

Brief Report on Community Based Child Protection Mechanisms supported by Plan in Sri Lanka¹

Introduction:

Plan is an international child-centred development organization working in 50 developing countries across Africa, Asia and the Americas. Plan's vision is of a world in which all children realize their full potential in societies that respect people's rights and dignity. In recent years² child protection has become a key programming and thematic area for Plan in which it effectively contributes to the realisation of child rights, applying its Child Centred Community Development approach. For Plan International, child protection encompasses the work and activities it undertakes to prevent and respond to all forms of abuse, neglect, exploitation and violence against children. Plan's child protection work incorporates work on child protection in emergencies (CPiE), child protection programming referred to as child protection in development (CPiD) and Plan's policy to safe guard children, "Say Yes! to keeping children safe". Specific child protection programmes and strategies include:

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

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

This brief report provides an overview of community based child protection mechanisms supported by Plan Sri Lanka, as a contribution to a regional comparative analysis on community based child protection mechanisms supported by Plan in the Asia region³. 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;

¹ Claire O'Kane, ICPREC (2012)

² particularly since 2006

³ 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 group⁴ 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 documents⁵ and verified and updated by Plan's child protection focal points in each country. These country reports were further informed by primary qualitative data from Plan's child protection programme staff, civil society and/or government partners, as well as adult and child members of community based child protection mechanisms (CBCPMs) using the following two tools: 'H' assessments – undertaken by different stakeholders to share their views on the main strengths and achievements, challenges and weaknesses of their CBCPMs; as well as practical suggestions to improve CBCPMs in their country context. Secondly, Stories of Most Significant Change and Most Significant Challenge (SMSC/C) relating to experiences of community based child protection mechanisms were shared by various stakeholders. In Sri Lanka 41 stakeholders (5 boys, 7 girls, 16 men and 13 women) were involved in the 'H' assessments⁶ and some stories of most significant change were also shared.

Brief Introduction to the Country Context:

Sri Lanka has faced 30 years of civil strife in the country. The separatist violence has led to the conscription of children by armed guerrilla groups, internal displacement, exposure to and propagation of a culture of violence throughout the country and damage to social and cultural norms that protected children. This is particularly relevant to the North and Eastern Provinces directly affected by civil strife and the areas bounding these provinces. In addition, the tsunami disaster of December 2004, affected 13 districts of the country with a death toll of 40,000 people making children more vulnerable, as some children were left orphaned, unaccompanied or with a single parent. Research in Sri Lanka has identified widespread forms of violence against children (in all sectors of living and social strata) including corporal punishment, psychological punishment⁷, domestic violence and sexual abuse. Child marriage is also a concern affecting children especially in

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

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

⁶ See Annex 1: Stakeholders involved in CBCPM study in Sri Lanka, April / May 2012

⁷ A psychological punishment is a type of punishment that relies not or only in secondary order on the actual harm inflicted (such as corporal punishment or fines) but on psychological effects mainly emotions, such as fear, shame and guilt. This can occasionally cause severe cardiac harm, even death, but those are not strictly intended, and in the case of torture accidental death would even defeat the purpose. Psychological punishments that are particularly cruel or severe may be considered psychological torture.

conflict affected Eastern provinces. Exploitative child labour and risks of sexual exploitation are also of concern.

While some formal systems of child protection have been established in recent years, constraints in financial and human resources and necessary expertise remain, especially in terms of family support programmes at the community and family level. Through their home visiting programme the Public Health Midwives are expected to work with parents and caregivers to build on traditional positive child rearing practices and to educate parents on child development and positive forms of discipline. However, due to the heavy workload of the PHMs their interventions are often confined to the promotion of pre and post natal care, immunization and growth monitoring. The Child Protection Officers and other duty bearers who are responsible for community-based services (prevention, detection, and surveillance) do not always provide such services due to lack of resources and technical capacity. Consequently, parents teachers, and management of juvenile institutions lack appropriate skills to prevent and sensitively respond to child protection concerns.

According to the 13th amendment for the constitution of Sri Lanka, child protection has become a devolving subject in the provincial governments while the central government is also having powers and authority. Since ratifying the UNCRC in 1991 Sri Lanka government has made progressive measures to achieve the standards of Child Rights by enforcing policies and legislations and establishing the institutions. The Apex body of the child protection system is the Ministry of Child Development and Women's Affairs. Under the management of the Ministry are four complementary structures/ authorities which each have responsibilities to fulfil children's rights to protection. These include: the National Child Protection Authority; the Department of Probation and Child Care Services; the National Monitoring Committee on CRC; and the Secretariat on ECCD.

Sri Lanka has 9 provinces and the monitoring mechanisms on CRC and child protection have been established at that level. The public administration is set up across 25 District Secretariat Divisions and strategic decisions on child protection are taken at this level. Public administration is decentralized into Divisional Secretariat Divisions and there are 329 divisions in Sri Lanka. The child protection interventions at this level are operational with identification, response, referral and follow up. The primary level of the civil administration is Grama Niladhari Division (GND) and this is the setting of community in the country context and the total number of GNDs is 14,016. Community Based Child Protection Mechanisms are referred to this level where prevention and curative aspects are implemented including the processes of reporting, rehabilitation and re-integration.

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

Plan has been working in Sri Lanka since 1980. Protection programming was not part of the first CSP of Plan in Sri Lanka. During the second CSP cycle Plan's child protection programme was more focused on prevention with limited interventions in responding to child abuse and reintegration. While certain protection responses to children in difficult circumstances have been encompassed in some of Plan's earlier work in Sri Lanka, child protection programming with long term objectives to improve child protection outcomes started in 2006. In the CSP III the programme will adapt a multi-level approach by working at community, divisional, district, provincial and national levels. The Goal of Plan's protection work in Sri Lanka in their third Country Strategic Plan is that **all children grow up in safe and protective environments where they are protected from all forms of violence**. The program goal is that primary and secondary duty bearers demonstrate capacity to protect children from all forms of violence against children without discrimination.

Plan Sri Lanka have 2 key strategies to achieve this goal each of which complement each other and contribute to strengthen of child protection system building in both ongoing development and emergency contexts:

1. Changes in capacity and practice of duty bearers and right holders to establish/promote child protection committees in Communities and Schools.

2. Capacity Building of Divisional and District Child Protection Committees and provincial and national level steering committees.

The first strategy is directly related to establishing and strengthening CBCPMs. Plan supports the formation and strengthening of Child Protection Committees (CPCs) in communities and schools. The second strategy aims to strengthen the coordination and capacity of different institutions, agencies and individuals who have mandates on child protection at different levels to ensure that the child protection initiatives at community level are better supported. This strategy encompasses advocacy, promoting national level coordination among the key duty bearers on child protection and strengthening of a national child protection system. National level advocacy is undertaken to ensure that the key duty bearers from the Ministries of Child Development and Women’s Affairs, Justice and Law Reforms, Police Department are held accountable to prepare a conducive environment for child protection by making policies and legislations, allocating resources and monitoring mechanisms to promote Community Based Child Protection Committees. Involvement of children in their own protection and Child Protection in Emergencies are being mainstreamed into the interventions under these two strategies.

Geographically Plan is working in 4 provinces, 6 districts, 18 divisions and 234 communities. Functioning community based child protection committees have been established in 30 of these rural communities in two of the provinces (Uva and North Central)⁸:

Province	District	Division	Functioning community CPCs
Uva	Monaragala	Siyambalanduwa	6
		Monaragala	5
North Central	Anuradhapura	Wilachchiya	7
		Medawachchiya	12

The CBCPM work is directly implemented by Plan in their PUs. However, the staff work closely with CBOs, community volunteers, community leaders and any existing child and youth groups. The National Advisor coordinates the programme at the national level while the technical advisors deployed in the three Programme Units coordinate and implement the programme in the PUs. The Community Development Facilitators play a significant role in community mobilization, facilitating participatory processes between the rights holders and duty bearers and capacity building of Community Based Organizations. It has been noted that a comprehensive assessment of the current level of understanding and knowledge on child protection, as well as the CCCD approach is compulsory to make the ongoing exercise on capacity building of the staff members more effective and sustainable.

 **Structural aspects of CBCPMs:**

The main structures for community based child protection being supported by Plan in the Sri Lanka are the community based **Child Protection Committees (CPC)**. Most of the child protection committees have been newly formed by Plan through the community development approach. However, a few of the CPCs have been built upon existing groups/ committees. The Child Protection Committees generally involve 10 – 24 members including: community volunteers, representatives from Community Based Organizations and child/ youth groups, the Grama Niladhari (the lowest administrative officer), the Public Health Midwife, the Samurdhi Officer, Pre School teachers, School Principals, Police Personnel from the Children and Women’s Desks, the chairman

⁸ JNO funding is supporting the establishment of community CPCs in 13 divisions in: Monaragala district in Uva province; in Anaradhapura district in the North Central Province; and in Kandy and Nuwar-Eliya in Central Province – plantation areas. However, the CPCs in the Central Province, and in some divisions in Uva and North Central provinces are still in progress of being established.

of the mediation board (a local level dispute settlement body with limited legal powers), religious leaders, and other interested representatives from the civil society. Membership is open for the interested individuals and volunteers from the community, especially individuals who have a good reputation within the community, and experience of working with children. Political affiliation and representation from the local political leadership is very minimal. Membership is generally kept unchanged, though key positions (chair, secretary, roles in working groups/ sub-committees) are rotated.

The Grama Niladhari (local administration officer) is considered as a coordinator in the CPC by default of their local administrative role. The Chair person of the CPC is elected by its members, as is the secretary. Within the CPC members may form working groups or sub-committees on specific prevention or protection issues that they are seeking to address. 2-4 children/ youth representatives are members of the CPC, who are usually part of Child/ Youth Groups within the community.

While one of the key roles of the CPCs are to prioritise and address concerns affecting some of the most marginalised and excluded families and children, there is emerging recognition that community members from the most marginalised families are not directly represented in the CPC. Thus, increased efforts are planned to ensure more inclusive representation in the CPCs.

The Department of Probation and Child Care Services under the purview of the Child Development ministry has developed a TOR with the guidelines for the CPCs which can be customized. However, most of the CPCs currently supported by Plan do not have a detailed ToR. The CPCs usually meet on a monthly basis, in addition to meeting when risks or concerns are identified. Some of the CPCs keep minutes, but they are in the early stages of developing documentation system.

In addition to the community CPCs, Plan are also supporting **school based Child Protection Committees**. These school based CPCs include representatives from the school administration, teachers, children, parents and any other interested individuals from the civil society. As a result of increased collaboration between the Education Ministry and the National Child Protection Authority in September 2011, the formation of school Child Protection Committees in all Government schools were encouraged through a circular from the Education Ministry Secretary to all Provincial Director of Education.

As shown in Figure 1 the community CPCs link with and are able to make referrals to the **Divisional Child Protection Committees**⁹, which link with higher level **District Child Protection Committees** which are mandated structures under the National Child Protection Authority (NCPA)¹⁰. A Government Gazette No 1136 (Part I) in June 2000 outlined the composition and functions of the District CPCs to strengthen and expand the child protection activities at district level. The District Secretary acts as focal point and is responsible for the planning and implementation of activities. The committee serves to co-ordinate probation and child care work and local law enforcement authorities, the Judiciary and health aspect at local level. Local NGOs working in the field of child protection are also included.

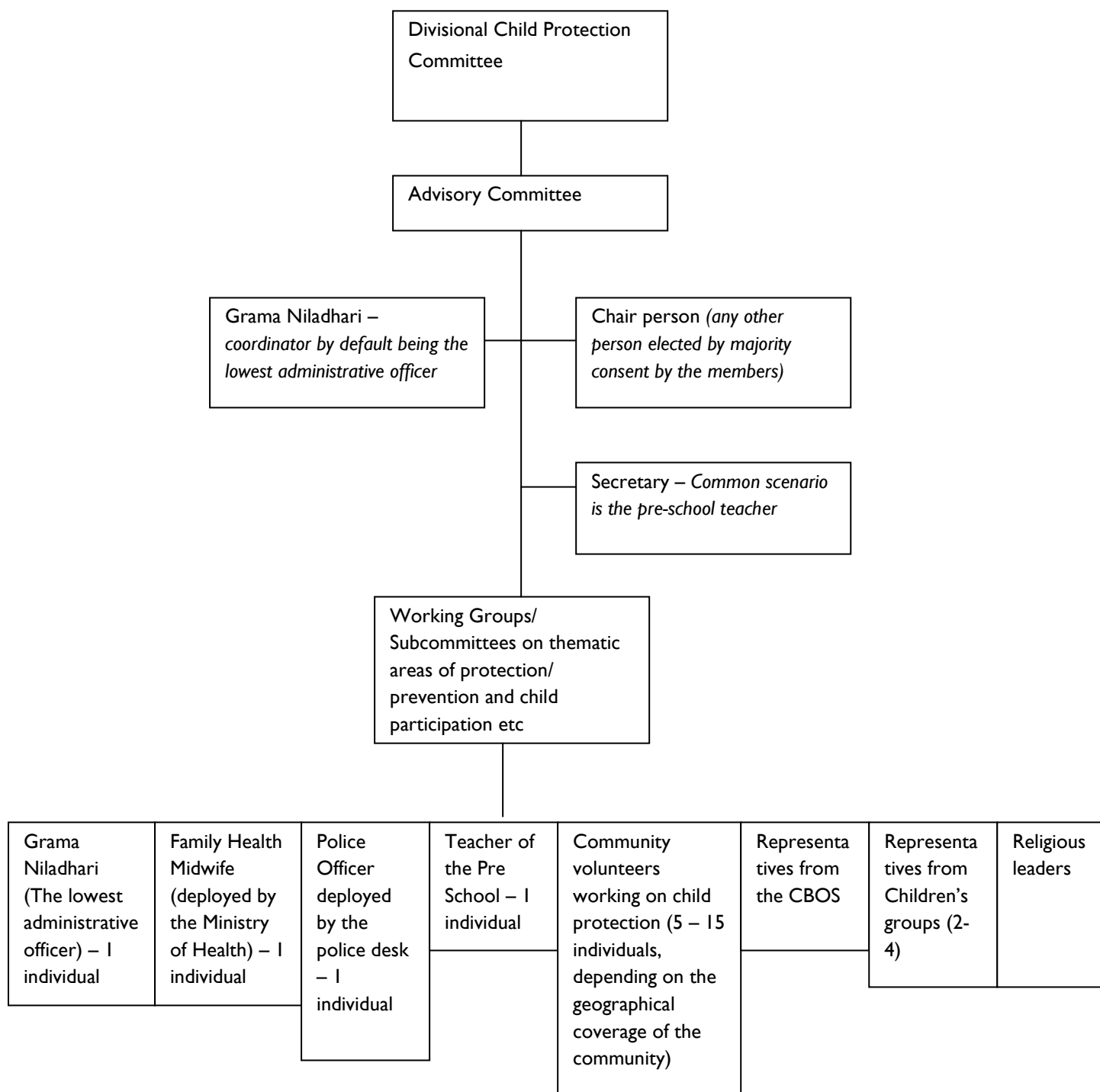
The Divisional Child Protection Committees comprise of - Child Rights Protection Officers, Divisional Secretaries, Probation Officers, officers from the cultural, youth and social services, Officer In Charge of Women and Children's Desk of Police, Director of Zonal Education Medical Officer of Health, representatives from the civil society including Non Governmental Organizations, Community Based Organizations and children's forums. Similarly, the District Child Protection Committees comprise of – the District Secretary, Provincial Commissioners of Probation and Child Care and labor, the Coordinators from the National Child Protection Authority, Pediatrician/Judicial

⁹ Which are sometimes also referred to as Divisional Child Development Committee

¹⁰ The NCPA was empowered to appoint sub committees under sec. 15(e) of the Act No.50 of 1998

Medical Officer, the Psychiatrist, the Provincial Directors of Education and Health, , the Deputy Inspector General of Police and the representatives from local and International Non Governmental Organizations, representatives from the civil society including the children’s forums and Community Based Organizations.

Figure 1: Structure of the community protection committee which is linked to the Divisional Child Protection Committee:



Under the Ministry of Child Development and Women’s Affairs Monitoring Committees on the CRC has been established at the National, Provincial and District level. As illustrated in the diagram of child protection structures at different levels in Sri Lanka (see Annex 2) at the Divisional level child rights monitoring and protection work is supported by a Government appointed Child Rights

Promotion Officer (who is appointed by the Department of Probation and Child Care Services) and reports to the Divisional Secretary. Thus, as part of Plan's efforts to strengthen community based child protection mechanisms, it also supports initiatives to strengthen the Divisional and District committees on child protection and CRC monitoring that are crucial structures in the formal child protection system.

Functional aspects of CBCPMs:

The functions of the National Child Protection Authority are decentralized to the Districts through District Child Protection Committees. The main functions of these committees are: 1) to receive record and refer child abuse complaints; 2) referral of victims of child abuse to relevant institutions; 3) provision of emotional support in Divisions where trained counsellors are available; and 4) to conduct awareness programs and coordinate Government Agencies and Non Governmental Organizations that have a mandate to work with children and their families. Thus, the community based CPCs are linked up with the Child Protection Committees at divisional and district level, which are also linked to the district and provincial level monitoring committees on child rights.

The objectives and roles of the community Child Protection Committees are:

- To increase the knowledge and capacity of children, teachers, parents/ caregivers, CSOs and government duty bearers to raise community awareness and action on child protection and safety measures in families, schools and communities.
- To identify, prevent, monitor and respond to child abuse cases.
- To map the child protection risks and maintaining the databases on vulnerable and excluded children and families.
- When necessary to make referrals to Divisional Child Protection Committee and/or to seek support from Divisional Child Right Promotion Officer.
- To support child and youth involvement in child protection initiatives at community and divisional levels.

The community CPC functions encompass a strong focus on monitoring and prevention work, response to concerns that they are able to address within the community, and referral to the Divisional CPC or to the Divisional Child Right Promotion officer for more complex cases. The CPCs are also involved in care planning and reintegration of children in families when needed. As part of their prevention efforts the CPC members, Child Groups and community volunteers have been involved in awareness raising and campaigns on birth registration, domestic violence, positive discipline, the harm caused by alcohol abuse, and the safety and protection of the children in migrant families. The CPCs also support broader social welfare and recreational activities including organizing sports and cultural activities for the community members.

As volunteers we were able to start the good practices concerning children and non violent behaviour in our own families (community volunteer, North Central Province).

The community volunteers (5 – 15 individuals, depending on the geographical coverage of the community) play an important role in raising awareness among parents on parenting skills including how they can communicate with and guide children through positive discipline. The volunteers also support family support programs to share practical tips for children's safety and protection, and to monitor and support children and families at risk through the community child protection committee, where-ever needed linking children and families to prevention and protection services or referrals for other forms of support. The community volunteers also support the children's clubs/ groups to create a space and opportunities for children's involvement in child protection activities, and to strengthen their knowledge and capacity.

Plan's role in supporting community CPCs is to:

- Strengthen the technical capacities of Divisional Secretaries and train the relevant staff to form or promote Community Child Protection Committees mandated by the Ministry of Child Development and Women's Affairs.
- Facilitate the training of Officers of the Divisional Secretariats to expand the membership of the Community Child Protection Committees to support safe, inclusive and meaningful participation of representatives of children's groups and Community Based Organizations.
- Strengthen the technical capacity of the Community Child Protection Committees to implement family support programmes. The family support programmes will be implemented by the duty bearers and coordinated by the CCPC. The Family support programmes will train and educate parents, children, and young people on identifying children and families that are excluded, marginalized and vulnerable to violence and abuse.
- Use IEC in Family Support Programmes to raise awareness on identifying forms of abuse, prevention, responding to abuse, and supporting family reintegration.
- Forge partnerships with duty bearers and agencies with the technical and operational capacity to implement alcohol and substance abuse prevention programmes with youth.

The **school CPCs** are intended to provide a space where children can raise and discuss safety and protection issues affecting them in schools, and to ensure action by concerned school authorities, teachers, parents and children to create child friendly schools which are inclusive, safe and free from violence. The school CPCs seek to address corporal punishment, bullying and emotional abuse especially in the school settings not only capacitating the teachers, schools administrators but also the policy makers in education sector. These CPCs contribute to Plan's 'Learn without fear' campaign and are in line with the National Child Protection Authority (NCPA) efforts to lobby and guide the Ministry of Education to support CPCs in schools to maintain the education settings free from corporal punishment and bullying.

Plan staff roles in supporting CPCs in schools include:

- To develop the capacity of the committee to identify the children at risk and implement surveillance programmes in collaboration with the Community Child Protection Committees
- To strengthen the technical skills and knowledge of school children and teachers to map child protection issues and concerns of girl and boy children using participatory methods.
- Strengthen the technical capacity of the committee to develop an annual action plan with girl and boy children and collaboratively monitor the plan (special groups of children such as those living with disability, extremely poor children, and other vulnerable groups)
- Strengthen the capacity of the school child protection committees to mobilize local resources for targeted assistance for children who need educational support.
- Strengthen the technical knowledge, capacity and attitudes of the school principals, administrators, teachers and senior students to develop and follow norms on positive discipline, and discourage all forms of violence in schools including bullying.
- To train teachers for counselling and the provision of emotional support for children who need services especially victims of abuse who need to be re-integrated.
- To scale up the best practices of child media projects implemented in collaboration with the National Institute of Education and the Wijeya children's newspaper to capture and disseminate information on child protection and scaling up best practices. School child media clubs will also be linked to national partners in media to disseminate experiences and information of children on child protection and participation.

Plan also supports capacity building of police desks to support reporting and more sensitive and systematic responses by the police to child and women protection cases. Officers from the police desks are often one of the most proactive members of the child protection committees at divisional and district levels. They are also providing important support to the community level CPCs to conduct the community outreach events on prevention, and support responses to cases.

Process of identifying and responding to child protection cases:

Through the community CPCs the main protection issues that are being identified and responded to include: child abuse – negligence (leaving children unsupervised), beating, scolding (including corporal punishment in education settings through the school based CPCs); emotional abuse and neglect; bullying of children including peer bullying; child marriage and teenage pregnancies; sexual abuse especially by the family members, relations and neighbours; and exploitative child work including excessive household chores. Such concerns have been identified through observation by CPC members, through reports made to CPC members by concerned family or community members, and through mapping exercises undertaken by CPC members to identify risks of safety and protection and to identify the most vulnerable children and families in their community.

The child protection concerns that are most easily addressed by CPC members within the community include: addressing negligence due to children being left unsupervised while the parents/ caregivers are working. CPC members encourage and support the parents to identify safe practices for taking care of their children while they are working away from their homes or communities. Parents are also encouraged to send their children to school, allowing them to do productive work after school hours, rather than missing school to work. Furthermore, through awareness raising on positive discipline the community volunteers and child/ youth group members have been able to reduce beating of children by parents, caregivers and teachers.

The protection issue that is most difficult for the community CPC members to solve is child sexual abuse. Such cases are generally referred to the Divisional CPC. In responding to child sexual abuse there are often delays in legal procedures for prosecutions, and such delays sometimes may affect the credibility of existing CPCs in the communities as community members find the response inefficient and ineffective. Children have also raised concerns regarding families members use of alcohol and drugs which is often associated with increased violent behaviour towards children and other child rights violations. Children have requested support for increased awareness raising initiatives to prevent parents and caregivers drug and alcohol use.

Increased reporting and response to child protection through community volunteers, CPCs and child/ youth groups, Medawachchia, North Central Province¹¹:

In Medawachchia division the police desk for children and women covers more than 40 Grama Niladhari Divisions (administrative communities). Some communities are 40 – 50 km away from the police desk which makes it difficult for children and families to report child protection cases, and makes it more difficult for the police to follow up on cases. Since the establishment of the community based child protection mechanisms in 12 remote marginalised communities in the last 18 months community members, children and youth have been empowered to identify, prevent and respond to child protection and safety concerns. When establishing the CBCPMs the Divisional officials disseminated and displayed notices regarding the process of community based child protection activities with an open invitation for the interested volunteers, children and youth. 260 volunteers from the 12 communities applied, and 220 community volunteers joined with our trainings. During the trainings, volunteers discussed issues regarding the safety, potential risks and current trends in abuse incidents in their communities, and they discussed various solutions to prevent and to respond to different forms of child abuse. After the training the community volunteers and child/ youth groups have undertaken social maps to identify children and families that face risks. The community volunteers regularly update Divisional CRC members about children's situation, and share cases which require deeper attention such as legal and medical support. As a result of the voluntary work of community volunteers and child youth groups in the past 12 months the child and women police desk have received reports of 37 serious incidents including sexual abuse, incest and cruelty against children; and have been able to support referrals for community based response to 52 incidents concerning family disputes, neglect of children, and domestic violence. Furthermore, through joint efforts by the community CPCs and officers at divisional level

¹¹ Shared by a divisional level police official during participatory activities undertaken as part of the regional CBCPM study, April 2012

17 families have been referred to the social security service to access financial or other forms of support (e.g. medical treatments, equipments for the children with special needs, housing and land plots etc.)

In the Sri Lankan context child protection case management is primarily used by multi-sector teams within government hospitals. For example, in responding to severe abuse and child sexual abuse cases the process is led by a team of medical professionals of paediatrician, Judiciary Medical Officer (JMO), and a Psychiatrist. Other professionals including: social workers, probation officers, psychologists, and the police are also involved.

While Plan staff are involved in reporting child protection incidents through the CPCs or directly to the investigating officers, the role of Plan staff is minimal in case management. However, Plan staff support the involvement of community CPCs in the process and facilitate the coordination through the divisional and district child protection committees. During the process of preparing the care plan for the child the role of the Probation Officer as the social worker of the panel is prominent. When preparing for family re-unification the Probation Officer establishes proper coordination with the respective CPC and community volunteers to engage them in preparations for family re-unification and reintegration, and for ongoing monitoring and follow up. Based on the CPC members monitoring and feedback to the probation officer progress reports are made.

While all the current community CPCs being supported are in rural communities supported under long term development programming, during the Tsunami response CPCs were also established to support children's psychosocial recovery and family reintegration efforts.

Role of community based CPCs as part of the Tsunami Disaster response:

Community based child protection committees were also established in communities affected by the 2004 Tsunami. The interventions were carried out by the special Plan Program Unit for Tsunami Disaster Response. Plan's role was to conduct the psycho social interventions for the children and support the family re-unification process of separated children. After family re-unification the CPCs have supported the functioning of children's resource centers in communities where the children were given the opportunities to access learning, recreation, sports and cultural events.

Children's participation and involvement in CBCPM:

Within the 30 communities where CPCs have been established children's groups/ clubs are also supported to enable children's active participation in awareness raising and action initiatives to prevent and promote the protection of children in families, schools and communities. The child groups/ clubs generally involve girls and boys aged 10 -18 years. The children's groups/clubs vary in their membership, however many clubs have 40 – 60 members. In the Sri Lankan context the idea of children clubs is very popular and many institutions have been supporting these clubs. However, concerns regarding the effectiveness of the children's clubs in promoting children's citizenship and participation in governance, and questions regarding the inclusion and participation of the most marginalised children have been raised by some of Plan's child protection staff members. Thus, in areas where the CBCPM is being developed increased efforts are underway to support inclusive children's groups which encourage participation of the most marginalised children, including working children, and children with disabilities.

Child / youth groups have been supported through training on child rights, child protection and life skills. Child group representatives attend both the community and divisional level child protection committees to support prevention, reporting, response and referral to address child protection concerns. Some child leaders have also received training to enhancing their skills in befriending children (especially children who are excluded) and in basic counselling skills to support children who are at risk of or who have experienced abuse.

Through their child groups girls and boys are more informed of their rights, they are able to play a crucial role in prevention efforts, in raising awareness, ensuring identification and response to child protection concerns. Children have been involved in developing social risk maps, to identify children and families that are at risk, and to ensure support to such children and families to reduce their vulnerability. Children can reach out to other children to share information on child rights, protection and life skills through peer education; and can be-friend and support children who face risks, or need support.

We, members of the children's club developed a map of our community and identified the children at risk and the dangerous places for children. We organized a joint visit to the homes where children face risks (e.g. their parents are working abroad, they are from separated families, or families with parents who are addicted to alcohol or drugs). When we were doing such family visits we involved some of our teachers and volunteer leaders from the village level organizations. Our presence in the homes of our friends gave them a feeling of recognition and honour... The teachers gained a more proper understanding of the background of our friends and how to support them in continuing their school activities. The teachers and community volunteers appreciated the way that we thought about our own friends and our good intention to support to them. Everybody started to pay more special attention for such children and families and to interact more with them. (16 year old boy, Children's group leader, North Central province)

Through creative media initiatives, production of their own newspapers, drama and other cultural forms of expression girls and boys are playing active roles in awareness raising and advocacy initiatives on domestic violence, corporal punishment, alcohol and substance abuse, and peer bullying within the community. Children are more effective in sharing information and messages on child protection among their peers, including information about available resources and services that children can access to ensure that they are better protected. Furthermore, through their child groups and involvement in CPCs children are also gaining increased opportunity and space to participate in community decisions that affect them.

However, key challenges faced when supporting children's participation in community protection initiatives include: time constraints; risks faced due to their participation; manipulation and under utilisation of children; and technical processes. Time constraints are faced as girls and boys in rural communities are generally busy with school, household/ land/ animal husbandry work to help their families and/or other productive work to support the families' income. Children often need to negotiate use of their limited 'free time' with their parents/ caregivers to be able to participate in their child group and other child protection related activities. The times that other CPC members are available to meet may not always be times that the children's representatives are available. If children participate in children's groups when their parents do not agree, they may risk punishments. In addition, some adolescent girls face risks when they are moving around their community for children's group activities. Thus, increased efforts are needed to ensure that girls and boys are safe while participating in activities that are of interest to them.

Furthermore, adults continue to under estimate and under utilize children's potential. Due to children's relative lack of power compared with adults, dangers remain that adults are able to manipulate children to get them to do what they want, rather than supporting children's genuine participation in decision making processes and acting upon children's suggestions. Furthermore, when dealing with complex child protection cases, including child sexual abuse cases the process becomes more technical, involving higher level authorities and the space for Child Group involvement in the process is reduced.

To strengthen their children's groups/ clubs their members would like increased opportunities to network with and learn from children's groups in other communities. There is also an ongoing need for sensitisation of parents/ caregivers, community volunteers, teachers, community elders and local officials on the benefits of children's participation so that girls and boys can be further supported to

participation in child protection initiatives and other governance issues affecting them in their local communities.

Capacity and support systems:

Plan's approach to child protection system strengthening is informed by the study and analysis of existing concepts, approaches and frameworks that other agencies are using, and by Plan's own organisational rights based child centred community development approach. Plan analyses and identifies gaps in the existing mechanisms that are needed to increase the realisation of children's protection rights. Through strategic partnerships with the Ministry of Child Development and Women Plan is demonstrating how existing gaps in the implementation of child protection mechanisms at the community level can be addressed through Plan's work in Programme Units in specific locations and time frames. Plan regularly updates the Ministry and relevant departments on the progress made in efforts to strengthen community based child protection mechanisms and their linkages to higher level child protection structures.

Plan's capacity building approach is further informed by child rights situational analysis and efforts to strengthen the responsibilities of duty bearers (government, parents/ caregivers, teachers, police, probation/ social workers) to prevent and protect children from all forms of violence¹². CPC members from community and divisional level committees receive training that enhances their knowledge, skills and attitudes to create a protective environment for children. The training encompasses information on child rights, child protection, relevant laws and policies, the importance of listening to the child and making decisions in the best interests of the child, sensitive handling of cases and referrals. Awareness raising for parents on child protection concerns and training in positive discipline skills are also supported by CPC members, especially by the community volunteers and by Plan staff. As described above, children are also empowered as right holders with knowledge, skills and value to better assert their rights to protection.

Strengthening the capacity of the Divisional Child Protection Committee, Uva¹³:

In Sri Lanka, child abuse may be denied, un-recognised or not responded to effectively due to lack of knowledge and weaknesses in co-ordination and response by concerns duty bearers. In Wellaway division in the Southeast Programme area, the Divisional Child Protection Committee was not functional. The members lacked knowledge and consistency among the members on the respective roles and responsibilities towards the divisional child protection committee, and coordination among the members was poor. There were delays to respond to the child abuse incidents reported from the communities, which contributed to a lack of confidence and trust among the communities over the divisional child protection committee. Plan entered into a strategic partnership with the Divisional Secretariat to conduct capacity building workshops for community level duty bearers on child protection. Training was organized for members of the divisional child protection committees and community level child protection committees. The training enabled discussions on the definition of a child, basic concepts of child development and protection and the impact of child abuse. It supported an increase the knowledge and capacity of individuals to respond to child abuse incidents and to implement prevention activities at community level. Plan also supported the Divisional CPC to make a 3 month action plan and to increase coordination among the members, and to increase support to the community level CPC.

¹² See annex 3 that provides an overview of training provided by Plan Sri Lanka to actors involved in child protection mechanisms at the community and divisional levels.

¹³ Plan Powerpoint presentation of a Case Study: Supporting to the Divisional Child Protection Committee of Wellaway; an South East PU Progress report (CPO 13) from child protection and participation section (title: protecting children through building capacity).

The Grama Niladhari, the chief administrator of the division explained how: *“The training helped me to develop my attitudes. More often in the trainings we attend, the main objective is to teach us something related to our job... , sometimes we have to listen to what we already knew or have heard from someone. But in this experience prior to the workshop there was a test to assess what we know on the factors that we are going to discuss. We understood that our knowledge on children and their development was very limited.... After the workshop I understood that I had a wrong perception about child rights as I used to see it as a challenge for the adults. But now I realize that it is our responsibility to protect them and ensure that all the children in our communities are living happily enjoying their rights. Before the workshop I was reluctant to accept that some child protection issues are widespread in Sri Lanka. But now I understand the severity of the issue. I am conscious of my individual commitments to establish a safe and protective environment in my home with my own children first and then with my neighbours and the community”*

One of the public Health officials, a nursing sister from Wellawaya who attended one of the trainings shared her views. *“As health workers we are very much concerned about nutrition and care. This was so for teenage pregnancies that we so often in our area. Little we realized the child protection element in it. All what we did was to ensure that the young mother is fit enough to deliver a healthy baby. But after the training, I got conscious that this is a serious protection issue in our society that we as health workers can make young people and parents more aware. I will share these learnings with my colleagues at the hospital”*

Through Plan’s CCCD approach good relations are established and strengthened within communities that facilitate training, mentoring, and receptiveness to technical advice to increase communities’ capacity to better protect children from different forms of violence. The successes of the CPC activities in the community are more dependent on the mobilisation of human interest and strengthened capacity of community based volunteers to have necessary knowledge, skills and values to prevent and respond to child protection, rather than on financial inputs. However, relying on volunteers has its limitations and thus it is crucial that the community CPC members have clarity on their roles and responsibilities and that the community CPC has proper recognition and a clear mandate to undertake prevention and protection activities. There was also an interesting suggestion from members of the Divisional CRC to link the child-youth leaders to the academic and diploma courses on child protection and social works so that they may (if they wish to) develop their career path and ensure better service for the communities.

Linkages with civil society and Government:

There are different CBOs and children’s groups operating in different communities. Thus, Plan has tried to mobilize different CBOs, child /youth groups, and women’s groups to involve their representatives in the Community CPC. As mentioned linkages between the community based CPC and the Divisional and District level CPCs are also strengthened by Plan to ensure clear systems for referral and response to child protection concerns. The mandate of the child protection committees at divisional and district levels is to maintain horizontal and vertical coordination among the professionals, individuals and institutions that are working through the multi disciplinary approaches on prevention and surveillance of child abuse (see Annex 2).

Plan also supports networking and experience sharing horizontally among CPCs supported in neighbouring communities. Strong coordination can be seen among the CPCs in different communities and they are really interested to share not only their lessons and experience but their available resources also. They see their coordination and synergy as a strength when they represent and interact with the divisional and district level child protection committees.

In terms of linkages with other areas of Plan’s work, through the establishment of school based CPCs there are clear links between the education and protection programme work and contributions to the global campaign “Learn without fear”. Emergency preparedness and mainstreaming on child protection and participation in emergencies also enables some linkages with work on DRR, though these linkages can be furthered strengthened.

Monitoring and evaluation system and process:

Plan's Annual Participatory Programme Reviews in the three Programme Units generates qualitative and quantitative information and data on the progress of the strategies, the corrective action required, and the best practices. The process of participatory reviews in each quarter are facilitated by the designated schools, communities and divisions; and the mid-term review is facilitated after one and a half years of project period to inform Plan project strategies and activities. The results of the mid-term review of the project will be incorporated into the Plan's overall midterm review of the Country Strategic Plan and the Child Protection Country Program.

Furthermore, in the JNO child protection project which is supporting community based child protection mechanisms in the 3 PUs the following process and outcome indicators are being used:

Number of children's/youth groups and Civil Society Organizations represented and actively participating in community child protection committees;

Number of children/youth, teachers, school principals, parents/care givers, Civil Society;

Organizations members who acquire the minimum knowledge on safety and protection;

Number of community, school and divisional Committees that recognize and create the space for child/youth groups to participate in child protection initiatives;

Number of community and divisional committees that maintain reliable data on age, gender, and location of children with protection risks.

Participatory tools and indicators are also being developed with children/youth and communities. In project areas where community CPCs are being established assessments are undertaken by Plan PU staff to assess understanding, knowledge and practice on child protection and safety. This will be done with a selected sample of children, parents and care givers, teachers and child protection duty bearers. During the analysis the gender segregated information will be generated. Furthermore, the divisional level Child Rights Promotion Officer is often involved in the assessments. A final evaluation of the 3 year JNO project is planned to capture the best practices on addressing the issues of violence and abuse against children at different settings.

Sustainability and scale up of CBCPMs:

Through Plan's approach which is based on an analysis of the existing child protection system, and a collaborative approach to with the Ministry of Child Development and Women's Affairs, the concerned authorities at different levels (provincial, district, divisional) and with communities they are in a good position to influence sustainability and scale up of community based CPCs.

In 2005 the Ministry of Child Development and Women's Affairs was created as the coordinating body of the different departments and other state agencies responsible for child protection namely, the National Child Protection Authority (which was established in 1998) and the Department of Probation and Child Care. The other main duty bearers are the Children and Women's Desks of Sri Lanka Police Department (which were established as separate units in the Police Department since 1995) and the Ministry of Justice and Law Reform. The National Child Protection Authority and the Ministry of Child Development and Women's Affairs are responsible for formulating the policies and regulatory frameworks and recommending the legal reforms to establish a functional child protection system with lateral coordination.

The department of Probation and Child Care services under the purview of Ministry of Child Development is the mandated authority to implement and monitor the progress of child protection committees at community and divisional levels which are the crucial entity to ensure that the CBCPMs are functioning towards the designated objectives. Plan has established a clear partnership with the probation department to support the efficient implementation of community and divisional child protection committees in the selected divisions and communities. The probation department has recognized the Plan's contribution and they have put the measures to avoid the duplications by other agencies to ensure that the project concept is not disturbed and the allocated resources are utilized efficiently.

Plan is currently supporting community based CPCs through a 3 year programme supported by funds from JNO¹⁴. The department of Probation and Child Care has also deployed the required human resources in the Plan working divisions to coordinate the project activities with proper documentation process. The Minister of Child Development and Women's Affairs has personally attended review meetings concerning the CBCPM involving divisional level officers and community volunteers in Medawachchiya Division; and has expressed commitment to support scale up of this model by Plan and other child rights based organisations.

The establishment of a National Monitoring Committee on CRC (under the Ministry of Child Development and Women's Affairs) has also supported the development and implementation of provincial and district level monitoring committees on child rights. The District Committees are one of the strategies supported by Plan and UNICEF to decentralize the child protection mechanisms. While the support from Plan goes to the districts in the South, UNICEF supports the strengthening of district committees in areas of the conflict affected north and east of the country. The efforts of the Children and Women's Desks of the Sri Lanka police are also supported by Plan to strengthen their role of prevention and surveillance of child abuse, violence and exploitation.

Planned documentation of best practices in addressing corporal punishment and violence in schools and communities will be used as a advocacy tool with the Ministry of Education and the National Child Protection Authority to scale up their collaborative initiative on preventing corporal punishment and bullying in education settings especially in government schools; and with the Ministry of Child Development and Women's Affairs to scale up support to community CPCs.

Plan's CCCD approach is conducive to more sustainable programming as it emphasises participatory planning with children and adults, mobilising local human and materials resources to better identify and protect children, while also supporting referrals to mandated child protection committees at the divisional and/or district level. The financial investments in the communities are fairly minimal. The CPC members are volunteers, who are just provided with a small sum as an annual appreciation. The communities are provided with low cost resources including: child friendly visual IEC materials (visual aids, posters, comic books), sign boards, minute books and lockers (to keep locked confidential records). Furthermore, the communities are encouraged to identify and maintain community based resource centres where children and adults can undertake awareness raising and other child protection activities. While the community CPC committee does not receive any funds from Plan, they receive a limited allocation from the local government.

However, an existing weakness in terms of sustainability is that the current training provided to CPC members, including to the community volunteers is directly facilitated by Plan. For future sustainability concerned government agencies should be encouraged to take on such capacity building roles. The Ministry of Child Development may be one of the potential partners as already Plan has developed the modules, contents and materials for the community volunteers, families and children ministry can endorse the literature and publish them can be utilized for the same kind of projects.

Key achievements, challenges and lessons learned:

Key achievements of Plan's work to strengthen CPCs at school, community and divisional level:

- Increased awareness, discussions and knowledge among children, parents, community members and teachers on a range of child protection and safety concerns and positive discipline. Changed attitudes that children's needs need to be prioritised even when parents/

¹⁴ \$638,000 (over 3 years)

caregivers are busy. Increased recognition among parents and community members that good attitudes and efforts within the community can help reduce the risks and find solutions to some child protection concerns.

- Emerging understanding of the roles and responsibilities of communities in protecting children; and increased knowledge among children and adults about where they can report child protection concerns to.
- Increased recognition of the role children can play in their self protection.
- Prevention of child neglect and child abuse incidents and subsequent risks, including reduction in beating by parents and teachers, reduction in family disputes, and reduced bullying among children.
- Improved relations between the communities and child protection institutions at divisional level through CPC and community volunteer coordination with the Child Rights Promotion Officer and Police Desk.
- Divisional CRC members have increased understanding of their roles and responsibilities; and there is more understanding of the benefits of involving community CPC representatives including children's representatives in the CPCs at divisional and district level.
- There is more downward accountability to children, families and communities by the bureaucrats and there is more efficient responses to address child protection concerns.
- At a national level the community CPCs are contributing to increased understanding on the most significant child protection issues affecting children in different parts of the country.

Challenges identified during assessments of Divisional Child Protection Committees and efforts to overcome them¹⁵:

Assessments done by the NCPA and Plan's practical experience in the field revealed that District and Divisional Committees that do exist are under resourced and are not fully functional. As a result, many cases of child abuse, exploitation or violence were unreported or were not addressed effectively. Consequently, Plan has worked with the NCPA since 2004 to extend its mandate to the community level. In 2006 Plan Sri Lanka decentralized the project to the Programme Units so that the PUs could localize the overarching strategies to the local context. However, supporting the District Committees in the Districts that Plan works too was a challenge as the lack of physical resources, clearly defined roles, responsibilities for staff deployed to the Districts, high staff turn over, and limitations in knowledge and skills of staff were serious constraints. The Assessment showed that some of the District Committees were ineffective as they were not fully functional. The implementation of the mandate is dependent on the motivation and commitment of the members of the committee. Plan's role in ensuring the functionality of the District Child Protection Committees was confined to the provision of equipment, supporting training for staff and monitoring. To address these challenges, the PUs shifted their focus to the Divisional Committees that are chaired by the Divisional Secretary and have representation from all of the relevant state and non-state institutions and agencies dealing with child protection in a division. Plan has supported the Divisional Committees to become functional through the transfer of knowledge, skills, promoted inter-agency cooperation and operational capacity for outreach programmes. Plan continues to monitor the functionality of the Divisional Committees. In addition, Plan has supported the planning processes, governance and operational capacity of District Committees. The provision of equipment was mainly for documentation; outreach, data management and promoting inter agency cooperation through sharing of information.

Key challenges:

- Lack of due recognition for the community volunteers and children at community level. In some communities, the involvement of community volunteers and child-youth groups is challenged and less recognized, mainly as they are not coming from village level elite families.

¹⁵ Plan Sri Lanka (2011) Final Evaluation of the Child Protection Project (GAD 87) by Professor Harendra de Silva.

- Getting the voluntary involvement of community members when they have their own livelihood/ professional or personal familial responsibilities to fulfil (especially during cultivation and harvesting periods). There needs to be some kind of appreciation or recognition of the time and efforts provided by the community volunteers (in CPCs).
- Ensuring confidentiality and the principle of 'do no harm' during community based child protection work. When the child protection concerns are discussed within the community it can affect the dignity, privacy and security of parties involved. The principle of best interest needs to more realistically practiced, and impartial processes need to be ensured while responding to the victim and the perpetrator.
- Some adults do not recognise children's capabilities; and there is insufficient support for children's role in child protection from some teachers and school administration.
- Social security schemes are insufficient for supporting the poorest children and families who cannot afford even their primary needs, care and safety of the children.
- Community volunteers and their family members face threats from accused perpetrators for intervening in some child protection cases.
- Lack of recognition and readiness among Divisional CPCs (in some areas) for involving and listening to community representatives and children representatives in the DCPCs.
- Under-resourced and not fully functional Divisional CPCs that creates delays and ineffective response to referrals made from community CPCs to the divisional level. There are no central funds at the divisional level to support vulnerable children and families.
- Due to the heavy workload of Plan's community development facilitators they do not have sufficient time to monitor the CBCPMs.

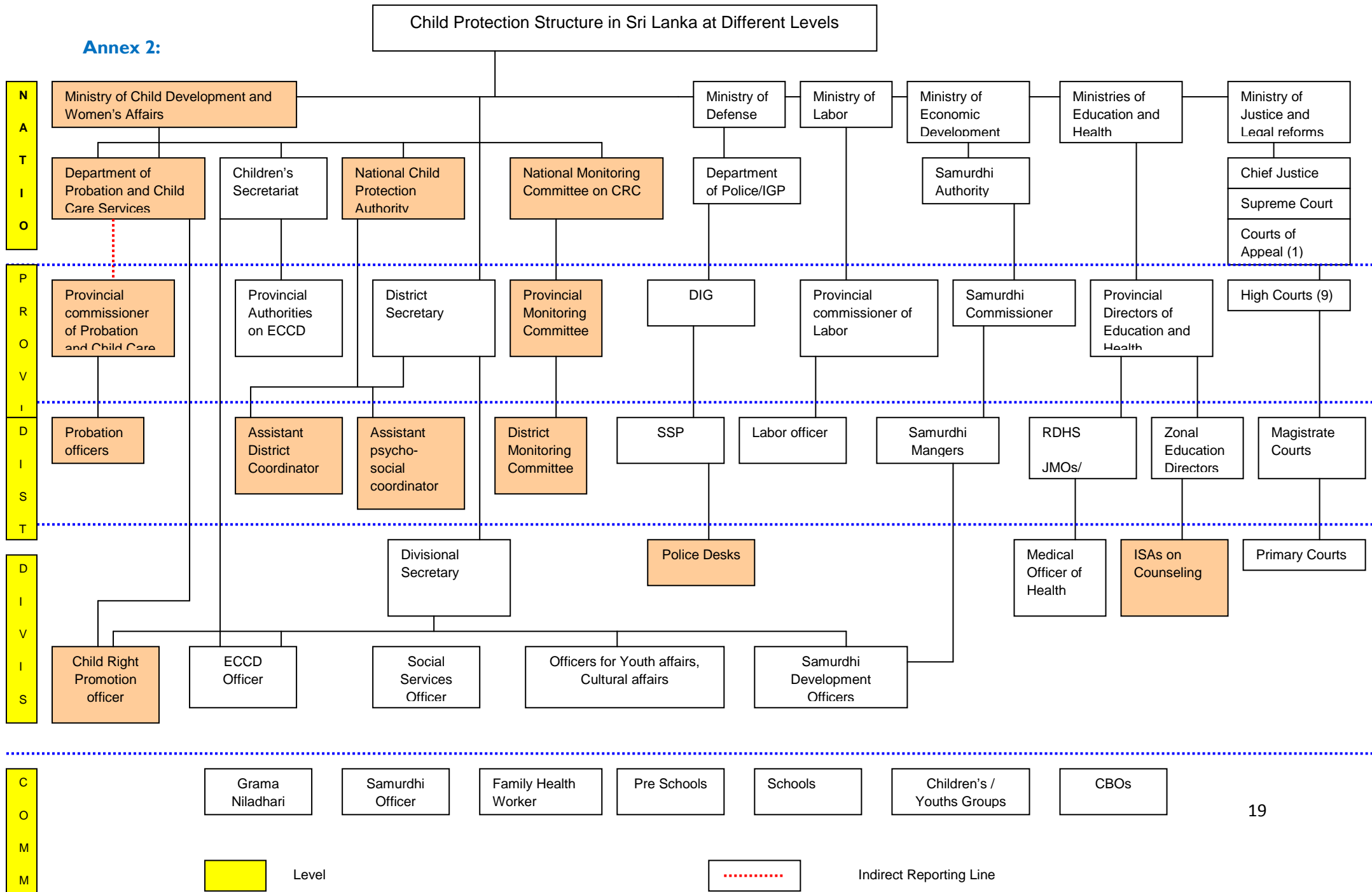
Key lessons learned:

- Support for meaningful children's participation is one of the essential aspects to include in the TORs and mandates of the community and divisional child protection committees – as when children are meaningfully involved the real protection concerns facing girls and boys can be heard and adult duty bearers can be mobilized to respond more effectively.
- While including children's representatives in the CPCs, it is also important to create separate forums for children at community and divisional level to ensure that children are better informed and prepared to represent children in the community and divisional child protection committees. Minimum standards for children' participation need to be applied to ensure inclusive participation reaching and meaningfully involving the most marginalized children (including the children in different settings e.g. children in care homes, children with disabilities, out of school working children) etc
- Plan had earlier supported the divisional child protection committee and the children and women's police desk (e.g. in Medawachchiya Division) to deliver their services efficiently and in a child friendly way. However, they had faced challenges in approaching communities especially at the periphery of the division. The designated community volunteers with proper trainings and guidance have been able to eliminate the gap, as they act as a bridge between families and service providers at the divisional level.
- Community volunteers undertaking voluntary social work should be issued with an identity card or equivalent document to ensure due recognition for their interventions.
- Increased efforts are needed to ensure confidentiality of child protection cases, and to develop and maintain a confidential data base system on child protection cases and children at risk.
- The community volunteer groups are still more close to Plan rather than the duty bearers at divisional level. For sustainability and effectiveness their partnerships with the divisional duty bearers should be further strengthened.

Annex 1: Stakeholders involved in CBCPM study in Sri Lanka, April 2012

Who?	Role and location:	Gender:		Age range (if children)	Total number:
		Male	Female		
Members of children's groups	Wiralmurippulwa Children's Groups, North Central province	5 boys	7 girls	12- 18 years	12
Community volunteers	Medawachchiya Division, Anuradhapura District, North Central	4 men	9 women		13
Members of Divisional Child Protection Committee	Medawachchiya Division, Anuradhapura District, North Central Key members of Division CRC including the: Child Right Promotion Officer (CRPO), Medical Officer, Probation Officer, In Charge Officer of the Police Desk, and Family Health Worker	2 men	3 women		5
Plan Programme Unit	Plan staff from the Programme Unit North Central Province including: Program Unit Manager, Assistant Programme Unit Manager, Technical Adviser and 8 Community Development Facilitators	10 men	1 woman		11
Total		5 boys, 16 men	7 girls, 13 women		41

Annex 2:



Annex 3: An overview of training provided by Plan Sri Lanka to actors involved in child protection mechanisms:

Community
Volunteers

Year of training:	Name of training (main subject):	Who was included:	Who facilitated:	Was there a follow up training?
2011 & 2012	<p>“Creating a Protective Environment for Children”</p> <p>Capacity building of the community volunteers for creating a safe and sound environment for children in their own communities</p>	<p>Community volunteers those who are interested in child protection and working with children Men and Women</p> <p>16 trainings (three day residential) 30 -35 participant for each training</p>	<p>Plan staff</p> <p>External professionals for the thematic sessions</p>	<p>Yes, participatory review meeting where as the participants could share their realistic approaches and actions after the training to create synergies and establish community forums for child protection</p>
2011 & 2012	<p>“Creating a Protective Environment for Children”</p> <p>Training for the police officers on responding, investigation and ensuring the best interest for the abused children. How effectively represent the child protection committees at district and divisional levels as the officers those who are having the first hand experience of reveling the child abuse incidents.</p> <p>How the responding and investigation process make child friendly and support to the communities for prevention the incidents.</p>	<p>Women and Child Police desks in Uva province.</p> <p>(5 day residential trainings for two batches – 32 participants for each batch</p>	<p>Plan staff</p> <p>External professionals for the thematic sessions</p>	<p>Yes</p>
2011 & 2012	<p>“Creating a Protective Environment for Children”</p> <p>To enhance the technical capacity of the members of the Divisional Child Protection Committees to ensure the efficiency and coordination where as the community child protection committees are better supported</p>	<p>3 day residential trainings for the members of 8 divisions in Plan working areas</p> <p>30 – 35 participants for each training</p>		<p>Yes, regular follow up and review meetings on the progress of actions plans developed at the end of trainings. Meetings are conducted at divisional levels</p>