areas. Many parents are unwilling to raise a child with special needs and others find that the burden is too great. In part due to improved registration for children with disabilities, the number of children who have been orphaned or abandoned has risen 24% in the last 5 years to 0.71 million<sup>12</sup>, resulting in increased pressure on the child welfare system. Other vulnerable children include street children, children from extremely low-income families, households with many children (born past the government birth limit, and often lacking proper birth registration).<sup>13</sup>

China does not have a comprehensive, multi-level, cross-sector national child protection system that safe-guards the rights of all children. The current system is fragmented, addressing primarily the needs of specific high-risk populations (such as orphans and street children). Effective child protection interventions have so far largely been limited to a number of pilot projects. The public and the government personnel generally do not fully understand the child rights and lack a compatible system to monitor and direct relevant departments. In order to make up for this deficiency, the State Council established the Working Committee for Women and Children. In addition, two committees including the Working Committee for Women and Children and the Committee for Protection of Minors are set up respectively at the provincial, municipal and county level. The administrative offices of these two committees are all set up within the offices of the Women's Federation. Women's Federation offices generally lack personnel for the position and also lack funds, negatively influencing their effectiveness in the work of coordinating and promoting child protection.

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<sup>7</sup> Plan China, CSPII, page 2

<sup>8</sup> Plan China, ongoing draft child protection programme, CSP III, page 1

<sup>9</sup> All China Women's Federation (2008), Research Report on Situation of Rural Left-behind Children

<sup>10</sup> *ibid*

<sup>11</sup> National Office for the Second Sampling Survey of Disability Population. (2007) The Second National Survey of Disability Population.

<sup>12</sup> UNICEF, Beijing Normal University and One Foundation. ( 2011 ). Child Welfare Stocktaking Report

<sup>13</sup> Plan China, ongoing draft child protection programme, CSP III, page 2

### **Brief overview of Plan's strategic child protection work and the scope of CBCPM work**

Plan started working in China in 1995 and commenced its child protection programmes in 2005, when working on universal birth registration together with the Institute of Population Development Studies Xian Jiaotong University. Plan China's 3<sup>rd</sup> strategic plan will commence June 2012. The draft child protection component of this plan focuses primarily on community based child protection work as well as on directly working with children on their resilience and other self-protective mechanisms. The country programme goal for 2012-16 is "To contribute to the development of a safe society in which children and youth realize their right to protection from all forms of violence and abuse". Expected programme results in child protection are:

**End Result 1:** Children in the general population have reduced exposure to all forms of violence and abuse, and are better equipped to protect themselves.

**End Result 2:** Particularly at-risk children and families, especially those from marginalized populations, have access to early-intervention and community-based support services.

**End Result 3:** Children experiencing violence and abuse or at high risk of experiencing violence and abuse have access to a comprehensive child protection response mechanism

The starting point for the development of Plan's community-based child protection programmes is to empower children by increasing their personal protective capacities. Secondly, by building healthy families, Plan will contribute to families' ability to offer care, support and protection to their children and will also enable them to access preventative support, when necessary. Thirdly, Plan will build the skills of schools, community organizations and community-based providers to contribute to a sustainable, community-led child protection monitoring and response system. In the fourth place, Plan will continue to work with government partners (including GONGOs) on building the formal child protection system to provide good care for the most high-risk cases. And lastly, through research and advocacy, Plan will work on policy change to enhance the child protection systems.

#### Main Purpose of the CBCP project:

*Increased capacity of the Chinese government departments, judicial institutions, civil society organizations and primary care givers, as duty bearers, to be able to fulfil their obligation to protect children and young people and to be accountable by establishing child protection service networks, strengthening the current child protection system, and improving the current child protection mechanism in pilot counties, for better handling of two kinds of cases:*

- A) Children and young people exposed to abuse or neglect
  - B) Children and young people at-risk of experiencing abuse or neglect.
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- I) Children and Young People's awareness of their right to protection and of avenues for seeking assistance when such right has been violated is realized
  - II) Increased opportunities for children and young people to participate, express their opinion and influence decisions affecting their right to protecting themselves as well as their capacity to make use of such opportunities
  - III) Increased capacity and action taken by guardians and other adult community members to protect and fulfill children and young peoples' right to protection
  - IV) Civil society organizations, government institutions, and judicial institutions have improved capacity and are mobilized to better monitor, advocate, and protect children and young people's right to protection

In 2009, Plan implemented a **pilot** Community-Based Child Protection Mechanism project. Then, in 2011, building on lessons learnt from the pilot project, it started a new CBCP programme (2011-13), which spans 7 target communities in 3 counties. Of those, 3 communities (in Chunhua county) are Plan PUs, while 4 (in Hanying and Yang County) are Plan-funded non-PUs. Plan China implements through the All China Women's Federation and the Shaanxi Society for the Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect (SSPCAN) for all its child protection mechanism work. The Shaanxi Women's Federation both at the provincial and county levels is the central organisation in coordinating and

mobilising available services and resources in responding to cases of child abuse, violence, exploitation or neglect that are brought to their attention.<sup>14</sup> SSPCAN reports to the Provincial WF and implements a large chunk of the activities that fall under the WF's responsibilities in relation to children. In the completed stage it will be a system which reaches from the ground (rooted in pilot communities) all the way up to county level, which is linked to the province. In Plan PUs where child protection mechanisms have not yet been launched, the Women's Federation and the Education Bureau support child protection training and public education. 75 percent of the communities are rural and 25 percent are peri-urban, both set in a longer term development context.

## **Structural aspects of CBCPMs**

### The structure of CBCPMs

The lynchpin of the Plan supported CBCPM in China is the Women's Federation (WF) staff at county levels. They are Plan's primary partner and are responsible for coordinating the work of the Village Committees and School Committees, through the women's representative at the township level. The County and township Level WF are the focal points for all child protection public education activities at community levels. At the provincial level, the WF sits on the district and provincial level inter-agency group on children and women's affairs and takes a lead on child protection issues. At a provincial level Plan also works with SSPCAN. The project is managed by a 7 person management team at the provincial level, including 3 Plan staff, 2 WF staff, and 2 SSPCAN staff. At the county level, 2 WF staff in each county (total 6) are responsible for project implementation.

At the community level, Plan works with the Village Committee, which is the elected seat of the Communist Party representatives, made up of representatives from various administrative departments, including a women's representative, village mediator and the village leader. Plan hopes to build the capacity of the Women's Representative to become the child protection focal point. In Plan PUs where child protection mechanisms have not yet been launched, the Women's Federation and the Education Bureau support child protection training and public education.

### Representation and inclusion

The Village Committees generally have 5-6 members, including the Village Chief, Vice-Village Chief, Party Secretary, Women's Representative, and Accountant. These positions are elected and paid. Representatives on the Village Committee are elected civil servants and therefore do not come from marginalized populations. There are no youth representatives in the village committees; this would be impossible because these committees are a governing body elected through the Communist party.

Secondly, Plan is about to launch Teachers' Child Protection Working Groups. The School Based Child Protection Working Groups will include the principal responsible for student affairs, a guidance counsellor, and core teachers, who will be responsible for sharing child protection training with other teachers and students. These groups have not been formalized at this point. The School-Based Child Protection Working Groups will not receive stipend, but are beneficiaries of many training opportunities. These Child Protection Working Groups will be closely coordinating with the Women's Representatives at Village Committee level for the work/follow-up on child protection (both awareness and case work).

## **Functional aspects of CBCPMs**

### Objectives and activities<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> SIDA 2011-13 narrative proposal, page 14

<sup>15</sup> See page 4 for complete description of objectives

By using a systems approach to child protection, Plan is working together with government, CSOs, communities, primary care givers as well as children and young people themselves to strengthen the child protection system in Shaanxi three pilot counties by:

- (i) strengthening a central component of the system, that is, the mechanism for handling identified cases of children and young people (i) at high risk of abuse, violence, exploitation or neglect or (ii) who have been subjected to abuse, violence, exploitation or neglect and;
- (ii) strengthening the capacity of the key stakeholders in the mechanism.

Plan will focus on working with the Women's representative in the villages, who will be the CP focal point within the committee. This person will be the focal point for referrals, case management of low risk and vulnerable child cases, and awareness raising exercises on local levels. Plan will also train the rest of the WF and at township and county level and will also work with local experts and WF at provincial level, the latter of whom are directly responsible for training the village committees and for improving the functioning of the township and county inter-agency coordination of child protection. Terms of Reference related to the community based child protection work have not been developed yet for the different stakeholders as the project is still in its early stages.

The township Child Protection focal points will also facilitate the implementation of prevention and awareness activities through teacher's Child Protection Working Groups and Village Committee Representatives, which will likely lead to cases coming forward. Teachers and Village Committee Women's Representatives often play a role in teaching positive parenting to adults in the community, so they do have a voice in preventing physical and verbal or emotional violence.

As the CBCP mechanism is not functional yet, cases have not come through the system yet. However, recent interviews with Children's Groups reveal high concern for verbal abuse and also report physical abuse. Concerns for cases of sexual abuse have been reported by teachers, though the school-based child protection working groups have not yet been established. The system is specifically aimed at battling violence against children. Though the community groups have not been launched yet, teachers and community workers report that sexual abuse is the most difficult subject for them to address, because of the taboos surrounding this. However, sexual abuse is more readily responded to by law authorities once it is discovered. As the Village Committee has a predominantly administrative role in the village, it works mostly on non-protection issues, but does have a role in mediating cases of violence at the community level.

#### Case management

Plan China has decided that the Women's Federation will be the sole agency responsible with case management to avoid a lack of follow up when this responsibility is shared. This decision is based on Plan's experience in establishing CP work and the way cases were handled to date. On a local level, cases are reported either to the Village Committee, specifically to the Women's representative, or to the School Child Protection Working Group who will then decide whether this case is low/medium/high risk. Low risk cases will be dealt with at local level, either by School Child Protection Working Group, the Village Committee Women's representative, with the support of the local village mediator. The responding focal point decides what happens next, whether cases dealt with locally or whether they are referred to the Township level Women's Federation, who will coordinate township level resources to support medium risk cases. The Township Level Women's Federation may be asked to coordinate Public Security and Justice focal points to help address medium level cases. Cases of high risk or cases in which the Township WF requires support will be referred to the County level WF, who will be responsible for ensuring the victim/child will be referred to the right services/assistance, either formal government services or NGO/GONGO services. As the involvement of international NGOs in caseload is sensitive, Plan is not involved. Children and teachers who have received training in child protection have been trained on the

importance of confidentiality. Official measures for ensuring confidentiality have not yet been put in place but are being developed.

### Children's participation and involvement in CBCPM

Plan China has only recently started involving children directly in child protection through the establishment of children's groups within the schools.

Plan works on child protection in schools, currently operating **Children and Young People's Advisory Boards**. This group is child-only, under adult guidance, and based in school. There are 8 groups, in 8 project school (two pilot schools in each county funded by SIDA, with two extra in the county where there is a PLAN PU, operating under sponsorship funds). Members are determined by children volunteering to participate in the School Advisory Board. In one school representatives were nominated by teachers for outstanding reasons. Half of the groups' members are girls, with exception of two schools where girls are the significant majority. Children will be responsible for educating and mobilizing their peers on peer-peer child protection education. As many children in project areas are "left-behind children", the majority of representatives are considered "marginalized". Half the schools are elementary and the other middle schools, so the representatives are either 4<sup>th</sup>/5<sup>th</sup> graders (elementary) or 7<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> graders (middle school). Child Groups have participated in training events in schools, covering child protection and child rights. The children have also been trained in peer-peer awareness raising and educational campaigns. Children reportedly are very positive about the opportunity to participate and improve child protection in their communities and schools. Children's participation in China is still a new phenomenon and as such, it is still a challenge to have children listened to and taken seriously. Though the peer-peer activities are just starting, the children are involved in designing public activities concerning personal safety and non-violence addressing their peers. This public education will take varying forms, including public education bulletin boards, posters, and interactive activities.

### Capacity and support systems

As the CBCP work in China is still in its early stages, building the (currently limited) child protection capacity of Plan's partners at the WF is the first priority as the WF is the main stakeholder in the CBCPM. Many of these "capacity" issues involve cultural barriers to child protection. There is a limited understanding of child protection amongst service providers which influences the way cases are dealt with. A different notion of best interests of the child exists throughout the system, in both the implementing partner and the communities. There is a saying in China, "Do not get involved in the work of trivial things" which means "Do not put your nose in other peoples' business" even if that "business" involves child protection.

In November 2011, Plan child protection staff as well as WF county level staff visited child protection projects of other agencies in Hong Kong, to learn from their referral network and to see different CBCP networks in action. By building the mentoring capacity of Women's Federation staff at the county level, Plan will enable the Women's representative on the Village Committee to engage in early intervention and public education activities, and also to conduct referral. Only the WF staff at the county level and the Township Level Women's Federation will be trained thoroughly in case management and follow-up, though multidisciplinary team training and referral training will be held for the group of inter-departmental child protection focal points at each county level. A major training on child development, child protection and case management will be held for Women's Federation and other bureau staff on May 12-19. The child development and child protection portion of this training will then be replicated to the community level for teachers and village committees shortly after the mechanism launch, along with a training on the community and village level operations of the referral system. There are plans to also build capacity of service providers, so that the referral and support mechanism can offer better services.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Please refer to annex III for an overview of training taken place to date



In addition, Plan works with teachers to change their attitude towards violence against children. Plan China's CP focal point reports: "While teachers know that sexual abuse is wrong, they have a really hard time understanding why they might not want to hit a child or curse them. They feel that they have no other option, because they are under a lot of pressure from the national education system. It takes a lot of work to convince adults involved in the CBCPM that it is important to protect children from physical violence from adults. (Note: teachers are very eager to reduce violence between children.)" <sup>17</sup>

### **Linkages with civil society and Government**

Due to the Chinese socio-political context, Plan works on CBCPMs in close cooperation with formalized institutions such as the Education Bureau, the Women's Federation, and the Department of Justice in implementing its community based child protection mechanisms.

Community level At a local level, Plan works through the Village Committee, which is in some ways a popular organization; though it is the lowest administrative unit, its members are elected. In some Plan PUs, the Women's Representative on the Village Committee plays a dual role as a volunteer in a Plan project known as Community Children's Platforms. Though this component of the project has not yet been launched, it is anticipated that in the future, the CBCPMs will have a referral post through this volunteer. At present, the project sites do not yet have the capacity to establish Community Children's Platforms that can play this role, as they tend to focus on ECCD and only exist in one of the current pilot counties. Additionally, as the project rolls out, Plan is hoping to partner with existing Community Youth League groups for the implementation of peer support activities.

Horizontal reach-out As the only existing CBCPMs in Shaanxi Province are run through Plan, they are engaged in learning as a "cohort" through which they share their work experiences as they implement the project. Once the CBCPM Development Project is rolled out into the remaining Plan PUs in FY 13, there will be peer learning conducted by between the new project counties and the first cohort.

Linkages with official CBCP mechanism at provincial and national levels On a national level, child protection is not a priority and in a centrally run state like China, this has resulted in very limited capacity of child protection mechanisms at provincial and district levels. There is a plethora of state actors involved in child focussed services/policy development. Plan's work to strengthen child protection services is all channelled through the Women's Federation, being the central organisation to coordinate and mobilize available services and resources in responding to cases of child abuse, violence, exploitation or neglect. <sup>18</sup>

An exciting opportunity to influence policy at the national level is the WF's cooperation with the All-China People's Congress in researching the feasibility of the Law for the Prevention and Prohibition of Domestic Violence. As a part of the process, two conferences concerning the drafting of this law were hosted by the Shaanxi Province Women's Federation, Plan's child protection partner. The Shaanxi WF took this opportunity to share lessons learned in child protection including their good practices and challenges. The WF took a list of recommendations from Plan China, which they incorporated in their recommendations on China's national child protection law. The decision-makers recognized and affirmed these recommendations. Plan China hopes that this process will yield significant policy changes in the near future.

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<sup>17</sup> Mapping China's CBCPM, April 2012

<sup>18</sup> For a full overview of actors, see I202 CP Mechanism China draft2, page 7-8



Linkages with other Plan sectors The Learn Without Fear (LWF) program/campaign is implemented in the same counties and eventually, the idea is that the two programs work simultaneously. Whereas the LWF program focuses more on building child resiliency, teaching children conflict resolution, and giving teachers alternatives to corporal punishment and educating parents in positive childrearing, the CP work focuses more on referral mechanisms and case flow. As such, the programmes could complement and strengthen each other.

## **Monitoring and evaluation system and process**

### General Plan China MER policies and plans

As per CSP II: Plan China has developed a data collection system to monitor the changes that programmes bring to communities. Plan China draws on lessons learned through its monitoring and evaluation system, disseminates this information and creates action plans fostering continual programme improvement. Plan China will build a documentation system, which comprises baseline data, case studies, empirical research, and cost-effectiveness analysis, will produce both qualitative and quantitative data related to programme evaluations, action research and case studies, all of which will be disseminated at the national level to selected government agencies in order to increase the government's understanding of the reality of rural communities, to promote best practices at the community level, to advocate for changes in public policies and the fiscal budget.<sup>19</sup>

### Child Protection Programme MER

According to the 2011-13 proposal, the CBCP programme's regular monitoring and evaluation is conducted by the WF and by SSPCAN. An M&E subcommittee, consisting of partners, Plan China staff, other key stakeholders, would be overseeing all M&E activities in the project. The M&E subcommittee will meet at the end of each quarter to review and evaluate the progress of the project activities for that quarter against the agreed indicators. The M&E plan is aimed at safeguarding a participatory methodology throughout the project and at maximizing the potential that the project results/outcomes are successfully achieved. In addition, the evaluation and research plan includes a thorough (independently conducted) baseline research, mid term evaluation and final project evaluation against the same indicators, including *but not limited to*:

- The proportion of children and young people aware (i) of their right to protection; (ii) of the current mechanism/processes available where they can receive assistance with/to address any violation of this right (iii) their willingness to use such processes
- The proportion of members of the respective communities who are aware of children's rights, their obligations towards meeting those rights and the current mechanisms available for assistance to address any violation of these rights.
- The awareness and perceptions of government officials and CSO to children's right to protection and their role (and willingness) in safeguarding the right.
- Using a common criteria based on international standards/indicators identify) the prevalence of abuse, violence, exploitation and neglect at the provincial level (?) and in each of the pilot counties.

The baseline was conducted in the autumn of 2011, through the WF and SSPCAN, the quality of which was not great and it was severely delayed, in turn delaying other program activities.

This did however provide the first opportunity to engage community feedback in monitoring and evaluation, which has been very valuable for further project design.

Children have been involved in M & E, which offered excellent testimony to the contributions children are making in the development of the mechanism. Feedback from children is being incorporated into development of mechanism /referral system at the very grassroots level, with special consideration for the establishment of increased peer support structures. M & E exercises

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<sup>19</sup> Approved Plan China CSP II, page 16-17

with teachers have again highlighted their willingness to participate in the activities and helped Plan to identify who might be suitable for the roles in child protection working groups. Where M & E has revealed difficulties, Plan has been able to adapt training to overcome these difficulties.

### **Sustainability and scale up**

The current CBCP project is funded through SIDA (Swedish Government Development Aid), from 2011 to 2013. After that, Plan China plans to expand the CBCP programme to other Plan Pus using both sponsorship and grants to fund this expansion. Plan's costs associated with the CBCP network include training, awareness raising programmes, launching events, peer education activities as well as all monitoring and evaluation activities. Plan's budget for its current work in 3 counties over 3 years is 270,000 RMB (approximately 43,000 USD), covering three counties for three years. All the village committees' child protection work is funded through Plan, channelled through the Women's Federation. The WF has government funds to address child protection cases that need referrals. However, it does not have funds for public education, early intervention or prevention activities. It is planned that the child protection work of the village committees can take place in the communal activities' space. The Child Protection Working Groups in the schools in Plan Pus will be provided with space through the Learn Without Fear project.

### **National policies and CBCPMs**

The development of women and children is a priority of the Chinese Government, to guide its efforts to improve children's welfare and to facilitate children's development. Working committees for women and children have been established at the national and regional levels to build cross-departmental partnerships and to monitor the regional implementation and realisation of the "Outlines".<sup>20</sup> The government is also piloting programmes targeting children in difficult situations, especially orphans, girls living in rural areas, and migrant and street children. Plan China has successfully negotiated or is in process of conducting negotiations with the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Civil Affairs on initiatives such as child protection and ECCD, which could provide Plan opportunities to influence policy and practise.

Plan's work with the All China Women Federation in Shaanxi and with the Shaanxi Society for the Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect (SSPCAN) focuses on building their capacity and networking on a local, district and provincial level. Building the capacity of the project partner and Plan China, as well as other key stakeholders, in the process of strengthening the child protection mechanisms will provide them with the skills and capacity to continue to work to improve the child protection system more broadly and to replicate the strengthening the child protection mechanisms in other counties over time.

### **Key achievements, challenges and lessons learned<sup>21</sup>**

#### **Most significant lessons learned**

1. The most significant lesson in China is that in order to establish a successful CBCPM within an authoritarian state as China, one has to work within the government system as it is the only way an international NGO is allowed to work on a local level. This has been challenging but progress has been made.
2. Early and frequent communication is the key, as it will prevent miscommunication about standards and potential unnecessary work for everyone. Bi-weekly meetings will be implemented regardless of project activities, with further communication scheduled well in advance of any upcoming activity or event.

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<sup>20</sup> see the *China Children Development Outlines (2001-2010)*

<sup>21</sup> Data for this section come from the SIDA CBCPM progress reports, Plan Partners' provincial and county level reports, Plan China's draft CP mechanism document as well as the H-assessments carried out by Plan with children.

3. A balance must be struck between quality control and grassroots empowerment, meanwhile maximizing efficiency. For this next project phase, Plan gives clear indicators and standards for each project activity and the details of implementation are left to the Partner. There will be a trial period while we observe efficiency and quality control.
4. Project Management System will be an important step in improving the implementation process.
5. Continued development of consistent, easy-to-understand definitions of child protection terminology and concepts is necessary. Consistency among literature and project materials is the key, lest implementing parties become confused about their objective.

#### Significant achievements

1. Plan China's self-reflection, monitoring and analysis of the processes of establishing the CBCPM in close cooperation with the Women's Federation has given rich insights in partnering with an authoritarian state on CBCP work. This has yielded fruit along the way of identifying what the main challenges are, which therefore leaves room for developing corresponding response measures.
2. The fact that Plan has been able to conceptualize and develop a system framework that has received the approval of the partnering Women's Federation is in and of itself an achievement.
3. The WF's advocacy for the Domestic Violence Law<sup>22</sup>, in which the WF shared Plan China's recommendations with government decision makers.
4. The way in which Plan China has managed to enthuse and hopefully empower a great number of children and youth in the early stages of the children's advisory boards in schools.

#### Significant challenges

1. The primary gap in China's child protection system lies in the lack of a strong mechanism that can coordinate all relevant departments.
2. Weak legal enforcement measures. Although China has some advanced administrative rules and regulations, many are vague, and have not been well enforced.
3. It is very difficult to adapt conceptualizations of CBCPMs from an international context and to communicate them in a way that can be understood by community stakeholders, within the framework of their worldview. Concepts such as child participation and the

#### **Positives according to children**

- Children are familiar with child rights and concepts of child abuse; children were also very clear on the definition of neglect, and talked about parental discrimination against girls.
- Children (voluntarily!) correctly identified and gave examples of physical abuse that they had seen in the village and stated that it was commonplace.
- Children are very eager about developing posters and utilizing International Children's Day to educate peers; they had some questions on implementation, but questions were all pertinent for their age.
- Children showed excellent ownership and level of responsibility for their roles in the Peer Groups
- Good practices that excited the children included: Developing Posters; Working with June First Children's Day; Holding a Class Speaking Competition;

#### **Positives according to teachers**

- Many grandparents help care for the children, and they are a method to help talk to the parents.
- Teachers feel strongly that the mechanism should be participatory to get children involved and develop ownership

<sup>22</sup> See linkages with national level policies at page 8 for more information

need for a sense of responsibility for the protection of all children are very new and inherently counter-cultural.

4. Additionally, terminology and conceptualizations within the international child protection community is not consistent, much less when translated and impacted by repeated transliterations into the Chinese language.
5. Extremely high turnover rate of staff, both in managing Partner Agency and in other agencies. The Chunhua chairwoman anticipated that in the remaining project period, there will be at least four new staff in one position of her county level partner bureaus.
6. Teachers feel that parents are *really* not involved; they say that they are too busy working to earn money to care for their children. Most children only see their parents once a week. This is especially true for children of migrant workers or children whose parents live in the rural areas. This makes the job of enhancing a child supportive environment both at home and school a difficult task, accordingly.
7. Teachers report that when they are anxious they will still hit children, though now they “know” not to.
8. Students’ levels of trust of teachers / class-monitors are very low. Even reporting to peers in the classroom worries children. This stops children from reporting.

#### Ethical challenges

1. The primary ethical challenge presents itself when communities and partners – due to different conceptualizations of child abuse/child protection/intervention – may not follow up on a case in a way that Plan would prefer to see. Provincial and County WF’s different understanding of case follow-up has resulted in cases not being attended to according to international best-practice standards. The difficulty presents itself particularly where Plan, as an INGO, is faced with many restrictions in terms of dealing directly with cases and data. It is difficult to know how far to “push” the community or partner organizations in the manner of responding to child cases, particularly when doing so could offend them and severely affect project implementation.
2. To what extent an international NGO macro or micro manages its government partner on a conceptual program that is new for their government partner.

#### Recommendations by teachers and children through H-assessments

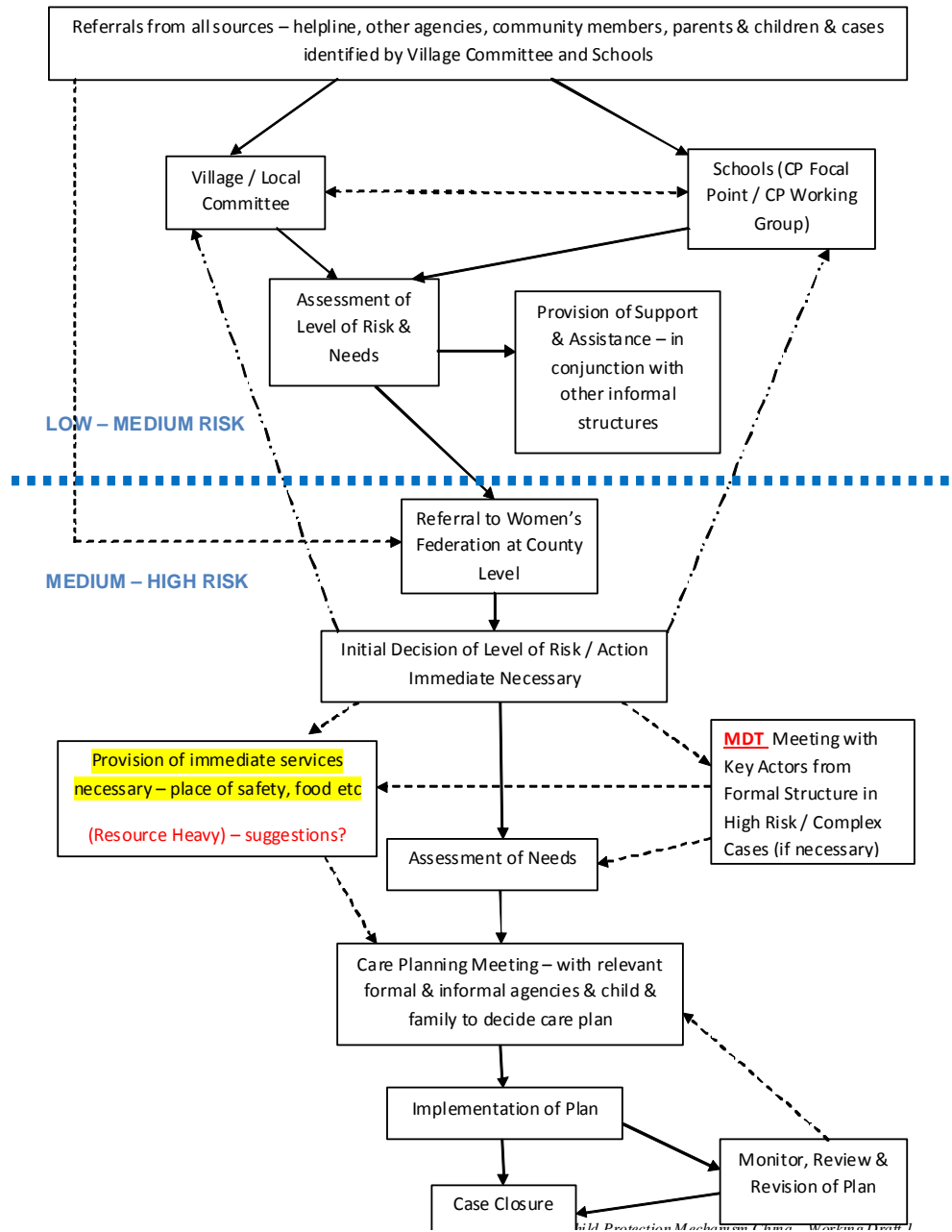
1. Children in schools emphasized in discussion that reporting issues by children really needs to go around the class monitor, contrary to current practice in many schools (both in elementary and in middle school). Trust of teachers and class monitors in terms of reporting to, seems to be very limited and either needs to be created or the reporting system needs to reflect this and establish other reporting lines as suggested by children.
2. Teachers feel that it is really important to get parents more involved; they recommend that we train teachers and that teachers can provide the information to caregivers in local dialect so that it is easy for them to understand.
3. If the program should eventually choose to encourage peer-reporting, students ask that Plan ensures: confidentiality, friendship, and trust-building. Students feel that if they reported to peers but knew that peers would report to a teacher, then it would break trust.
4. Children report that teachers and the school (as well as parents) need to be really involved in and supportive of student involvement in peer groups.

**Annex I Stakeholders involved in CBCPM study in China, March 2012**

Who?	Role and location:	Gender:		Age range (if children)	Total number:
		Male	Female		
18 female teachers	School teachers in schools where children have formed child participatory groups from 2 middle school and 1 elementary schools in respectively Beiguan, Chunhua County and in Han Ying Conty		18		18
4 boys and 2 girls	Child participatory group members at Beiguan Elementary School	4	2	Up to 12	6
5 children	Child Participatory Group members at Han Ying County Middle School	3	2	12-14	5
<b>Total</b>		<b>7</b>	<b>22</b>		<b>29</b>

**Annex II: Overview of CBCP mechanism for Plan China<sup>23</sup>**

**- SUGGESTED CHILD PROTECTION MECHANISM - DIAGRAM**



<sup>23</sup> 1202 CP Mechanism Plan China draft2, page 19

**Annex III – overview of trainings provided to strengthen the CBCPM by Plan China**

<b>Year of training:</b>	<b>Name of training (main subject):</b>	<b>Who was included:</b>	<b>Who facilitated:</b>	<b>Was there a follow up training?</b>
<b>November 2011</b>	nature of a comprehensive community based child protection mechanism and its various components	Plan staff and partners, later on for the WF	International consultant	Followed up with training for County Level WF
<b>Nov 2011</b>	Community mapping	Plan staff, partners incl WF	International consultant	M&E Plan
<b>Nov 2011</b>	Skills Audit	WF	„	Monitoring
<b>Nov 2011</b>	awareness child rights, knowledge and skills training on characteristics of children’s development, organisation of educating and teaching activities, communication between teachers and students.	110 teachers	Lieu Wei	
<b>Oct 2011</b>	Trip to Hong Kong to observe/see CBCP at work	Plan and Partner staff	Plan	Training by international expert through Plan
<b>May 2012</b>	Child Development, Protection, and Management	Child Case Plan staff, Partner staff, WF staff at all levels, Representatives from other bureaus	Wang Guo Qi Dr. Patricia Ho (Hong Kong)	This will occur.