

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

## Introduction:

Plan is as 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 report provides an overview of community based child protection mechanisms supported by Plan Philippines, 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> Claire O'Kane, 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 – 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. In the Philippines 154 stakeholders (60 men, 87 women, 2 boys and 5 girls) were involved in the participatory consultations<sup>6</sup>.

#### **Brief Introduction to the Country Context:**

The Philippines comprises of 7,107 islands in the western Pacific Ocean. Physically, the country is divided into three major island groups—Luzon (the biggest), Visayas, and Mindanao; and further subdivided into 17 regions, namely, Regions I-XIII, the National Capital Region (NCR) or Metro Manila, Cordillera Administrative Region (CAR), and the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM). The (NCR) has 16 highly urbanized cities and one urban municipality. As of June 30, 2011, the country had 80 provinces, 138 cities, 1,496 municipalities, and 42,026 barangays<sup>7</sup>. The present system of government is a unitary, republican form with three equal branches: Executive, Legislative and Judiciary. Local governance is decentralized to local government units (LGU) from barangay (village), municipality, city and to the provincial level. Local chief executives -- Barangay Captains, Municipal or City Mayors, and Provincial Governors as well as members of the local legislative council (Sanggunian) are elective positions.

The Philippines is the 12<sup>th</sup> most populous country in the world. As of August 2007, it has a population of 88 million with more people in rural than urban areas. Children (below 18 years) comprise 43% (37 million) of the population. The economy is propelled by agriculture but with

<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> See Annex 1: Stakeholders involved in CBCPM study in Philippines, *April 2012*

<sup>7</sup> Philippines in Figures 2012 from National Statistics Office

substantial contributions from manufacturing, mining, remittances from overseas Filipinos, and service industries such as tourism, and increasingly, business outsourcing. Wealth is not equitably shared: 10% of the population owns 36% of the country's wealth while the bottom 60% garners only 26%.

The Philippine National Strategic Framework for Plan Development of Children, or Child 21, 2000-2025 sets very clear targets for Filipino children's welfare to concretize government's commitments to the CRC and serves as government's road map to make plans and programmes for children focused on the principles and standards of the CRC. Its goal is to build a "child-sensitive and child-friendly society", a promise to Filipino children in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

Child abuse is considered a silent epidemic in the Philippines affecting thousands of children within the home, in schools and communities<sup>8</sup>. It comes in the form of corporal punishment, degrading treatment, sexual and psychological abuse, neglect and child labour. 36% of school-aged children are looking for work or working<sup>9</sup> in agriculture, forestry, hunting and domestic work. More boys (63%) were working than girls (36.6%) Child domestic workers are very young, mostly 12-17 years old, 92% are female. In Plan project areas, 7% of school-aged children were found to be working<sup>10</sup>. Girls are trafficked and recruited for factory work, household help and prostitution. Being poor, out of school and dreaming of the prosperity that comes with a promised job in Manila, young children become innocent targets for child trafficking. Trafficking exposes children to violence, sexual abuse and HIV infection<sup>11</sup>.

Certain clusters of the population are more disadvantaged as far as the right to protection is concerned. Muslim and indigenous children, children with disabilities and children in conflict with the law are vulnerable to exploitation and abuse by the very nature of their exclusion. There are also gender dimensions of violence with boys facing increased risks of physical violence, and girls increased risks of sexual abuse. Both girls and boys become more vulnerable to neglect, trafficking, sexual and other forms of exploitation during periods of disasters and emergencies as well as in situations of armed conflict. The effects of climate change – extended periods of droughts or flooding, erratic seasonal patterns and high intensity typhoons increase risks of vulnerability and child rights violation in the Philippines. Furthermore, although more people are in rural areas, rapid urbanization with an annual growth of 5% is increasingly becoming a threat to the welfare of children. The lack of local employment opportunities drive many Filipinos or families to urban areas within the country or to migrate overseas to find a living, depriving children of a basic family support and exposing them to threats of sexual abuse during prolonged absences of mothers.

The government have enacted many laws to protect Filipino children from various forms of abuse, exploitation and violence. The Council for the Welfare of Children (CWC) is government's policy coordinating body on matters related to children. The Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) is responsible for providing protective custody to victims. Philippine National Police (PNP), Department of Justice (DOJ) and Department of Education are entrusted with rescue and response and together help build a protective and caring environment for the children. The Local Council for the Protection of Children (LCPCs) at provincial, municipal, city and barangay (village) levels coordinate and monitor CRC implementation at the local level. A number of hotlines where one can report child abuse, exploitation and violence have been set up such as *Bantay Bata 163* ("Child Watch 163") and 24-hour *crisis intervention units* in all DSWD Field Offices have served as mechanisms for detecting, monitoring and rescuing children who are abused and neglected.

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<sup>8</sup> Plan Philippines Country Strategic Plan 2010 – 2014.

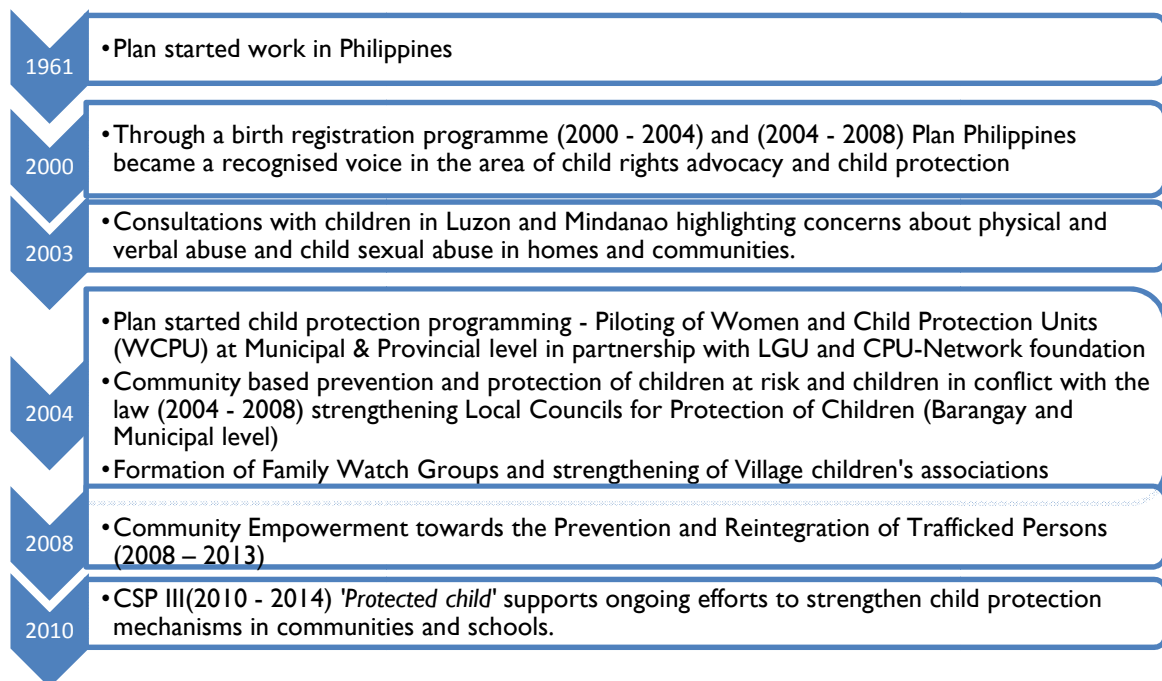
<sup>9</sup> Education Network, 2008 reported in Plan Philippines Country Strategic Plan 2010 – 2014.

<sup>10</sup> Children in Need of Special Protection (CNSP) 2007-08 described in Plan Philippines Country Strategic Plan 2010 – 2014.

<sup>11</sup> Plan Philippines Country Strategic Plan 2010 – 2014.

**✚ Brief overview of Plan’s strategic child protection work and the scope of CBCPM work:**

Plan has been working in the Philippines for over 50 years since 1961. In its third Country Strategic Plan (2010 – 2014) the main goal of Plan Philippines is for every child within our sphere of influence to enjoy his or her right to education. It is believed that education will enable children to break the cycle of poverty that has entrapped them and their families. However, to achieve this overarching goal, a focus on child protection is one of four important pre-requisites: 1) all children complete quality basic education (*learned child*); 2) all children are healthy and well-nourished to be able to attend and learn in school (*healthy child*); 3) **all children are protected from abuse, exploitation, violence, and harm from disasters** that interfere with their right to education (*protected child*); and, 4) all children, based on their evolving capacities, participate in advancing their education and other rights (*child/ youth engagement*).



**Figure 1: Brief history of CBCPM work in Philippines**

Plan has run child protection programmes including a focus on community based child protection in the Philippines since 2004.

**Consultations with children influence Plan’s decision to strengthen community based child protection mechanisms:** In 2003 Plan organised consultations with children in Luzon and Mindanao islands to listen to their concerns. One of the major concerns raised by girls and boys was the violence they experience and/ or witness in their homes and communities. Children shared concerns regarding physical and verbal abuse, as well as child sexual abuse. Concerns raised by children were backed-up by available data from Government and civil society data sources. For example, a survey conducted by Department of Health in 2000 found that 86% of the 2,704 adolescent respondents had faced psychological, physical and/or sexual abuse, violence or neglect at least once in their lifetime<sup>12</sup>. Furthermore, data from the Philippine National Police (PNP) revealed that the total reported offenses committed against children increased from 6,235 in 1999 to 8,222 in 2002<sup>13</sup>. Thus from 2004 onwards Plan established a child protection programme to strengthen Government mandated structures in the community and Plan staff capacity to better identify and respond to child protection cases.

<sup>12</sup> CSP 2 –Country Program Code 18: Protecting Children At Risk (Child Protect)

<sup>13</sup> Ibid

From 2004 in partnership with the Local Government Units and an NGO partner the CPU-Network Foundation, community-based quick response and referral mechanism managed by **Women and Child Protection Units (WCPUs)** were implemented in Four (4) provinces in Borongan, Eastern Samar; in Masbate, Masbate; in Catbalogan, Western Samar; and in Ilagan, Isabela; while two municipal level WCPUs were set up in Catarman, Northern Samar; and Bani, Pangasinan (and then replicated in other areas). 14 WCPUs have been established.



A four year project (2004 – 2008) concerning “Community-based Prevention and Protection Program for Children at Risk and Children in Conflict with the Law” was also run in three Program Units (Masbate, Western Samar, Southern Leyte) and two Non-Plan areas, Tacloban City and Cebu City to build the capacity of existing regional, provincial, and municipal Councils for the Protection of Children. From 2006 – 2008 increased efforts were made by Plan to strengthen the organisation and functioning of the locally mandated structure the **Barangay Council for the Protection of Children (BCPC)** to prevent and respond to child abuse. A learning from Plan’s Country Strategic Plan II that informed the CSP III (2010 – 2014) was that the ‘women and child protection units (WCPUs) prove to be good response mechanisms and can be enhanced by

*establishing them at the municipal level to make the services accessible to villages. The local councils for the protection of children (BCPC) should also be made functional as BCPCs can improve both referral of cases to the WCPU and monitoring of cases filed in courts’<sup>14</sup>.*

**Family Watch Groups** (Bantay Banay/ Bantay Panimalay) focusing on domestic violence and gender based violence have also been supported by Plan since 2006 with training provided to community volunteers by NGO partners Lihok Filipina in Camotes PU as pilot area then it has expanded in other PUs only in 2009-2012 as part of new CSP. Furthermore, **Violence Against Women and Children (VAWC) desks** at the Barangay level have been were also established in 25 villages in East, West and North Samar and Camotes<sup>15</sup>. Other community based organisations including community surveillance committees, **MOVE (Men Oppose to Violence Everywhere)** and support to **ERPAT (Enhancing and Reaffirming Paternal Abilities)**, a special parenting module for fathers) are also supported by Plan in some locations (see Annex 2). Furthermore, at the higher *municipality* and *provincial* levels the respective Councils for Protection of Children (MCPC, PCPC); as well as the Inter-Agency Council Against Trafficking (MIACAT and PIACAT) have been strengthened by Plan.

Plan’s National Programme Unit (NPU) is supporting a project on anti-trafficking in persons (ATIP) – the *Community Empowerment towards the Prevention and Reintegration of Trafficked Persons (CEPRTP) Project* which aims to improve and institutionalize mechanisms for an effective response to trafficking of children and women. This project is underway (2008 – 2013) in six provinces (Eastern Samar, Northern Samar, Western Samar, Southern Leyte, Masbate, Mindoro Occidental, and one island (Camotes Island in Cebu). The project includes efforts to raise awareness among children and adults on child trafficking, child protection, gender and anti-trafficking of persons in 150 barangays; to create functional structures (taskforces) supporting the prevention, rescue, recovery and after-care services of trafficked children and women in 150 Barangays; to establish 4 crisis centres; two help

<sup>14</sup> Plan Philippines Country Strategic Plan 2010 – 2014.

<sup>15</sup> Though work in Camotes has now been phased out.

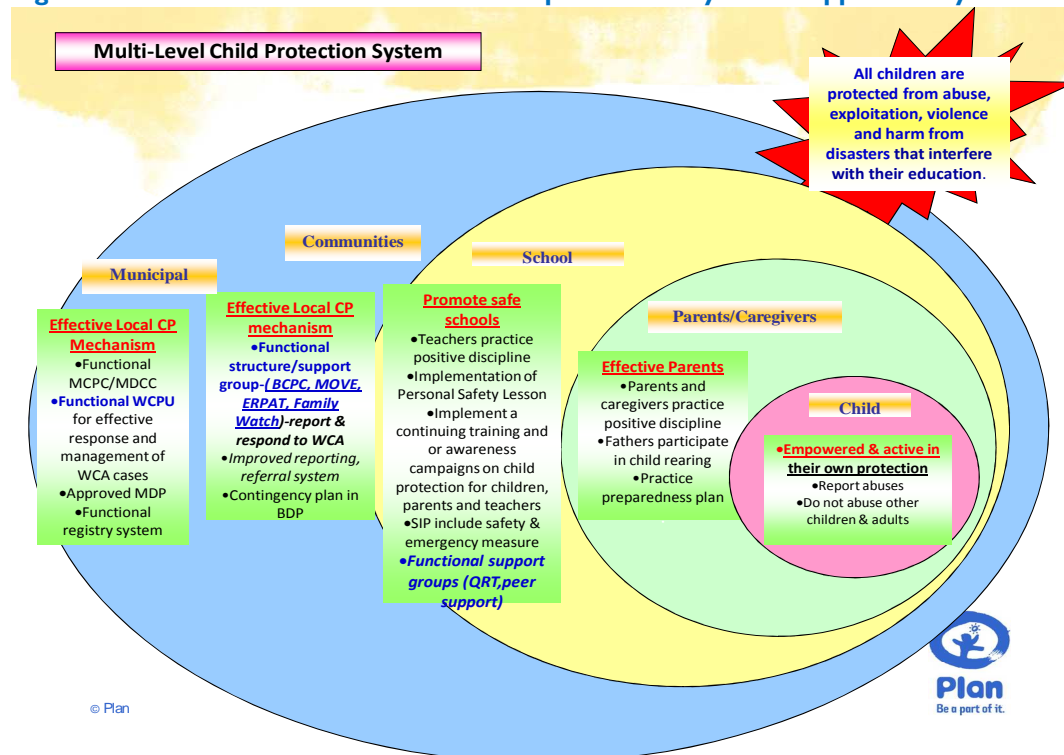
desks (in partnership with the police and the local social welfare and department office); and supports 15 municipalities to enact and enforce ordinances to combat children and women trafficking based on the Republic Act 9208<sup>16</sup>.

In the CSP III (2010 – 2014) the *Protected Child (Batang Ligas)* programme has 3 main programme strategies to contribute to its goal<sup>17</sup>:

- 1) Institutional strengthening of local governments, child protection agencies and schools to strengthen local child protection mechanisms and structures including prevention, reporting, referral, coordination, response and monitoring.
- 2) Building capacity of children, parents and communities on child protection risks, mobilization of government resources and monitoring to improve implementation and allocation of resources for child protection mechanisms.
- 3) Strengthening civil society and national networks, and children’s organizations, concerned with child protection, to conduct research, raise public awareness and advocate for policy and practice reform to strengthen the national child protection system.

**School based mechanisms** to prevent and protect children from abuse, exploitation, violence, and harm from disasters include: organising a school based support team who receive training in handling disclosure and response to abuse (including child sexual abuse); linking the school based support team for referrals to the BCPC and/or the WCPU for case management. In addition, teachers are trained in positive discipline and children are engaged in personal safety lessons which enhance their self protection. Collaboration between the schools, the Local Government Unit and the National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council are also supporting the introduction of disaster management in the local curricula.

**Figure 2: Overview of multi-level child protection system supported by Plan Philippines<sup>18</sup>:**



<sup>16</sup> Maria Juanita R. Macapagal (October 2011) Community Empowerment towards the Prevention and Reintegration of Trafficked Persons (CEPRTP). Mid Evaluation Report submitted to Plan Philippines.

<sup>17</sup> all children are protected from abuse, exploitation, violence, and harm from disasters

<sup>18</sup> See Annex 2 for more details on the types, locations and numbers of CBCPMs supported by Plan in the Philippines

### **Structural aspects of CBCPMs:**

Through Programme Units in Occidental Mindoro, North Samar, East Samar, West Samar, Southern Leyte, and Masbate, Plan is currently working to strengthen **local Councils for Protection of Children**, at the Barangay level in 387 rural communities; as well as the higher level the Municipal and Provincial level Councils for the Protection of Children. Implementation of CBCPM is lodged under these structures which are mandated by law and thus are part of a formal child protection system. The Republic Act 4881 (1967) created the Council for Protection of Children in every city or municipality. Furthermore, article 87 of the Presidential Decree 603 the 'Child and Youth Welfare Code' (1974) encouraged every Barangay Council to organise a local Council for the Protection of Children (LCPC/ BCPC), which should coordinate with the Council for the Welfare of Children (CWC) and youth in drawing and implementing plans for the promotion of child and youth welfare.

Membership for the **Barangay Council for the Protection of Children** is taken from responsible members of the community including government, NGO, private agency and youth representatives who are concerned with the welfare of children and youth. Most BCPCs have 11 – 15 members. The chair of the BCPC should be the Barangay Captain who should also appoint the vice chair. The secretary could be appointed by the captain or elected by the members. Members should include: youth organisations, day care workers, barangay health worker, barangay nutrition scholar, public school teacher, the chief of the barangay police, NGO representatives, child/ youth representative, a PTA president, church based children serving group representatives and members of other relevant organisations. These members are usually selected to serve a fixed 3 year service, after which the composition of the council changes.

Plan has also supported children to form **village level children's associations** and members of these children's associations are also involved in the BCPCs in some areas. 149 children's groups are supported across the 6 PUs. The children's associations vary in their structure and membership, while many of the village level children's associations involve 9 – 30 members, some associations involve more than 200 members.

The **Family Watch Groups** involving community volunteers are more informal than the BCPCs. A community-based Bantay Panimalay Organization requires at least fifteen (15) members and a maximum of 30. who are identified and trained based on their community status/ respect as leaders and their willingness to be child protection advocates. Members usually include village officials, mothers, fathers, farmers/ fishermen, and community service providers.

Plan is trying to strengthen the MCPC in 33 municipalities in all the 6 PUs. The **Municipal Council for the Protection of Children** (MCPC) includes the Municipal Mayor as Chairperson, two elected members of the Municipal Council, the Municipal Health Officer, the Municipal Supervising Teacher, the Chief of Police, the Municipal Social Welfare and Development Officer (MSWDO), and representatives of the PTA Organization and other relevant organisations.

While there is limited documentation regarding the s/election processes of females and males in the BCPCs, MCPCs, and the children's associations, Plan's (2011) progress report mentions gender-transformative interventions which have led to increased participation of fathers in child rearing; and to increased women and girl leadership in village councils, children's associations and community-based organizations<sup>19</sup>. However, in line with its rights based approach increased efforts are needed to reach and meaningfully involve some of the most marginalised members of the community in the community based child protection mechanisms and in the children's associations, including people/ children with disabilities.

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<sup>19</sup> Plan Philippines (August 2011) Country Programme Progress Report.

The **WCPU** (Women Child Protection Unit) is a one-stop-shop facility that offers services on investigation, medical examination and psycho-social care for children and women who may have suffered physical and sexual abuse. These WCPUs have a trained multi-disciplinary team including social workers, doctors and a police woman. Part of its services is to provide support to victims in pursuit of case litigation. The PU staff worked in close coordination with local social welfare offices and with the National Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) to support child protection case management and protective custody.

#### **Functional aspects of CBCPMs:**

In the six regular programme units<sup>20</sup> and in the National Programme Unit Plan focuses their interventions on helping fulfil the rights of the poorest and most marginalized children in these areas<sup>21</sup>. The Local Council for the Protection of Children (LCPC) at the Barangay and Municipal levels implements the Community Based Child Protection Mechanisms in partnership with support from the PUs.

The duties of **Barangay Council for the Protection of Children** were outlined in the Child and Youth Welfare Code (1974). They were to:

- (1) Foster the education of every child in the barangay;
- (2) Encourage the proper performance of the duties of parents, and provide learning opportunities on the adequate rearing of children and on positive parent-child relationship;
- (3) Protect and assist abandoned or maltreated children and dependents;
- (4) Take steps to prevent juvenile delinquency and assist parents of children with behavioural problems so that they can get expert advice;
- (5) Adopt measures for the health of children;
- (6) Promote the opening and maintenance of playgrounds and day-care centres and other services that are necessary for child and youth welfare;
- (7) Coordinate the activities of organizations devoted to the welfare of children and secure their cooperation;
- (8) Promote wholesome entertainment in the community, especially in movie houses; and
- (9) Assist parents, whenever necessary in securing expert guidance counselling from the proper governmental or private welfare agency.

In relation to more recent guidance the activities of LCPCs also encompass<sup>22</sup>:

- Updating a data base on children
- Preparing an annual work plan and financial plan
- Advocacy on the promotion of the rights of children
- Conducting capacity building on child rights and child protection
- Formulation of a Local Development Plan for Children, a Local Investment Plan for Children, and a Local Code for Children and Local State of Children
- Assistance to children in need of special protection (CNSP)
- Monitoring of the enforcement of national and local laws
- Monitoring and assessment of the PPAs on children; health and nutrition programs
- Services and programs for children with special needs, interests or concerns

In accordance with its child centred community development approach Plan's community organizing strategy provides for the point of entry in working with the communities which include partnership with BCPCs. The process starts with the undertaking a situational analysis of children's issues in partnership with the village officials. Gathering of issues involve the community officials, volunteers

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<sup>20</sup> West Mindoro, North Samar, East Samar, West Samar, Southern Leyte, and Masbate

<sup>21</sup> reaching out to children in hard to reach clusters of families, children of indigenous people communities, children from the poorest families, children with disabilities and children in difficult circumstances

<sup>22</sup> See Merlyne, M. Pagnolgui (2011) Understanding the Non-Organisation and Non-Functioning of the Local Council for the Protection of Children in the Philippines. Centre for Strategic Planning and Policy Studies.



and children. Results are shared and presented and the role of Plan is to facilitate the process of identifying, consensus building and agreements. Plan's Community Development Facilitators spearhead the process, and action is organised after consensus on the concerns that need to be addressed.

Depending on the issues identified community volunteers may be trained and supported to organise themselves in **Family Watch Groups** to support prevention and response to domestic violence.

The objectives of the Family Watch groups are:

- To enable men and women to develop the capability to respond to their own problem and in the process develop their own strength as a person;
- To prevent and minimize the incidence of domestic violence, sexual abuse and other forms of abuse against women and children
- To promote multi-sectoral and community approach to domestic violence and other forms of abuse to women and children

At least 29 Family watch groups are currently present in 5 PUs (Masbate for Luzon, East Samar, West Samar, North Samar and Southern Leyte). The PU in Mindoro has yet to start with the identification and organization<sup>23</sup>. Plan also supports parenting education through the Government initiative Parent Effective Service (PES) and ERPAT (enhancing and reaffirming parental abilities).

**BCPCs functions are strengthened by Plan** through re-orientation on their roles and responsibilities and provision of training on child rights and child protection issues. Plan is supporting BCPC functioning to: organise regular meetings (at least one meeting every 3 months as per the government regulations); to be more effective in monitoring and responding to child protection cases; and to support family reintegration of victims of abuse and trafficking<sup>24</sup>. Plan also raise awareness of local leaders and community members including children on child rights, child protection, and the responsibilities of the BCPCs to try to encourage increased reporting and response on child protection concerns. Linkages between the BCPC and other community based organisations – children's associations, Family Watch Groups, MOVE; and referral mechanisms with the Women and Child Protection Units (WCPUs), the Municipal Councils for Protection of Children (MCPCs) and/or other NGOs are also strengthened. BCPCs are also encouraged and assisted by Plan to draft ordinances which increase child protection and disaster risk management, and to strengthen the child protection reporting, response and referral system.

**Encouraging Barangays to pass ordinances on child protection:**<sup>25</sup> In Barangays where Plan are working the number of municipal and village ordinances enacted on child trafficking and disaster risk reduction (DRR) has increased. For example, in Visayas, 101 local ordinances were passed in 2011, an increase of 85% from 2010. The majority of these ordinances are related to child protection and anti-trafficking.

Plan also strengthens the functionality of the **Municipal Councils for the Protection of Children** which have an important role to play in establishing and strengthening reporting and referral systems and service facilities. The MCPC need to support reporting and referrals from the help desks and hotlines to the WCPU (or to other agencies) for a professional multi-disciplinary response to child abuse and neglect. The MCPC and the Municipal Social Welfare and Development Officers (MSWDO) need to support the training of multi-disciplinary teams (social workers, doctors, police women) to ensure that they can sensitively handle and respond to child abuse and neglect. At the provincial and regional level Plan also advocates for and supports strengthening of the six Provincial Council for Protection of Children (PCPC) and its links with WCPU, police helpdesks,

<sup>23</sup> Camotes PU was one of the areas who pioneered the implementation of the family watch group but work in this PU was phased out in 2011.

<sup>24</sup> When functioning well the BCPCs have a focus on prevention, monitoring, response, reintegration and rehabilitation.

<sup>25</sup> Plan Philippines (August 2011) Country Programme Progress Report.

hotlines, judiciary, and lawyers to respond to child protection cases, including prosecution of perpetrators. Provincial level networking can also support referrals to NGOs for after-care services for survivors.

**Process of identifying and responding to child protection cases:** Identification and reporting on child protection cases (including physical abuse, child sexual abuse, exploitative child labour, children in conflict with the law and child trafficking) are increasing as a result of the sensitisation and awareness raising on child rights and child protection supported by Plan among children and adults in communities<sup>26</sup>; and among teachers and students in schools. Children may share concerns within their children's associations; community members (including members of the Family Watch Groups) may witness neglect or abuse; and teachers may observe or be told about abuse. Significant concerns are increasingly reported to the village head/ Barangay Captain. Reports may also be made to other Family Watch Group members, to a concerned teacher, to a Plan staff member or other BCPC member. Once a concern has been reported teachers and BCPC members have legal duties to respond and if needed may make referrals to the MCPC or WCPU for medical, psychosocial and/or legal interventions. See [Annex 4](#) illustration of the community based child protection reporting and referral flow diagram showing the linkages between different child protection structures in terms of reporting, referral and/or response to concerns of child abuse, neglect, violence or exploitation.

The importance of parenting education and prevention efforts to **prevent** children coming into conflict with the law or requiring special protection has been emphasised and encouraged by BCPC members.

**BCPCs encourage parenting education and prevention efforts<sup>27</sup>:** In identifying and responding to cases concerning children in conflict with the law BCPC members have identified that such children should not be labelled as perpetrators, but rather should be understood as victims of inadequate parenting. Being recast as victims has helped decriminalize their behaviour; and the response is reframed as children are identified as vulnerable and in need of guidance and special intervention. BCPC members have emphasised parental responsibility in supporting prevention efforts. Furthermore, Plan's community based protection work has shown them that given proper guidance and care, these children can take a new course. As the community became witnesses to real and actual stories of life change among children in conflict with the law who were transformed from being gang members into leaders and child advocates, and some of them have come back to school. It supported the logic of restorative justice.

Furthermore, as part of prevention efforts awareness raising on the cycle, causes and impact of violence on children are discussed among children and adults in the community, and children and adults are encouraged to report their concerns.

**Examples of increased reporting and response through CBCPM work<sup>28</sup> and school based protection work:** Through awareness raising on the cycle, causes, and impact of violence among Family Watch Group members in Visayas 106 cases of violence against women or children were reported. There are also increasing cases being referred to the WCPUs over time. By August 2011 the number of cases served by the WCPUs increased from 101 children (25 boys, 76 girls) and 19 women in 2010 to 330 children (129 boys, 201 girls) and 322 women in 2011.

Plan also supports training on Personal Safety Lessons (PSL) in 63 schools in Southern Leyte, Camotes, East and West Samar and Masbate PUs. These schools are now actively promoting PSL.

<sup>26</sup> however, as will be described later some child protection concerns are still not reported due to sensitivity and stigma associated with child sexual abuse and other protection concerns.

<sup>27</sup> Plan Philippines (2009) Community based prevention and protection program for children at risk and children in conflict with the law. Final Report.

<sup>28</sup> Plan Philippines (August 2011) Country Programme Progress Report.

Eighteen (18) teachers were trained as PSL Trainers. The Schools Division Superintendent of Masbate appointed a PSL coordinator. These efforts resulted in 23 child abuse disclosures (17 sexual abuses, 6 physical abuses) in Visayas, which were referred to proper authorities.

Family Watch Group members are identifying, preventing and responding to child abuse (physical abuse, scolding, neglect and child sexual abuse) faced by children and women within their families. Members raise awareness among community members to prevent domestic violence, they directly intervene to discuss with family members when concerns are identified, and/or they make referrals to BCPC and/or WCPU. However, during an evaluation of community based prevention and protection programmes in 2009 it was revealed that BCPC members can be considered to be 'meddling' if they try to address abuse within a family. Due to this negative cultural connotation, some BCPC members said that they are not aggressive in uncovering existing abuse in the homes. Another cultural concern is the issue of confidentiality. Abuse victims would not sometimes go to BCPC because there were situations when sensitive information would leak to the whole community<sup>29</sup>. The importance of confidentiality is crucial when undertaking child protection case work.

#### **Children's participation and involvement in CBCPMs:**

Information on child protection is shared with children in villages and in schools. Children's village level associations are supported at community level to educate children on protection risks, self-protection, and advocacy. Over 150 Barangay children's associations are being supported by Plan which enable children are able to play a more effective role in prevention, monitoring and response to child protection concerns in their communities. Through their associations child leaders are trying to reach out to more children to raise awareness and action on child rights by holding activities ('youth participate' sessions or "Sali-Kabataan") in the more remote sub-villages of their respective villages. Some children's associations are also able to monitor and contribute to local government efforts to strengthen child protection mechanisms. However, challenges remain in institutionalising children's representation in the BCPCs. Most BCPCs continue to have adult led decision making processes, and traditional socio-cultural attitudes towards children result in a lack of recognition and appreciation by adults on children's capacity to be involved in development process.

Plan are supporting efforts to transform such traditional attitudes so that parents, teachers, community elders and government officials recognise children's potential and engage with girls and boys (including the most marginalised) as social actors. In most of BCPCs where Plan are working, children's representatives are sometimes involved in the BCPC. When genuine space for children's representation in the BCPCs is made children's perspectives on the protection concerns most affecting them, and their proposed solutions can be heard. Across PUs, there are some good examples of the Barangay Councils passing resolutions to allocate increased funds to support children's activities, and to recognise and certify children's associations.

**Children's organisation PAYCO influence Barangay Council practices<sup>30</sup>:** Children have been able to influence the Barangay council to support and adopt their projects through sending of letter to the Barangay council and attending their meetings. Projects initially implemented by the children's group such as tree planting and coastal clean ups have been sustained by the Barangay Council in Masbate.

Some children have opportunities to participate in media and arts initiatives to raise awareness and action on child protection at community and higher levels. In a mid-term evaluation of a community based project to prevent and respond to trafficking, which included strengthening community based protection structures, the use of IEC materials (including murals, posters, stickers, comics,

<sup>29</sup> Dela Cruz, L. B. & Escalante, B. A. (2009) Empowering communities towards child protection : Final Evaluation 2006- 2008. Plan Philippines.

<sup>30</sup> Shared by PAYCO children's members during 'H' assessment for the CBCPM regional study, April 2012

infomercials, pins, audio visual presentations and documentaries, theatre plays,) in the information drive were assessed by children and the community as useful and effective especially those where local children participate<sup>31</sup>. In addition, peer education on gender based violence is supported through the schools in some project areas. In Masbate, student governments have formulated policies against proliferation of sex videos and use of obscene words.

**Children's advocacy on child protection through the media**<sup>32</sup>: 125 members of Young Hearts (the youth in media group in Plan Philippines) produced public service announcements, MTVs, and video documentaries as entries to the first Children's Media Festival in the Visayas. Some of the best video entries of the festival eventually found their way in local and national media networks and 25 children were recognized by the Philippine Information Agency as media correspondents in Region 8 (Eastern Visayas). Some of the videos produced by children from across PUs are also being shown now in provincial and buses and ships. In Masbate, children took part in their "television-series on protection" or the showing of videos on abuse and trafficking. Anti-trafficking radio infomercials produced by children are now aired regularly in local radio stations, and even in provincial buses and ships.

Increased efforts are needed to reach and engage the most marginalised children in children's associations (children with disabilities, indigenous children, out of school working children, child domestic workers etc). As part of such efforts Provincial level Children's Forums and focused group discussions (FGD) have been organised to raise awareness on persons with disabilities and their rights. In addition children representing the indigenous communities were given space in the annual programme participatory review (APPR) in Mindoro PU.

#### **Capacity and support systems:**

Plan's main approach to child protection is guided by the child centred community development (CCCD) approach where children are placed at the centre of the program. Plan contributes to building capacity of children, parents, community members and government officials on child rights and child protection. Children and parents are empowered to assert their rights, and parents, teachers, community elders and government officials are supported to gain the knowledge, skills and attitudes needed to fulfil their rights to better protect children. Government duty bearers at barangay, municipality, provincial and national levels are encouraged to mobilise and use government resources to better protect children, and to improve implementation of child protection mechanisms to effectively prevent and respond to all forms of child abuse, neglect, violence, exploitation and harm.

Key areas of capacity building supported by Plan that contribute to stronger community based child protection mechanisms in the Philippines include<sup>33</sup>:

- Support to children's groups including training on child rights, child protection, organisational development, media, and advocacy.
- Supporting the DSWD district level to provide parenting education services for caregivers that promote non-violent behaviour and positive disciplining methods.
- Building child protection capacity of CBOs, including Family Watch Groups, MOVE to raise awareness and action to monitor, prevent and respond to different forms of abuse and violence against children and women; and to contribute to efforts to strengthen child protection mechanisms mandated by the local government.
- Training of teachers and members of school based support team: on child rights, child protection, positive discipline, sensitive handling of disclosure of abuse.

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<sup>31</sup> Macapagal, M. J. (October 2011) Community Empowerment towards the Prevention and Reintegration of Trafficked Persons (CEPRTP) March 2008 – December 2013. Mid Evaluation Report, October 2011. Plan Philippines.

<sup>32</sup> Plan Philippines (August 2011) Country Programme Progress Report.

<sup>33</sup> See Annex 3 for an overview of training provided as part of CBCPM efforts

- Re-orientation and training on BCPC members on their roles and responsibilities, child rights, child protection, national laws and policies, child protection reporting, referrals and response. Mentoring and practical support to strengthen linkages and partnerships between the local Councils for the Protection of Children and other relevant civil society groups and structures at different levels to increase the effectiveness of child protection prevention and response.
- Capacity building of multi-disciplinary teams (Social Workers, Police Officer and Medical Officers) for the Women and Child Protection Unit on child rights, child protection, national laws, child friendly procedures and proper handling of child abuse cases, counselling and group work for sexually abused children.

**Example of training for BCPC and MCPC members in Western Samar<sup>34</sup>:** In 2011 in Western Samar, 761 (344 Male, 417 Female) members of the village-level Council for the Protection of Children (CPC) and 30 members from the municipal level CPC were given re-orientation on their roles as council members. In Masbate, 39 village-level child protection councils underwent an assessment. Three LGUs reorganized their municipal-level child protection councils, reviewed the Local Code for Children, and allocated 1% of their funds (Internal Revenue Allotment) to support their council's activities.

**Example of capacity building for children and children's association:** Children are provided training on child rights, child protection, and media (video production, photography, theatre, arts and mural making). Furthermore, in 2011 one hundred and thirty seven (137) existing village-level children's associations underwent organizational capacity assessment and 104 went through a series of trainings on leadership, organizational development, and resource mobilization. The process resulted in the reactivation of 67 of these associations. Furthermore, in Western Samar, 135 children (48 Male, 87 Female) from 13 children's associations were oriented on disaster risk reduction and management (DRRM) and climate change adaptation (CCA).

**CPU-Network Foundation** has supported capacity building of the WCPU multi-disciplinary staff teams. CPU-Net is a body of child protection practitioners and child protection units in Philippines that is committed to the highest clinical standards of care for abused children, contributing effectively to a comprehensive national child protection infrastructure that will close the gaps between medical, psycho-social, investigative and legal services. As mentioned above NGO partners Lihok Filipina and Runggiyan have also supported the formation and strengthening of the Family Watch Groups.

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

As already described the local Councils for Protection of Children are mandated structures at the Barangay, Municipality and Provincial level to be established by the local government unit, and should coordinate with the Council for the Welfare of Children (CWC) at the national level, thus contributing to a formal child protections system. If child protection concerns cannot be prevented or solved at the Barangay level, the BCPC should make referrals to the Municipal Council for Protection of Children or to the Women and Child Protection Units which are also supported by the Local Government Unit.

At the community level Plan is supporting partnerships and linkages between the BCPC and Barangay Children's Associations, Youth Councils (Sangguniang Kabataan), Family Watch Groups, Para legal volunteer groups, Parenting Effectiveness Service Session (PES) volunteers, school based support team, men's organisations (MOVE), farmers associations and other religious groups, such as

<sup>34</sup> Macapagal, M. J. (October 2011) Community Empowerment towards the Prevention and Reintegration of Trafficked Persons (CEP RTP) March 2008 – December 2013. Mid Evaluation Report, October 2011. Plan Philippines.

the Church to provide appropriate, timely and adequate support to children in need of special protection and to their families.

**The role of fathers and men in CBCPM:**<sup>35</sup> In appreciating the significant role of parents to their children, sessions on Parent Effectiveness (PES) and ERPAT covering topics on child abuse prevention and child protection have been supported by Plan in the Barangays. Through *'the Proud ERPATs experience'* in Llorente, Borongan, Eastern Samar Plan has supported an organization among fathers at the municipal level wherein a core of 26 men were initially trained as trainers and then dispatched to organise training among men in different barangays in the locality. There was a positive response on the part of fathers in the different barangays when moving from house to house inviting fathers to participate in trainings at the barangay level. Fathers who received the orientation and training sessions have demonstrated behavioural changes towards their children and family members. Furthermore, in 12 villages in Northern Samar men's organisations have been organised named 'MOVE' (Men Opposed to Violence Against Women Everywhere). MOVE have lobbied for membership on the task force that was activating the Barangay Council for the Protection of Children.

The Church has also played a role in community based child protection and anti-trafficking work is underway. For example, in Masbate and Western Samar the Church has been handling the victims' support fund; while the Diocese of Ilagan played a prominent role in supporting the set up of the WCPU partnership in the province of Isabela.

Linkages and referral systems (see [Annex 4](#)) with the MCPC, PCPC, WCPU, helplines, hotlines, and other NGOs who may support report, referral and response services for children who have faced abuse, violence, exploitation (including trafficking) are also being strengthened. The WCPU is able to make and manage necessary referrals (e.g. for protective custody, shelter, psychosocial support, after care services education, livelihood assistance, skills training and legal support) through the Local Government Unit and NGOs. Linkages with NGOs (local, national and international) and with UNICEF are also harnessed by Plan to support programming and advocacy efforts to strengthen the child protection system.

At the national level Plan has served as convener of the NGO Coalition and the Child Rights Network (CRN) in Philippines. The organization is also a member of the Child Injury Prevention Technical Working Group organized by the Department of Health that developed safety checklist for home, school and community settings, Sub-committee - Child Protection Working Group of the Council for the Welfare of Children, the core group of the National Network to End Violence Against Children (NNEVAC), and the Juvenile Justice Network. Plan is also the current NGO representative to the Juvenile Justice Welfare Council (JJWC) which oversees the implementation of the Juvenile Justice Welfare Act. Plan's active participation in such groups supports inter-agency efforts to strengthen the national child protection system. For example, World Vision invited Plan Philippines to share their experiences on supporting community based child protection initiatives during an Asia-Pacific workshop on child protection systems.

Strong partnerships with the media have also intensified information drive on issue of child protection and rights violations among community members and local officials through print and radio. As mentioned above, video and radio advocacy materials on corporal punishment produced by children have also been used to promote child rights in the communities.

In terms of inter-sector collaborations, in line with Plan Philippines' strategic focus on education, there are links between the child protection and education programme. A baseline study by Plan Philippines revealed protection-related concerns on why children are out of school: needed to work

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<sup>35</sup> Dela Cruz, L. B. & Escalante, B. A. (2009) Empowering communities towards child protection : Final Evaluation 2006- 2008. Plan Philippines.

to earn money, looked after siblings, helped in farming and fishing, scared to go to school, has disability, and displaced due to disasters. Thus, the child protection programme is also seen to contribute to prevention and response efforts to support children's access to safe education. Baseline information prompted partner communities and Plan to support interventions addressing child labour, child abuse, child disability, and other protection issues. Violence in school is also being identified and addressed through teacher training on corporal punishment and the establishment of the school based support team. Furthermore, a new project on anti-corporal punishment further complements Plan's "Learn without Fear" campaign. Eight community-based advocacy and monitoring groups (CBAMGs) have been organized, 50 national advocates and champions have been identified and a research about the long-term psychosocial effects of corporal punishment is underway. Awareness raising on birth registration is also organized with community members and local government officials to support the birth registration campaign<sup>36</sup>.

There are also links between the child protection, education and disaster risk reduction to enhance children and adults preparedness for disasters in communities and schools. Disaster risk reduction and climate change reduction is being mainstreamed across Plan programs, including the child protection program by Plan Philippines. Twelve Municipal Disaster Risk Reduction and Management (DRRM) offices were established in Rizal, Camotes, and Eastern Samar in 2011. This complies with the new law on DRR, which strengthens LGU initiatives on disaster prevention. Plan also influenced the local government officials in 10 municipalities in three programme units to allocate at least 5% of their funds (internal revenue allotment) for DRRM activities; and supported the reorganisation of DRRM Councils in these 10 municipalities, seven of which are now fully functional. Moreover, DRM-related activities have been integrated into the local development plans of six municipalities<sup>37</sup>.

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

The Monitoring and Evaluation Results (MER) Framework guides the country as to how progress will be examined against goals and objectives and to explain the underlying causes affecting program results. Project monitoring is undertaken on a regular basis through project visits, consultations with communities and partners, staff meetings. Furthermore, children and community adults are involved in annual participatory program reviews that enable identification of progress, constraints and lessons learned. Furthermore, independent evaluations have been conducted for some of the community based projects concerning anti-trafficking<sup>38</sup> and children at risk or in conflict with the law<sup>39</sup>.

Baseline information has been gathered on child rights and protection in PUs. Every village where Plan works has a set of the baseline data for key children well-being and practice indicators that Plan staff and partners can use to influence decision-makers to support projects for children at community, municipal, and provincial levels. However, gaps remain in identifying and using indicators to regularly collect quantitative and qualitative data regarding the development of community based child protection mechanisms in the Philippines and outcomes for children. Currently there is a lack of centralised data collection across the PUs that enable comparative analysis of the status of progress regarding the functionality of BCPCs being supported by Plan. Data is also lacking regarding the number of child protection cases that are being referred to and responded to by the BCPCs, and the outcomes for children. The Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG) is mandated to oversee the organization and functionality of the LCPC. In 2008 DILG developed revised guidelines in monitoring the functionality of the LCPC at all levels. Functional LCPCs are

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<sup>36</sup> which resulted in the registration of 3,541 children in four PUs during 2011.

<sup>37</sup> Plan Philippines (August 2011) Country Programme Progress Report – promoting child rights to end child poverty.

<sup>38</sup> Macapagal, M. J. (October 2011) Community Empowerment towards the Prevention and Reintegration of Trafficked Persons (CEPRTP) March 2008 – December 2013. Mid Evaluation Report, October 2011. Plan Philippines.

<sup>39</sup> Dela Cruz, L. B. & Escalante, B. A. (2009) Empowering communities towards child protection : Final Evaluation 2006- 2008. Plan Philippines.

those that meet regularly and have minutes of meetings, have an action plan and approved budget for children, and submit annual reports on children. It would be useful for Plan to see how they may incorporate use of these guidelines in their own M&E processes.

#### Sustainability and scale up of CBCPMs:

Plan's CCCD approach emphasizes participatory processes, capability-building, empowerment and partnering with civil society groups and the government; and therefore, promotes sustainability. In terms of sustainability and scale up Plan's efforts to support increased functionality of local Councils for the Protection of Children especially at Barangay and Municipality levels are strategic as such structures are already mandated by the Government. In general, the LCPC is crucial in sustaining the national efforts in the localization of the Philippine National Strategic Framework for Plan Development for Children or Child 21, which is a roadmap for planning programs and interventions meant to promote and safeguard the rights of Filipino children<sup>40</sup>. Moreover, the LCPC plays a key role in the protection of children, particularly in implementing community based child protection mechanisms and in coordinating with and assisting the LGUs in the formulation of a the comprehensive plan on juvenile delinquency prevention in supporting proper implementation of the Juvenile Justice and Welfare Act of 2006. Likewise, they play vital role in implementing National Action Plans pursuant to enacted laws such as the National Strategic Action Plans Against Trafficking in Persons, Violence Against Women and their Children and National Strategic Framework to End Violence Against Children.

The government has 1% appropriation for activities related to child protection based on income revenue of the municipality. Thus, mechanisms are in place to secure some funds for use by the BCPC. Furthermore, based on their action plans LCPCs can apply for funds from the Local Government Units (LGUs). However, in reality there are significant weaknesses in Government efforts to establish functioning BCPCs and to mobilise and make effective use of the 1% income revenue funds towards child protection. Many BCPCs continue to have none or very limited access to funds. Thus, ongoing efforts are needed to support LCPCs in formulating and recommended plans and policies concerning child protection (and other child rights) for submission to LGUs. LGUs should provide funding for programs/projects/ activities (PPAs) on children and should ensure that these are implemented. In this sense, the LCPCs' Annual Work and Financial Plan (AWFP) should be incorporated in the Local Development Investment Plan/Annual Investment Plan<sup>41</sup>.

In efforts to ensure sustainability Plan's efforts to develop WCPUs were carried out in partnership with the Local Government Unit, with the LGU responsible for its operation. However, to support quality developments Plan retained responsibility as child rights and child protection advocates following up or checking out cases sent to WCPUs. Getting the commitment of LGUs to support the WCPU is crucial, thus increased efforts are needed to ensure that the LGUs truly exercise strong governance and leadership role and responsibility; and ongoing advocacy with LGUs is needed to increase resource allocations for the operation and implementation of program interventions of WCPUs such as group work counselling session for victim-survivors and the 24 hour help desks. In 2011 there were encouraging efforts in this direction with four Local Government Units (LGUs) committing more funds for the operation of WCPUs.

In Plan's CEP RTP project '*Community Empowerment towards the Prevention and Reintegration of Trafficked Persons*' the provision of a trust fund for treatment and after care services to trafficked victims-survivors and support for their reintegration to their families and communities was included. Advocacy is needed with the Department of Social Welfare and Development to increase resource allocations to Municipality Social Welfare and Development Officers to access similar funds to support case management including medical, legal and psychosocial response to the survivors.

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<sup>40</sup> PIDS (2010) The Filipino Child, Policy Brief No. 7 'Localising Child Protection: Does the Local Council for the Protection of Children matter?'

<sup>41</sup> Ibid



## Key achievements, challenges and lessons learned:

### **Key strengths and achievements** of CBCPMs supported by Plan in the Philippines<sup>42</sup>:

- Plan has developed strong partnership and collaboration among LGUs, the Department of Justice (DOJ), Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD), the Police and NGOs which ensures a quick response of reported child protection cases, including trafficking cases.
- Plan staff have increased capacity to support community based prevention and protection work providing technical guidance and support to government duty bearers and civil society actors to support decision-making in the best interests of the child. Furthermore, Plan's own child protection policy helps inform and guide community based work.
- Plan has trained and supported community leaders, children and youth and CBOs to facilitate awareness raising and action on gender and child protection, and has supported parenting education about fathers and mothers which enhances prevention and protection of children. There is increased awareness among adults and children about where they can report concerns on child protection.
- Plan has strengthened child protection mechanisms and facilities (BCPC/ Family Watch Groups/ MOVE/ children's associations/ WCPC/ help desks/ hotlines/ crisis centres) at the Barangay, Municipal, Provincial, and Regional levels which facilitates reporting and response to child protection concerns, including child trafficking.
- There is increased reporting of child abuse cases through the establishment and strengthening of WCPUs. Trained professionals (police officers, social workers, doctors) are handling abuse cases.
- Plan has strengthened reporting/referral system at the village and municipal level.
- BCPCs have drafted and passed ordinances related to Child Protection.
- Active MCPCs and BCPCs support better implementation of a range of activities related to Child Protection including parent education (PES/ERPAT) and child protection case management.
- Children are seen as one of the catalyst of change in the promotion of advocacy campaigns on laws and other related concerns (through their radio programs) and children are identifying and reporting child protection concerns (e.g. in Occidental Mindoro)
- Increased number of schools are practicing and applying Personal Safety Lesson (for example in East Samar where the PSL module has been integrated into the regular curricula).
- Anti-trafficking help desk is assisting persons (including children) who are victims/potential victims of trafficking due to Plan's and LGU support in terms of fund, trainings and other resources. Also, there is commitment and dedication of ATIP help desk officer despite limited financial support received from the Provincial LGU.
- In Masbate group counselling for victim-survivors of abuse has been undertaken with support from Plan and partners (PSWDO,CSWDO,WCPU).
- Plan has developed strong partnership with the media and has support children's media initiatives to intensify information drive on issue of child protection and rights violations through print and radio.
- Parenting Education Sessions supported by Plan (e.g. in Pintuyan in Southern Leyte) have successfully used government modules on parent education (PES) and ERPAT to engage men/ fathers as active facilitators and volunteers in promote prevention and protection of children. Parents have observed behavioural changes in their relationship with spouses and children, and there is a reduction in hitting children. Men are supporting interventions to address domestic violence, and PES volunteers and MOVE members have helped in reporting child protection cases to Barangays and WCPUs.

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<sup>42</sup> The first few points are from CP focal point presentation at CPN 2011; others are informed by desk analysis and 'H' assessment findings from key stakeholders undertaken as part of the CBCPM study in April 2012

**Benefits of Family Watch Group interventions, Masbate<sup>43</sup>:** Prior to the formation of the Family Watch Group (Bantay Panimalay) in Tagpu there was a case of a father who beat his wife and children whenever he was drunk. As a result his children and his wife were all afraid of him. When the Family Watch Group was formed and orientation was given to community members on the Anti-Violence Against Women and Children Act this man and his wife were present. At the end of the session the man shared how he now realised that there was a law that could punish him for his practice, and he would try to change the way he treats his family member. A month later members of the Family Watch Group visited his home, and the man's wife testified that there really was some change in their relationship as family.

**Achievements of community campaigns on child rights and child trafficking<sup>44</sup>:**

Community campaigns on child rights and specific campaigns against human trafficking have been conducted in the PUs. As an outcome of these campaigns, a total of 127 village ordinances related to child protection (curfew, prohibitions on establishment of billiard halls and video/ karaoke bars near schools, prohibitions on purchase of liquor and cigarettes) were issued in West Samar and Camotes. In West Samar, a resolution creating the village council for the protection of children and allocating 1% of their internal revenue budget was passed. A total of 42 village resolutions and six municipal ordinances were issued in support of our campaign against trafficking. These issuances have helped rescue 148 trafficked victims this fiscal year (2011)<sup>45</sup>.

**Key challenges and gaps of CBCPMs supported by Plan in the Philippines<sup>46</sup>:**

- Traditional practices, including socio-cultural attitudes towards children contribute to children's vulnerabilities to being abused and contribute to lack of reporting on child protection concerns. There is low level of acceptance in the promotion of the policy RA 9344 to stop corporal punishment, as corporal punishment is deeply rooted in the cultural practices of punishment as a form of disciplining children.
- Many Barangay Councils for the Protection of Children are not yet functional. The multiple tasks of *barangay* officials make it extremely difficult for them to be competent in all their tasks. The political will and interest of local officials in child protection is still the determining factor of the effectiveness in the proper handling of cases of abuse at the local level.
- There are concerns regarding risks of the confidentiality of abuse victims being violated when cases are dealt with by the BCPC.
- Limited monitoring and follow up of reported cases. Plan's staff role is limited to referral in some areas, and mechanisms are weak to monitor progress of cases.
- There is slow processing of court cases on child abuse and the juvenile justice system is slow (some prosecutors and judges are not child or gender sensitive).
- Community people's trust in the Municipal SWDOs lessens due to unresponsive and slow process of reported child abuse cases and other related concerns. Also need to strengthen prevention of child neglect that results to sponsored children getting ill and/or dying from drowning, burns, accidents, falls.
- There is a back log of cases at the city and provincial levels, as community leaders and BCPCs are not yet empowered or skilled enough to solve cases at the community level.
- Some Local Government Units have no registered social workers. There is need increased number and training of social workers and improvements in psychosocial services.
- Fast turn-over of trained police officers handling child abuse cases. Recruitment of staff (social worker, doctor and policewoman) is often delayed and need to fast tracked by the

<sup>43</sup> Shared by a Family Watch Group member during participatory activities undertaken for the CBCPM regional study, April 2012

<sup>44</sup> Plan Philippines (August 2011) Country Programme Progress Report – promoting child rights to end child poverty.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid

<sup>46</sup> From CP focal point presentation at CPN 2011, desk analysis, and 'H' assessment findings from key stakeholders undertaken as part of the CBCPM study in April 2012.

LGU. New staff need to be supported with sufficient training. Also increased gender awareness is needed in police departments to ensure better support to women police.

- Local corruption that prevents the perpetrator being brought to justice (especially if the perpetrator is rich and/or well connected/ related to people in power).
- Some of the Medical Health Officers or District Hospital Doctors are refusing to conduct medico legal examination of abuse cases to avoid court appearances.
- Service providers own biases and prejudices towards marginalised children and families can negatively influence service delivery. Non-discriminatory attitudes and sensitive handling of cases need to be encouraged through training and mentoring.
- Lack of community diversion for alternatives for diverting children in conflict with the law from the formal justice system.
- Increased family support is needed for single parent families, and to address concerns relating to alcohol use by caregivers.
- Limited support to after care services to survivors of abuse, since this is not a priority of LGUs.
- Limitations in documentation and data collection on child protection cases. Reporting and documentation systems have been established, but Municipal LGUs are non-compliant in their use. Furthermore, the Provincial Social Welfare and Development Officer (PSWDO) has no direct supervision/authority over the Municipal SWDO thus they are not held liable for non-compliance on reporting.

**WCPC efforts to overcome the practice of out of court settlements<sup>47</sup>:** The Women and Children Protection Unit (WCPU) has been operational for barely 2 years in Pintuyan, Southern Leyte. The team underwent a specialized training in the management of child abuse to equip them with proper skills and attitude in handling cases of abuse. The most significant challenge for the team is sustaining the interest of the victim and their families during case litigation. Though most victims want to pursue legal action against the perpetrator, most of them eventually withdraw the case and agree with the perpetrator's financial offer to settle the case out of court. Some of the factors that influence the parents' decision are when the perpetrator is a family member, and a prominent/influential person in the community. Others are afraid of retaliation/threats from the perpetrator and family members. Another contributing factor is poverty, thus victim and family agree to receive the financial offer. Families also remain ignorant about the justice system, thus are misguided on what to do.

The challenge is considered most significant, because the child -victim remain to be powerless. She/he is still powerless to fight for her right to be protected. We sometimes think that our efforts become futile when the victim we assist become uninterested to pursue the case and that the perpetrator remain to be free to victimized other vulnerable children. Raising the awareness of the families on child protection issues which would enable them to lend support and advocate for children's rights remain a challenge. With this reality, members of the WCPU are now coordinating with the Plan Philippines and the Crusade against Violence, a victim-run private organization to provide legal assistance to victims and their families. The organization provide counseling on the process of the case litigation. They also monitor the case in the court and escort the victim and attends during court hearings. Though, the support of the organization doesn't always ensure winning of the case, at least the victim and their families are properly guided on the process of the case.

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<sup>47</sup> Shared by members of a WCPU in April 2012 as part of the participatory data collection process for the CBCPM regional study.

**Key lessons learned** from previous evaluations on community based child protection work<sup>48</sup> and from analysis of data gathered during this regional study include:

- BCPCs and MCPCs are mandated structures in the local government and thus if they can be activated to function well they can provide sustainable responses to child protection cases and can support community based prevention and response initiatives. However, social services and programs for the protection of children is not a priority for many LGUs. Assessment of BCPC functioning can inform prioritisation of the BCPCs that require closer guidance and assistance to effectively respond to child protection cases.
- Facilitating factors include: close collaborative working with the Local Government Units; building a strong network of relationship among organizations (BCPCs, CBOs, children's associations); ensuring close coordination between the BCPC, MCPC and WCPU; and identifying and encouraging 'champions' for the child protection cause (e.g. Municipal Councillor or a retired University Professor<sup>49</sup>).
- Factors that hinder the functionality of LCPCs include<sup>50</sup>: expectations of the Barangay Councils to organise too many sub-committees and councils<sup>51</sup>; overlapping CBOs with similar roles and responsibilities<sup>52</sup>; changes in composition of the Council every 3 years or after election; limited capacity of Barangay officials; budget limitations.
- Training of Barangay officials increases their vigilance and interest in protecting their constituency.<sup>53</sup> Training of trainers is a positive move to create a multiplier effect in the communities and other *barangays* in the provinces. Need to develop more 'packaged' training for BCPC and other mandated bodies – a sequence of trainings/modular sessions.
- Need to ensure procedures are in place to support training of child protection of newly appointed officials and members of help desks and WCPU (e.g. newly appointed doctors, police, social workers).
- Increased efforts are needed in some places to strengthen the links between the informal Family Watch Groups and the formal BCPC. If the Family Watch Group is formally recognised by the BCPC. This may increase trust to Family Watch Groups from community members and their authority to intervene in preventing and addressing domestic violence.
- Follow up and mentoring of BCPCs, CBOs and children's associations ensure more successful implementation of lessons learned from workshops. CBOs and children's associations can benefit from training on organisational development.
- Technical assistance, training and advocacy help strengthen BCPCs. However, increased capacity building and mentoring are needed to strengthen: child protection case management, close monitoring, follow up and documentation; improved provision of after care services by the local government, including psychosocial interventions; and increased community based interventions to support children with disabilities, and diversion of children in conflict with the law<sup>54</sup>.
- In supporting CBOs it is important to identify and engage community members who are committed to children/ child protection, who are value oriented, who have previous

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48 Plan Philippines (2009) Community based prevention and protection program for children at risk and children in conflict with the law. Final Report.

49 Merlyne, M. Paunlagui (2011) Understanding the Non-Organisation and Non-Functioning of the Local Council for the Protection of Children in the Philippines. Centre for Strategic Planning and Policy Studies.

50 Ibid

51 At the Barangay level there are meant to be 7 sub-committees and each has 2-3 councils. The Council for the Protection of Children is just one of four Councils under the Sub-Committee on Sectoral Concerns.

52 If they do not coordinate with and strengthen the formal LCPC structure.

53 Macapagal, M. J. (October 2011) Community Empowerment towards the Prevention and Reintegration of Trafficked Persons (CEPRTP) March 2008 – December 2013. Mid Evaluation Report, October 2011. Plan Philippines.

<sup>54</sup> Plan Philipp Dela Cruz, L.B. & Escalante, A. (June 2009) Empowering Communities towards child protection. Final term evaluation 2006-2008. Plan Philippines.ines (August 2011) Country Programme Progress Report – promoting child rights to end child poverty; Macapagal, M. J. (October 2011) Community Empowerment towards the Prevention and Reintegration of Trafficked Persons (CEPRTP) March 2008 – December 2013. Mid Evaluation Report, October 2011. Plan Philippines.

experience and/or training in community work and who are able to dedicate time to respond to child protection cases. Training community members as Family Watch Group members or para legal volunteers at the grassroots level can be effective as local people are more approachable. However, it is important to train people who have time to be active, thus, not to train people who are busy working full time as farmers or entrepreneurs<sup>55</sup>.

- It is beneficial to support inclusive children's associations as girls and boys have energy and enthusiasm to work for social change in their communities, and are able to promote non-discrimination especially if their own association membership is inclusive. Training with children should emphasise their responsibilities as well as their rights.
- It is effective to engage men and fathers in parenting education and to support men's organisations to prevent and address violence against women and children.
- Some community members are reluctant to report child protection cases to the proper authorities due to stigma, shame or fear, especially in child sexual abuse cases when the perpetrator is a relative. Traditional mechanisms for arranging out of court settlements rather than reporting to the concerned authorities also continue to be used in situations when a child has been abused by someone outside of the family due to fears of retaliation from the perpetrator and/or due to the slow process of case litigation. There are also concerns about local corruption that enables perpetrators to flee. Furthermore, witnesses are often unwilling to testify as it involves their time, potential loss of income, and they also fear retaliation from the perpetrator.
- It is important for the LGU Social Worker should be present during court hearings of cases of children as support system especially during the first four court hearings when the clients and their family are not yet familiar with the system. In the absence of municipal social workers, the provincial level social workers should support families during court cases.
- Need to conduct training of all concerned duty bearers on data collection, monitoring and documentation system.
- Advocacy and lobbying at the national and provincial level on relevant child protection laws, policies, codes, practices and budget allocations complements and supports efforts to strengthen community based child protection mechanisms. Plan has been involved in lobbying concerning the Juvenile Justice and Welfare Act, anti-pornography, child trafficking; and has been involved in the development of national guidelines and standards on case management, and on child protection action plan.
- Ongoing lobbying is needed with concerned authorities to ensure increased budget allocations for prevention work, and for victims/survivors of violence, abuse, neglect and exploitation to support litigation<sup>56</sup>, access to psychosocial services, and where relevant family and community reintegration (including opportunities for skill training, livelihoods or income generation).

**Benefits of a 'survivors support fund' to support psychosocial recovery, Social welfare officer, Masabte:** When responding to child abuse cases in Pasirungan the Social Welfare Officer was able to access survivor support funds provided by Plan to support psychosocial interventions. As a result the children have been able more effectively supported to recover from the trauma of their abuse experiences and they are now doing well in school.

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<sup>55</sup> Ibid

<sup>56</sup> Children and adults in Masbate have shared good practice regarding the Barangay provision of financial support for victim/ family members transport to municipality to pursue child protection cases; and financial assistance for after care support, including educational assistance.

**Annex I: Stakeholders involved in CBCPM study in Philippines, April 2012**

Who?	Role and location:	Gender:		Age range (if children)	Total number:
		Male	Female		
Family Watch Group Members	Family Watch group members from Barangay Balnasan, San Roque, Northern Samar.	5	2		7
Parent volunteers	Supporting Parenting Education Sessions in Pintuyan, Southern Leyte.	6	3		9
WCPU members	Pintuyan, Southern Leyte		7		7
WCPU members	Sta. Margarita, West Samar, Philippines.	7	5		12
Children's organisation members	Members of Paraiso Active Youth Organization (PAYCO), Masbate	2	5	11 – 17 years	7
Plan Staff and government social workers involved in LCPC, WCPC and Provincial Inter-Agency Council on Anti Trafficking	Social workers (municipal and provincial), police officer, Plan technical officer for child protection, technical supervisor, Plan project staff on anti-trafficking in persons in Masbate	1	11		12
Plan staff	Plan Programme Staff: Masbate: Program Unit Manager- 1M Finance Manager – 1F Finance Staff – 2M Area Supervisors – 3F Sponsorship Officers – 1M;1F Technical Support Supervisor – 1F Technical Officers – 2M;3F General Service Staff – 2M Community Development Facilitator – 24 (8M;16F) Project Coordinator(AECID) – 1M	17	25		42
Barangay leaders in communities where they have Family Watch Groups, MOVE, BCPC, and referrals to WCPC	Barangay leaders in Masbate: Brgy Captain (1m), Brgy Kgd- 4 (2m, 2f), Brgy Secretary (1f), Brgy Information Officer (1m), Family Watch Team (6 - 2m, 4f), PTA president (1f) and Katarungan Pambarangay (1m)	7	8		15
Plan staff	Plan Staff, East Samar	2	7		9
Plan staff	Occidental Mindoro: Representative from Magsaysay and San Jose and Calintaan and Sablayan, Mindoro	2	7		9
BCPC members	BCPC members from Burgos, Sablayan, Occidental Mindoro	13	12		25
<b>Total</b>		62	92		154

**Annex 2: Overview of types, locations and numbers of CBCPMs supported by Plan Philippines:**

<b>CBCPM:</b>	<b>Main purpose:</b>	<b>Who is involved:</b>	<b>Main partners:</b>	<b>Number and locations:</b>
Women and Child Protection Units (WCPU)	To provide professional multi-disciplinary response to referrals on women and child protection cases (especially at the municipal level).	Multi-disciplinary team including social workers, medical doctor and police woman - <i>One stop centre</i> .	Plan, Local government Unit, and CPU- Network Foundation.	14 WCPU set up with Plan support in Masbate, Eastern Samar, Northern Samar, Western Samar. (Also in phased out areas Isabela and Pangasinan)
Barangay Council for Protection of Children (BCPC)	To identify, prevent, protect and respond to child abuse, neglect, violence and exploitation cases within the community (village level).	Chair of the BCPC should be the Barangay Captain, Vice Chair and secretary appointed by captain. Other members include: barangay health, education, ECCD officials, chief of the barangay police, and representatives of local NGOs, children/ youth, and church organisations.	Mandated structure in local government, Plan & NGO partners.	Plan is strengthening BCPCs in 387 communities in 6 PUs: West Mindoro, North Samar, East Samar, West Samar, Southern Leyte, Masbate.
Family Watch Groups ( <i>‘Bantay Banay’, ‘Bantay Panimalay’</i> )	To monitor, prevent, report and respond to domestic violence and gender based violence in communities	Adult community members who are selected based on their community status/ respect as leaders & their willingness to be child protection advocates.	Plan, NGO partners (Lihok Filipina, Inc in Cebu City, Rungiyon in Tacloban City	Five hundred thirty two (532) young women and mothers from 25 Villages In Visayas (East West, North, Southern Leyte) (source: FYI I CPPR). In Masbate, there are 4 groups of Bantay Panimalay
Village Children’s Associations	To educate children on protection risks and to empower children for self-protection and protection of their peers through action and advocacy initiatives.	Girls and boys aged 12-15 years.	Plan, Local Government Unit, CBOs	149 Child Groups across the 6 PUs.
Village Against Women and Children (VAWC) Desks	VAWC desks are located at village level to make reports on violence against women and children. They were created in line with the Republic Act 9262 – Anti-VAWC Act. They can	The Village Head assisted by members of the Barangay Council for Protection of Children.	Plan Local Government Unit DILG	25 desks in East, West , North Samar and Camotes

	respond through BCPC or make for further assessment of psychosocial interventions.			
Safe schools – school based support teams (SBST)	To promote positive discipline in schools and safe schools which are free from violence. In addition education on child protection in disasters is included in local curricula.	Teachers and members of school management have capacity building on positive discipline and a school based support team is formed whose members are trained to sensitively respond to disclosures of abuse, and to make referrals for case management support.	Plan, Department of Education at district and local government levels, School management, Centre for the Prevention and Treatment of Child Sexual Abuse (CPTCSA). LGUs and National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council. At the national level, Lunduyan Foundation and Department of Education, Quezon City District	There are 63 schools implementing Personal Safety Lessons (PSL) in PUs Southern Leyte, Camotes, East and West Samar and Masbate (7 supported teams). Formation of the SBST is part of the PSL program implementation At the national level, 4 partner schools in Quezon City. In Promoting safe schools and resilient communities, this is being implemented across Plan covered areas
MOVE (Men Opposed to Violence against women and children Everywhere)	To support men's engagement to prevent and address violence against women and children.	Men from local communities who are interested to engage.	Plan, MOVE National, LGU	12 groups in North Samar; 5 groups in Masbate
Surveillance Committee on anti-trafficking	To identify, prevent and respond to trafficking cases.	Plan, LGU, BCPC	Plan LGU BCPCs FBOs CBOs	<i>In a few villages in Western Samar, Northern Samar, and Southern Leyte).</i>
Survivors Group of sexually abused children and a parent support group.	To support the psychosocial recovery of survivors of child sexual abuse.  The parents, on the other hand, were trained to understand and manage their children's coping behaviours.	4 child survivors of child sexual abuse. Parents of the children supported by trained social workers and Plan staff.	Plan and Local Government Unit jointly developed a six-week programme for these groups.	<i>These groups were piloted in Masbate</i>
Municipal Council for Protection of	To support referrals and action at the Municipal level to prevent protect	Members of MCPC include the Municipal Mayor as Chairman,	Municipal Government Department of	MCPC should be present in every Municipal.

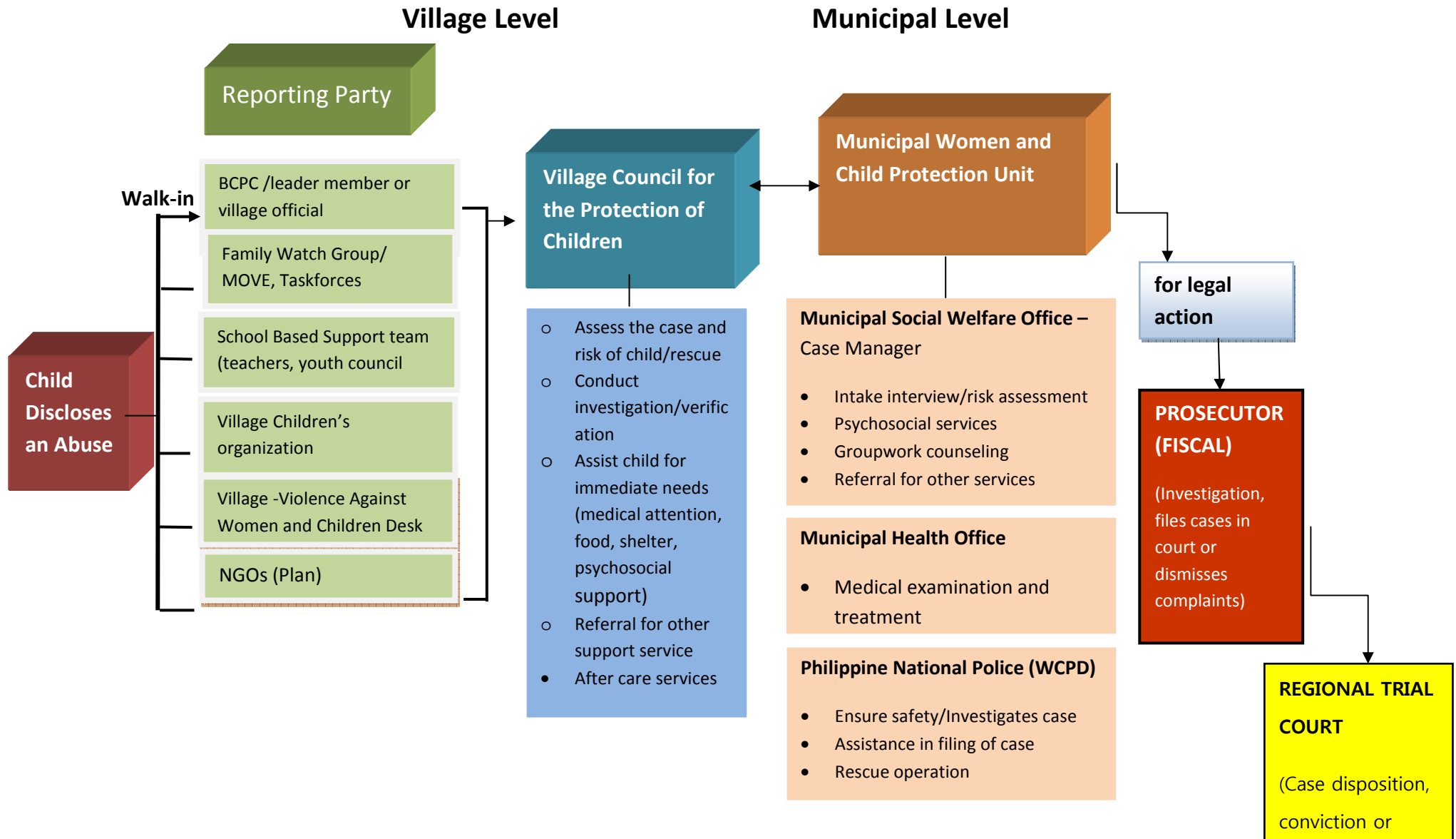


Children (MCPCs)	children from all forms of abuse, neglect, violence and exploitation.	two elected members of the Municipal Council, the Municipal Health Officer, the Municipal Supervising Teacher, the Chief of Police, an officer from Social Welfare Department, and representatives of the PTA Organization and other relevant organisations.	Social Welfare Plan	Plan is trying to strengthen the MCPC in 33 municipalities in all the 6 PUs
Municipal Inter-Agency Council Against Trafficking (MIACAT)				MIACAT were supported by Plan in the areas of Western Samar, Eastern Samar, Southern Leyte, Masbate, (and prior to phase out in Camotes Island).
Provincial Council for Protection of Children (PCPC)	To support referrals and action at the Provincial level to prevent protect children from all forms of abuse, neglect, violence and exploitation.			PCPC should be present in every Municipal. Plan is trying to strengthen the PCPC in 6 provinces across the 6 PUs
Provincial Inter-Agency Council Against Trafficking (PIACAT)				PIACAT were supported by Plan in the areas of <i>in Western Samar, Eastern Samar, North Samar, Southern Leyte, Mindoro, Masbate, (and Camotes Island before phase out).</i>

### Annex 3: An overview of recent training provided as part of CBCPM efforts:

Year of training:	Name of training (main subject):	Who was included:	Who facilitated:	Was there a follow up training?
2006-2008	Children in conflict with the law and diversion	BCPCs, MCPC members	Plan	No
2009 – 2011	Child protection, domestic violence, gender sensitivity	Family watch group community volunteers	Plan	Yes
2010	Personal Safety Training of trainers (including how to respond to child sexual abuse)	Training of trainers to train teachers	Qualified Social worker	Yes
2011	Child protection for (74 members from the village council, 9 from the municipal level council for protection of children) in North Samar, Camotes, and Mindoro.	Members of the local councils for the protection of children	Plan	Yes
2010- 2011	Training of trainers on ATIP law, child rights and child protection	Local officials,retired teachers, PNP, youth representatives	Plan	Yes
2009 – 2011	Training on Anti-Trafficking in Persons (ATIP) law, child rights, child protection, difference between child abuse and trafficking) and skills (monitoring, referral, and reporting).	Barangay officials	Plan	Yes
2009 – 2011	Formulation of local ordinances (in provinces of Western Samar, Eastern Samar, Southern Leyte, and Masbate)	LGU officials	Plan	-
2009 – 2011	Training in surveillance and detection of trafficked victims were done in all areas	LGU officials (BCPCs)	Plan	no
2009 – 2010	Para-legal training for child protection (in all provinces)	1066 child protection services providers	Plan	no
2010	Gender responsive Local Government Units	MCPCs or Inter-agency committees	Plan	no
2011	Child friendly procedures and proper handling of child abuse cases	WCPU – 19 multi-disciplinary teams	CPU-Network	yes
2011	Counselling and group work for abused children	14 social workers (from WCPU) & 7 Plan Programme staff	CPU-Network	yes
2011	Parenting sessions	460 sessions in North Samar, East Samar, Southern Leyte, Mindoro, and Masbate.	Plan	yes
2011	Enhancing and reaffirming paternal abilities (ERPAT) which have improved parent-child and husband-wife relationships	491 fathers in 38 villages in East Samar, Southern Leyte, and Masbate	Plan	yes

## Annex 4: Community Based Child Protection Reporting and Referral Flow



## Annex 5: Story of Most Significant Change: Harnessing the commitment of the Municipal Health Officer to support abused children through the Child Protection Unit:

The idea about Child Protection Unit (CPU) came to be clear to me when Plan has arranged for a learning visit to an existing CPU in one of the municipality. At first, I am pessimistic about it because I thought it would mean additional burden to me. My initial understanding on CPU was superficial, an organization of trained multi-disciplinary team (MDT) composed of a doctor, social worker and police officer who are helping each other to help and manage cases of child abuse. I thought then that was nice to know.

We were brought to the CPU later that afternoon and said, "This is it, nice place, any child can relax out here". After the visit we had a conference. There we were told that a similar service will be established in Northern Samar and those of us who were with the group will become the MDT. Ambivalent feeling started to crop up in my mind, one side of my brain is dictating it is an opportunity to add knowledge and help others but on the other side I thought it was a taxing job that I might not be able to handle. I am the Municipal Health Officer of Catarman and my vast coverage of 55 villages is more than too much to me. On that day, my concept of CPU became more comprehensive. It will not only the MDT who will be involve but a partnership endeavor among many stakeholders, the provincial and municipal government units and all the village's councils of Northern Samar. It also involves cooperation of various agencies, the DSWD, Police, DOH and the people as well.

I was hesitant at first in accepting the CPU assignment because I see it as an additional load for my hectic job at the Rural Health Unit. I have many villages in Catarman and with the establishment of the CPU other municipalities of Northern Samar will soon be coming for my service. I cannot imagine how tremendous this job would be. But, I didn't remember the exact day when I decided to accept my role as physician of the CPU and become a member of the MDT. All I know is, "*on that day I made one of my greatest decisions in life*". There were many factors that helped me decide to accept this challenge but the most important reason was my desire to help abused children and contribute to its prevention.

I underwent the six weeks child protection specialty training course at Child Protection Unit-Philippine General Hospital (PGH). The first session was an eye opener, new facts, new skills and I began questioning myself if I can handle it. On the last two weeks of the training at the CPU-PGH, I was already handling actual abused cases. I could hardly believe attending to 11 cases a day. More so, majority of them were sexual abuse. This situation heightened my interest to give my best service to the CPU.

I wondered how many more children are abused who don't have access of CPU services, or who are merely afraid to report their predicament. As I became accustomed to the day to day events at the CPU-PGH, I began to understand the purpose of the training. This is also where I realized that my profession as a doctor was not only to heal physical injuries of a victim and make medico-legal reports but rather help in the process of holistic healing of an abused child.

Before I was trained for the CPU operation, I used to handle sexually abused cases in the same way with other cases of illness in the center. There are no special interviews, no concerns for the client's privacy and feelings. During the training I realized the many shortcomings I have done and the way I mishandled the victims.

Going back to my municipality, lobbying with the Local Chief Executive was not an easy task, the mayor has to understand the importance of the project the way I have it in my mind. There were many constraints for the CPU to function such as manpower, maintenance, location of the building and budget. After long deliberation with the Municipal Council, the final plan was to attach the CPU

to the Municipal Health Center. With consistent follow-up with the Municipal Council, the CPU fully equipped was finally launched.

Abused cases referred to CPU were provided with immediate assistance by the MDT. It was amazing also that, child abuse cases have raised to 23 reported incidents on the 1<sup>st</sup> year of operation. This could have been made possible by Plan's massive awareness campaign on children's rights and child protection. Before, the RHU have an average of one (1) sexual abuse case reported per year only.

I could say that at this stage of the CPU operation, my skills and knowledge as a CPU doctor has been harnessed continually coping with the challenge to help many abused children to cope with their distressful situation but to provide all children the protection they deserve. With the new Local Government and Plan's support, unrelenting commitment of trained MDT and aggressive campaign of partner communities, the CPU has survived and will sustain its operation.

This story was most significant because as a Municipal Health Officer serving 55 communities, the workload is so much a challenge, but upon realizing the importance and fulfillment of helping abused victims, my personal commitment has changed.