STEP BY STEP TOWARDS CHILD SAFER COMMUNITIES

Resource handbook for working with communities to enhance child protection

A guide for field practitioners



RAŠA SEKULOVIĆ

STEPHANIE DELANEY

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Plan Asia Regional Office 2014

For more information, please contact:

Plan Asia Regional Office 14th Floor, 253 Asoke Building Sukhumvit 21, Klongtoey Nua Wattana, Bangkok 10110, Thailand Tel: +66 2 204 2630-4 Fax: +66 2 204 2629 e-mail: asia.ro@plan-international.org www.plan-international.org/asia

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Overall concept and supervision: Raša Sekulović, Plan Asia Regional Child Protection Adviser

Authors: Raša Sekulović and Stephanie Delaney

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Authors

CONTENTS

Acronyms and Glossary Introduction

Introduction	3
The place of communities in protecting children	3
Plan's work with Community-Based Child Protection Mechanisms in Asia	5
Work with children linked to work with communities	8
Purpose of this resource handbook	8
Use of the resource handbook	9
How the resource handbook was developed	10
Format of the resource handbook: A step-by-step guide	11
Form and Function of Community-Based Child Protection Mechanisms	15
Before We Start: Plan Internal Processes	20
STEP ONE: Engaging Communities	21
Consult, engage and mobilise communities before setting up CBCPMs	23
STEP TWO: Mapping the Child Protection Context	27
Mapping of service providers and agencies	29
Understand the legal and policy framework (including economic context)	31
Foster positive and constructive working relationships and alliances with stakeholders and partners (from the formal sector)	33
STEP THREE: Explore Community Dynamics and Influences	35
Understanding the situation for children (building on	
Child Rights Situation Analysis)	37
STEP FOUR: Establishing CBCPMs	43
Considering risk and safety Designing for context	45 47
Designing for context	47
STEP FIVE: Children's Involvement	53
STEP SIX: Capacity Building and Support for CBCPMs	59
Capacity building requirements	62
STEP SEVEN: Actions for CBCPMs	65
Awareness raising and sensitisation	68
Advocacy and influencing policy	69

STEP EIGHT: Res	sponding to Child Protection Concerns	71			
	reporting mechanisms	73			
Identifying cases and risk assessment					
Especially challenging situations					
STEP NINE: Monitoring and Review/Evaluation					
Summary and Final Thoughts					
Resources and R	eferences	84			
TOOLS		87			
Tool One	Protection and Risk target exercise	89			
Tool Two	Mapping matrix	91			
Tool Three	Case mapping exercise	94			
Tool Four	Framework checklist	95			
Tool Five	Reminder - international human rights legal				
	minimum ages definitions	96			
Tool Six	Template roles and responsibilities for agencies	100			
Tool Seven	Focus group discussion with community members	101			
Tool Eight	Areas of consideration	102			
Tool Nine	Risk evaluation form	104			
Tool Ten	Selection criteria for membership	105			
Tool Eleven	Self declaration form	106			
Tool Twelve	Code of conduct for members	107			
Tool Thirteen	Summary of recommendations for				
	involving children in CBCPMs	109			
Tool Fourteen	Training needs assessment template	111			
Tool Fifteen	Checklist of traditional harmful practices	112			
Tool Sixteen	Sample referral form	113			
Tool Seventeer	n Risk assessment exercise	115			
Tool Eightteen	Sample data collection form				
	Number of functioning CBCPMs - monitoring indicator	116			
Tool Nineteen	Checklist for establishing and supporting CBCPMs	118			

ACRONYMS AND GLOSSARY

CBCPM	Community-Based Child Protection Mechanism
CRSA	Child Rights Situational Analysis 🥂 🦳
CPC	Child Protection Committee
Plan ARO	Plan Asia Regional Office
PU	Programme Unit
VAC	Violence against Children

Child/Children - Anyone under the age of 18 years old, irrespective of location or age of majority in country.

Community - A group of interacting people who live in some geographical proximity to one another and usually shares common values and interests. The term refers to a social unit larger than the household. This definition applies equally to rural and urban settings.

Community-Based Child Protection Mechanism - A network or group of individuals at community level who work in a coordinated manner towards protection of children from all forms of violence, in all settings. Such mechanisms can be indigenous or externally initiated and supported. They may be more formal or informal in their structure and functioning. CBCPMs are linked and contribute to child protection systems.

National Child Protection System - A comprehensive, interacting and sustainable series of functions and structures including laws, policies, and services (at all levels) with the purpose of preventing and responding to all forms of violence against all children.



INTRODUCTION

The place of communities in protecting children

The UN Violence against Children Study (VAC Study) highlighted and confirmed that child can, and do, experience violence¹ in all settings, including within the home and in the community. Almost at the same time it became more widely acknowledged that although thematic child protection programmes, such as those for street or trafficked children, were still needed, the concentration on such interventions left gaps in ensuring the protection of all children.

What is meant by national child protection system?

Plan defines a child protection system as:

"A comprehensive, interacting and sustainable series of functions and structures including laws, policies, and services (at all levels) with the purpose of preventing and responding to all forms of violence against all children."

From "Protection from Violence is Every Child's Right": Plan International's Global Strategy for Child Protection Programming, October 2014.

It has been recognised that what is needed is a holistic approach to the prevention and response to child protection. This includes ensuring that services and procedures work in synergy across sectors, with a well capacitised workforce and avoiding the duplication of efforts in order to maximise resources.

As a result, considerable efforts have been placed on work to develop national child protection systems. This initially concentrated on conceptualising the role of formal structures and services (such as social welfare departments, police and health); however the importance of involving communities in the work of the national child protection system and in efforts to protect children has become increasing emphasised.

This is reflected in Plan Asia's regional child protection thematic sub-strategy "Safe and Sound - Growing up with Protection", which places community-based child protection work at the forefront. Furthermore, Plan International's Global Child Protection Strategy,² clearly articulates as a priority the development of Community-Based Child Protection Mechanisms (CBCPMs).

¹ In this context violence means all forms of abuse and mistreatment towards children, including physical, emotional/psychological and sexual abuse and neglect. For further information see www. unviolencestudy.org

² Plan International (2014) Protection from Violence is Every Child's Right: Plan International's Global Strategy for Child Protection Programming; Plan International, Woking, UK.

For Plan, CBCPMs are:

"A network or group of individuals at community level who work in a coordinated manner towards protection of children from all forms of violence, in all settings. Such mechanisms can be indigenous or externally initiated and supported. They may be more formal or informal in their structure and functioning. CBCPMs are linked and contribute to child protection systems."³

Why involve communities in efforts to protect children?

There are a number of good reasons for ensuring that communities are included in efforts to protect children, including:

- Children live, grow up, work and play in communities it's the community people they are closest to and with whom they have the most contact. Safe children live in safe communities.
- Community-based groups are present on the ground and may be more accessible than more formalised services which may not be accessible to children especially if they live in remote areas or are on the move/nomadic.
- For a variety of reasons, children and families may be reluctant to rely on more formal services or may be worried about the consequences of engaging with them.
- Communities often understand best the problems that children face within their community and how to help solve these in ways which are acceptable and make sense to children and their families.
- Parents have a responsibility to protect children and communities can help support parents, and other carers/guardians, in fulfilling that important role.

³ Ibid.

Plan's work with Community Based Child Protection Mechanisms in Asia

Plan International has a distinct focus on working with communities using child-centred community development (CCCD). This emphasises the importance of ensuring that children's rights and needs are given central prominence in development agendas. Substantial work has been undertaken in this area, both as conscious child protection programme decisions and choices, and also through capitalising on opportunities that have been presented through the evolving nature of work in the programme units.

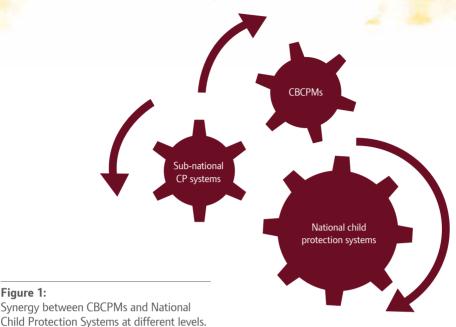
Through this work, Plan has been instrumental in supporting communities to set up numerous community-based child protection mechanisms (CBCPMs) at local levels throughout the Asian region. In 2012, Plan Asia Regional Office (ARO) conducted a comparative analysis of child protection mechanisms at community level in Plan Programme Units across the region.⁴ This study not only captured efforts to date, and quantified the amount of work undertaken, but also highlighted key functional and structural aspects of CBCPMs and learnings stemming from it.

Plan Asia Regional Office (ARO) Child Protection Strategy

Plan ARO has its own child protection strategy "Safe and Sound - Growing Up with Protection" (2013), which informed the global Child Protection strategy, produced by Plan in 2014.

The regional strategy identifies the support of the development of national child protection systems through Plan's work with communities - including the establishment and development of CBCPMs.

 ⁴ Plan ARO (2012) Lessons for Protection - A comparative analysis of community-based child protection mechanisms supported by Plan (2012); Plan Asia Regional Office, Bangkok, Thailand.
 ⁵ Ibid. Figure 1, taken from the Comparative Analysis of CBCPMs in Asia in 2012.⁵ shows how country offices within the region have generally conceptualised how CBCPMs fit and work with national child protection systems.



As a follow-up to the Comparative Analysis of Plan supported CBCPMs in Asia,⁶ Plan has undertaken an evaluation of the effectiveness of the work in countries in the region to establish, support and develop CBCPMs. The purpose of this evaluation was to consider the overall effectiveness of the existing CBCPMs supported by Plan in Asia and their contribution to the improved protection of children from all forms of violence.⁷

Plan's Work in Asia with CBCPMs (2012)

- Over 2,000 CPCPMs were supported in more than 2,400 communities across 11 countries in Asia (over half of which were in India).
- Nearly 90% of Plan supported CBCPMs are in rural areas.
- The most common structure for community-based child protection supported by Plan across the region is the community level Child Protection Committee.

Figure 1:

⁶ For full report see: http://plan-international.org/about-plan/resources/publications/protection/ lessons-for-protection

⁷ ICPREC (2014) Regional Evaluation of the Effectiveness of Community Based Child Protection Mechanisms supported by Plan in Asia: Plan ARO, Bangkok, Thailand.



Work with children linked to work with communities

Plan has always placed a heavy emphasis on the need to work with children directly in order to increase their awareness of their rights and to build their capacities to identify and respond to rights violations.

In 2011 Plan ARO developed a manual – **Bamboo Shoots**⁸ – which was specifically designed to equip staff to raise awareness and empower children regarding their rights and the situation within their own communities. This included identifying gaps in the fulfilment of rights, and prioritising and developing action plans to address these gaps. This manual has been used and adapted throughout Asia to support Plan's efforts to developing children's involvement in recognising and addressing rights violations in their communities.

While Bamboo Shoots considers child rights generally, an accompanying manual developed as part of an extensive regional consultation process in 2013 – **Sticks and Stones**⁹ – focuses on the child's right to protection and children's involvement in their own protection. This includes raising awareness of different risks and the actions children can take to promote their own protection, both through collective actions (for example by children groups) and at an individual level. Although **Sticks and Stones** considers actions by children, it emphasises and underscores that while the involvement of children is critical in promoting their own protection, the responsibility for ensuring protection remains with adults.

Of course, creating an environment where children are empowered to be fully participatory and enjoy all their rights depends largely upon a community which is accepting of children's participation and which is able to ensure the safety of children. This also creates a link with CBCPMs and the active participation of children in realising their rights to protection.

Purpose of this resource handbook

This resource handbook bridges efforts to ensure children's protection through CBCPMs and the aspirations to empower children to participate fully in both realising their rights and contributing to their own protection as explored in **Bamboo Shoots** and **Sticks and Stones**. It seeks to address in a practical way, issues which can be encountered in developing and supporting CBCPMs. This is in response to the challenges that Plan staff working at community level have faced, bringing together learning and experiences from the field to share good practice.

⁸ Plan ARO (2011) Bamboo Shoots - A training manual on child-centred community development/ Child-led community actions for facilitators working with children and youth groups; Plan Asia, Bangkok, Thailand.

⁹ Plan ARO (2013) Sticks and Stones - A training manual for facilitators on how to increase the involvement of children in their own protection; Plan Asia, Bangkok, Thailand.

The handbook is intended to give staff practical tips and ideas based on Plan's experiences from the Asia Region primarily, together with reviews of other similar initiatives in other locations throughout the world. It is not designed to be prescriptive, nor will it be able to offer definitive actions because of the wide variances in the communities with which Plan works. It is important that, when developing CBCPMs, these are designed specifically for the context in which they will be located and in consultation with community members. While there may be similarities between mechanisms, it is important not to just transport a model from another location. The mechanism needs to fit the context, otherwise it is unlikely to be effective and ownership by the community will be difficult to attain. This, in turn, will pose challenges in both the functioning and sustainability of CBCPMs in the longer run.

This handbook is therefore intended to signpost and highlight key considerations and explore typical dilemmas, while offering tips for practical solutions. Many of the suggestions and ideas are derived from common practice, to be further adapted to local context.

Knowledge around the best ways to engage with children, their families and communities in order to increase the protection to children continually develops as experience in this type of work grows. Therefore readers are also encouraged to add their own ideas and experiences to handbook as they identify other concepts and approaches that can helpfully support their work. This also includes specific guidance that has been developed for some countries. For example, Plan Nepal has produced a comprehensive training guide for CBCPMs in Nepal, which includes a broad range of the local context specific issues and related practice guidance.¹⁰

Use of the resource handbook

While the handbook is primarily intended to be a resource for those working at field level and in Programme Units, it may also be useful for technical specialists engaged at programme level as they plan interventions and activities which are centred on community-based child protection and are expected to extend support to the field level practitioners.

It may also be useful to share the handbook with partner organisations and other stakeholders, in particular with government counterparts, to aide with common understandings and commitment. This is important as it is likely that many actors will be seeking to implement activities which are centred on enhancing the national child protection system. Making sure that there is a shared appreciation of the way in which

¹⁰ ERT FULL REFERENCE – check status of English translation / if online

Plan is working with communities will contribute to ensuring that the different actions combine in a holistic way, and do not inadvertently pull against or undermine other initiatives. It is also of critical importance to explore synergies with other Plan supported programmatic interventions in the same communities, so as to further strengthen collaborations with other sectors (particularly early childhood care and development, health and education) and further stimulate coordination.

Where Plan is working with an implementing partner organisation in the field, it is critical that there is a shared understanding between the partner and Plan to create consistency. This link may need reinforcement over the duration of the project, and can be achieved through regular monitoring, briefings and also through providing technical training to the implementing staff.

The handbook can also serve for those who are already quite confident and have experience as a useful reminder, but it is especially aimed for those who may have less experience in working with communities yet are expected to support and/or contribute to establishing community based child protection mechanisms. The handbook, or sections from it, could also be given to community members who may become part of the CBCPM to support them in understanding their role and the processes involved in establishing a CBCPM.

How the resource handbook was developed

The idea for the resource handbook was conceived by Raša Sekulović (Regional Advisor, Child Rights and Protection, Plan Asia) following feedback and observations from country offices. Together with Stephanie Delaney (Child Protection Consultant) a first draft of the handbook was produced. This first draft also considered a number of reports and publications relevant to work with communities¹¹ so that good practice could be identified and shared.

The first draft was used as a basis for consultation with the members of the Plan Asia Child Protection Network (representing all countries in the region) whose feedback was incorporated into further drafts of the handbook, and who validated the final version ensuring that views and experiences from across the Asia region were incorporated in order to make the handbook as practical and relevant as possible.

In addition, information collected through the process of the evaluation of Plan's work in the region on CBCPMs has also been used to complement and shape this resource guide.¹²

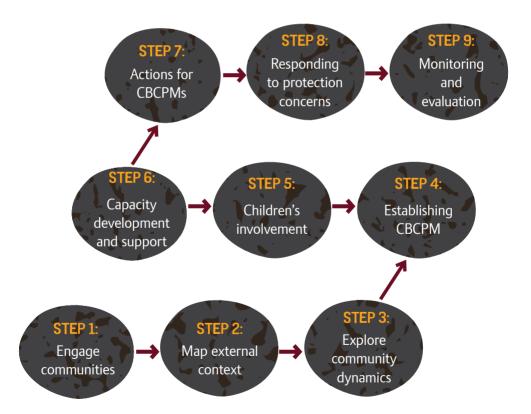
¹¹ Please see Resources Section for a complete list of reports and publications consulted during the drafting of this guide.

¹² For full report, please see: http://plan-international.org/about-plan/resources/publications/protection/ lessons-for-protection

Format of the resource handbook: A step-by-step guide

Establishing and supporting CBCPMs involves a number of steps. Some of these need to be followed in order, as skipping a step may mean missing a critical element in the development of the CBCPMs (such as understanding the context). Some steps can be carried out concurrently. Other steps, for example child participation and capacity building, will need to be revisited numerous times and cannot be considered as one-off activities.

In order to try and organise the material in the handbook in a logical way we have imagined the journey from a community not having a child protection mechanism to a functioning child protection mechanism being established and operating as a series of stepping stones as shown below. This is a broad guidance – the exact order and specific process to be followed will depend on the local situation.



Each of these steps is explored in the following sections of the handbook, subdivided into a number of key practice issues which are discussed. Under each area, a number of resources are signposted. These are either suggestions for further reading, or references to additional useful materials which have been published elsewhere, such as training guides. In selecting these resources we have tried to choose those which are most practical or jargon free, in order to keep with the intention of making this resource relevant to those undertaking direct work. We have also tried, wherever possible, to include materials which are available online.

In addition, we have made suggestions of Tools (which can be found in the appendices). These are not intended to be the only way to address issues but are ideas for how they can be explored or developed at community level – as such, they are the starting point for helping country programmes to develop their own creative solutions together with communities. The tools take a variety of forms, from being a recommended exercise that could be conducted at community level, to a questionnaire/set of considerations or a guidance note that users of this resource may find helpful in working through issues. All the tools are based on responses from the field practitioners and address specific challenges faced in different contexts.

EXPERIENCE FROM THE FIELD – CASE STUDY from Indonesia: From Idea to Operation

The process of establishment of community-based child protection (KPAD) was initiated with an assessment of knowledge, attitude and practice (KAP) towards child protection in 2009. This indicated that in the operating district there was no specific policy framework to regulate child protection. Most allegations of violence against children were settled under customary agreement, partly as legal enforcement was not trusted and was costly.

At district level stakeholders believed that prevention and appropriate education for the community could stimulate actions to reduce the occurence of violence against children. In addition, it was believed that creating a mechanism that would focus on child protection would encourage cases to be dealt with more timely and efficiently.

With support from DFID through a grant funded project on mainstreaming children rights and participation (MCRP), Programme Unit Kefamenanu and another 2 Programme Units (Surabaya and Rembang) initiated the process of establishment of community based child protection (KPAD). This included:

- A workshop on child protection that engaged targeted villages including representatives of community and village government of Faennake. In this activity, there were presentations and discussions on the concept of communitybased child protection including current issues of violence against children in the village. The aim was to raise awareness of child protection and to identify stakeholders. These included the village midwives, village government, village council (BPD), children goups, village respliancy body, cultural leaders, women leaders, Posyandu cadre, education, women leaders, Family Welfare Education (PKK) and Christian Basis Groups (KUB).
- As a follow up to the community workshop, at district level an initial workshop was held on the establisment of KPAD to further understand the child protection system. This workshop also identified villages with interests that could support child protection initiatives.
- Following the workshops at district and village level, respective agencies nominated their representatives to join the board of KPAD Faennake. These were then proposed in a forum in the village for agreement of the community, including the representative of children's groups.
- After the establishment of the board of KPAD Faennake, the board developed their strategic document which contains the vision, mission, objectives, tasks and function of the KPAD. This strategy was then communicated to community members so that they were aware of the work of KPAD, and could access services.
- Since the strategic document of KPAD Faennake was endorsed by the Village Government with a letter of recognition, KPAD Faennake was officially recognised.

The main focus of KPAD Faennake is on the prevention of all forms of violence against children in the village. Case management is a part of KPAD Faennake work, as well as also focusing on referrals and developing networking with other parties that have competencies in handling alleged cases of violence against children.



FORM AND FUNCTION OF COMMUNITY-BASED CHILD PROTECTION MECHANISMS

As mentioned previously, Plan describes a CBCPM as "...a network or group of individuals at community level who work in a coordinated manner towards protection of children from all forms of violence, in all settings. Such mechanisms can be indigenous or externally initiated and supported. They may be more formal or informal in their structure and functioning. CBCPMs are linked and contribute to child protection systems."¹³

It is important to understand that CBCPMs can take many forms. As the comparative analysis and the evaluation mentioned in the Introduction show, there are a range of solutions.

Defining communities

It is not always easy to establish what a community is! What is defined as a community will vary from place to place. It may be a village or district in a town, or be based on some other unifying factor such as religion, caste or family background.

For practical purposes, however community is defined; it is likely to also be determined according to geographical location and proximity.

In its Global Child Protection Strategy, Plan defines a community as:

"... a group of interacting people who live in some geographical proximity to one another and usually shares common values and interests. The term refers to a social unit larger than the household. This definition applies equally to rural and urban settings."

For Plan, the purpose of CBCPMs is to provide a way to ensure that children in the community are protected from violence against children $(VAC)^{14}$ by the community.

¹³ Plan International (2014) 'Protection from Violence is Every Child's Right': Plan International's Global Strategy for Child Protection Programming, Plan International, Woking, UK.

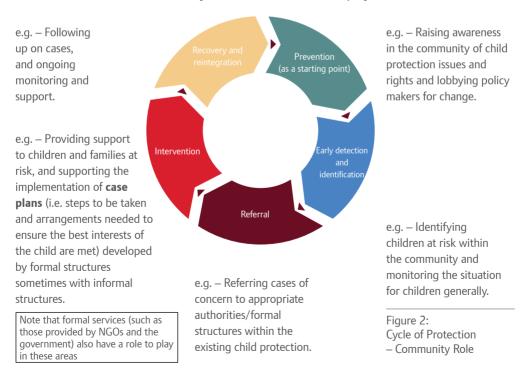
¹⁴ For the purpose of this guide violence against children should be considered in its widest form and to include physical, emotional and sexual abuse, neglect and exploitation. For further information on categories of abuse and definitions, please see Plan International's Global Child Protection Policy 'Say Yes to Protecting Children' (revised 2013).

They generally consider all children in the community and all forms of abuse, neglect and exploitation, although some CBCPMs may focus on especially vulnerable children (for example, children with disabilities or refugee children) or particular settings of violence, such as in the family or in school.

CBCPMs typically have a primary focus on prevention work through awareness raising and early intervention. However, especially in remote and rural areas or where there are few services and a limited reach of formal services, they can also play a key role in identifying and referring/responding children who have been/are at risk of being abused and mistreated. In some situations, depending on the context (discussed later in the handbook) the CBCPM may be involved to a larger extent in the investigation stage (such as working with the police).

The involvement of communities in prevention, and especially in relation to early intervention, does not mean that there is no longer a role for more formal services such as those provided by the government or by NGOs. Indeed, the presence of more formal services helps to ensure that the actions of the community are strengthened. In addition, the presence of a strong community mechanism to protect children can maximise efforts of formal services to protect children.

The Cycle of Protection, as it relates to children's involvement in their own protection, has already been shown in the **Sticks and Stones** manual¹⁶. Here it has been adapted to show the role that community-based mechanisms can play.



CBCPMs can take a variety of forms. This is a reflection of their need to be relevant and appropriate for the context in which they operate. Examples of CBCPMs include community protection committees (CPCs) or networks of individuals or groups that work together. There are also other structures, for example child protection focal points based in specific locations, such as schools or as part of a village management committee. CBCPMs can be organised and located through different settings, for example as part of the community or run through services such as early childhood development centres. In Asia, the most common form of CBCPMs supported by Plan is **community level child protection committees.** Structures established by children such as peer support groups, can also be considered as CBCPMs.

Whatever its form, the key defining feature of a CBCPMs is that it is run by members of the community it serves (although it may need support from outside sources, especially during the start-up and establishment, and dealing with serious cases of abuse when additional resources may be needed).

Ways of recognising the contribution of volunteers – examples from practice across Plan in Asia

Another feature of CBCPMs is that they are typically largely run by volunteers rather than paid staff. In some places volunteers may be paid a small stipend for their participation, but this is not strongly recommended as it can have serious consequences for the sustainability of the mechanism once financial support is ended. Other ways of rewarding community members for their participation could be through training opportunities, and recognising contributions through awards ceremonies and certificates.

Specific ways of acknowledging the work of volunteers from Plan's work in the region include:

- Annually appreciation of their services in a large forum, with a useful token they can display in their homes or places of work. It is clearly mentioned that this token is for the excellent service done for the benefit of the village;
- Providing access to different opportunities to develop their professional skills such as career guidance, vocational training with proper assessment and follow-up;
- Organising award and graduation ceremonies, and inviting key government officials to present certificates;
- Giving small in-kind gift packs of practical items which can be used in daily life (especially important in very poor communities);
- Providing access to livelihood opportunities through the experience gained as a volunteer.

In talking about CBCPMs, a distinction needs to be made between:

- CBCPMs that operate at community level, but which come from *outside* of the community for example Community Child Protection Committees which are *established* by NGOs. Unless these are carefully designed and introduced so that they fit and make sense for communities they are unlikely to be sustainable, and may gradually dissolve once external support is removed.
- **CBCPMs that come from** *within* **the community** and which are based and building on established community practices for example extending traditional ways of resolving conflicts between families to also cover child protection issues or traditional practices of looking after children without parental care. While these practices may be accepted by the community, the danger is that unless care is taken they may fail to adequately protect children. For example, a community may accept or tolerate traditional practices which are harmful to children and violates their rights. It should be noted that there are almost always ways in which communities and families seek to protect their children the establishment of a CBCPM ideally helps formalise and give value to these efforts.

In practice, a CBCPM is likely to be a blend of both ideas from outside and inside the community.

There are different degrees of integration of the CBCPMs into national child protection systems (where these exist) and the formal status of CBCPMs within law and procedures. The level of integration is often based upon how the national child protection system has developed/is developing and the legal tradition within the country, together with views about the involvement of volunteers and the importance based on communities. Regardless of this, to be truly effective the role of the CPCPMs need to be recognised by formal structures designed to protect children.

Common roles and expectations of CBCPMs

Depending on context, the role of the CBCPMs can vary widely. In emergencies or where there is an absence of formal services there can be an expectation that CPCPMs take responsibility for intervening and managing cases of abuse. This should be limited, and only introduced with caution as it is unlikely that without significant ongoing support a CBCPM will have the necessary skills to be able to offer such intensive work required – and the effect could be that children are left unprotected or harmed by inappropriate actions. This does not mean that community practices to protect children are ignored – they should be embraced, but the UNCRC places the responsibility for ensuring the protection of children upon states. To this extent a minimum level of protection needs to be guaranteed.

In general, CPCPMs should		In general, CPCPMs should not	
•	Raise awareness within the community Implement prevention activities,	 Investigate potential criminal offences Undertake investigations of 	
	including education and information sessions	allegations of abuseWork unsupported with children who	
•	Use community recognised practices – for example mediation – as a way of supporting families and solving child protection concerns (depending on the context, and consequently	have been abused – CPCPMs should be considered a complimentary part of the national child protection system, not a replacement for it	
	the mechanism and links to the formal system)	*It is noted that in some cases the CBCPM may have a more active	
٠	Identify and refer children to	involvement in issues such as	
	appropriate services who have been abused or where there is high risk	investigations and case management. The decision to do this MUST be based	
٠	Provide support to child and families in the community who are at risk	on the specific context. When this might be appropriate is discussed throughout	
•	Assist formal services in supporting and working with families as part of care plans	the handbook.	
•	Monitoring and follow up of cases in collaboration with formal services		
•	Advocacy for and lobby for improvements in services, and in law and policy changes		

Please see Step Four: Establish CBCPM for further discussion

Skills, knowledge and attitudes needed by workers engaged with CBCPMs

A wide range of attributes are needed by workers to be able to engage successfully with communities around child protection and in developing/supporting community. based child protection mechanisms. These include:

- Understanding of the sociocultural context of the community including an understanding of traditional practices;
- Knowledge of the situation for children regarding child protection which children are most vulnerable and what types of abuse are most prevalent and why;
- Knowledge of different forms of child abuse;
- Knowledge of key child protection principles and measures;
- Understanding of the current mechanisms for protecting children, and partners and services available;
- Commitment to working in partnership with communities and children;
- Ability to work with others, and to motivate;
- Negotiation and mediation skills, including the ability to solve problems and conflict;
- Training, mentoring and facilitation skills

BEFORE WE START: PLAN INTERNAL PROCESSES

Since this handbook has been specifically written to support Plan staff, it is appropriate here to include a reminder that country offices need to consider actions which are internal to Plan, and which should be considered before starting work with communities on establishing CBCPMs. For example, a child rights situation analysis should be conducted, and programming should be carried out within the framework of Plan's programme management cycle.

STEP ONE: ENGAGING COMMUNITIES

Plan

STEP ONE: ENGAGING COMMUNITIES

Consult, engage and mobilise communities before setting up CBCPMs

Since Plan works within field based Programme Units (PU), it is likely that communities will already be engaged with Plan before initial efforts to establish a CBCPM. This means that there should already be a child rights situation analysis conducted and also probably a community mapping. Both of these documents can be a basis for planning the best way to engage the community and in getting a preliminary idea of the context for setting up a CBCPM (including identification of possible partners and stakeholders). Ideally, the process of conducting the child rights situation analysis (and community mapping) should also have begun to create links with the community and engaged them with Plan.

These relationships can be further enhanced in this step, which is specifically concerned with engaging communities around the issue of establishing a CBCPM. Unless and until at least some members of the community see the need and value for protecting children, and are committed to this, it may be difficult to establish a CBCPM which will be active and sustainable.

To create buy-in from the whole community, and ensure the CBCPM fits and meets it objectives, it is important to involve parents/carers, children, community and religious leaders and other members of the community from initial consultation stage, through to planning and implementation. Special efforts will need to be taken to ensure that the process is inclusive, in order to ensure that the whole community is involved. This includes the most marginalised children, such as those who have a disability and/or girls, and sections of the community who may be especially isolated, for example those from minority or disadvantaged groups.

When engaging communities, it is helpful to focus on entry points, such as existing disaster risk reduction and birth registration programmes, and to be both open and sensitive to community issues and capacities. Work may be needed to raise community awareness and sensitise the community to the rights of children. It is not necessarily helpful to start a dialogue with communities by focussing on child protection initially. This is because this can often result in community members feeling criticised for what they are not doing, which can impact negatively on trying to establish positive working

relationships. Instead, it is helpful to concentrate on positive aspirations of communities – to ensure their children are healthy, educated, fulfil their potential and are kept safe. This then naturally flows into the exploration of gaps and barriers, and the importance of protecting children and what this means.

Children can also play a key role in raising awareness of their situation, through childled awareness raising initiatives (remember, of course, that a risk assessment must be conducted beforehand, and children supported through the process to ensure that their involvement is safe).

When engaging communities, it is also important to think about power dynamics and decision making. It is extremely important to ensure that there is a careful consideration and analysis of the power dynamics within the community, and that this is kept in mind in further steps when designing and implementing the CBCPM. If not, key players may be ignored (and therefore the plan will fail or not be as effective as imagined) or inequalities in society may become magnified. For example, as Plan's Comparative Analysis highlighted, while many of the decision makers in communities are traditionally male, most of the volunteers working in CPCPMs are female. Of course, boys can be engaged more actively through their involvement in children's groups, while the involvement of men can be increased through identifying specific tasks in the child protection mechanisms.

EXPERIENCE FROM THE FIELD – CASE STUDY from Bangladesh: Promoting the Active Involvement of Communities

Plan Inter national Bangladesh facilitated 450 community-based child protection groups to mobilise local resources towards reducing all forms of abuse and violence against children and women. Narchi Union Parishad is geographically difficult to reach, being situated on the bank of the river Jamuna. The Parishad formed a community-based child protection group.

The Union Parishad Chairman is the chair of this group including 21 members from different professionals (including school teacher, religious leader, marriage registrar and health personnel, lawyer, elected women members, representatives from law enforcement agencies, children and community). Men and boys engagement is significant in this group. The members from other groups, such as girls and young women groups, children's organisations, and other community based forums are incorporated in this group.

The group has annual plan of action which includes regular meetings, awareness events and social support. The group members facilitated parents' agreement



resulting in stopping 20 cases of child marriage in two years. They also combated domestic violence and trafficking. The age of marriage has been increased dramatically in this Union Parishad compared to surrounding Union Parishads. As an immediate impact of their work, children's views were increasingly promoted and respected within the community. The group also supports children to carry out child-led activities in the community. Both individually and collectively, the group members grew to become the agents of change in the community.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

TOOL ONE - Protection and risk target exercise

Other materials:

Plan International Child Protection Risk Assessment Template (included in Appendix).

KEY CONSIDERATIONS & PRACTICE TIPS FROM THE FIELD

- Existing work with communities can provide important entry points to discussing child protection and CBCPMs with communities – for example education, health, DRR and UBR.
- ✓ Use existing research, such as child rights situation analysis, as a basis for engaging the community and beginning to think about the best ways to introduce CBCPMs/ most appropriate mechanism. This includes identifying key stakeholders.
- ✓ Remember the process of engagement should be inclusive, and special efforts may be needed to ensure that the most marginalised children, such as those with disabilities and girls, and vulnerable communities groups are included.
- ✓ Awareness raising and sensitisation on protection issues may be necessary. If so, child-led awareness raising initiatives can be an effective tool in bringing issues to the attention of the community. However, a risk assessment must be done first and children must be supported to ensure that the process is safe.
- ✓ Pay attention to power dynamics to ensure the process is inclusive. This may need careful handling so as not to offend those in positions of power as this may be disruptive to the overall process of setting up a CBCPM.
- Although the purpose of the engagement of the community is centred on child protection, it is generally not useful to focus on protection or rights initially, but instead to explore community aspirations for children. Be sensitive and interested in the issues of concern to the community.

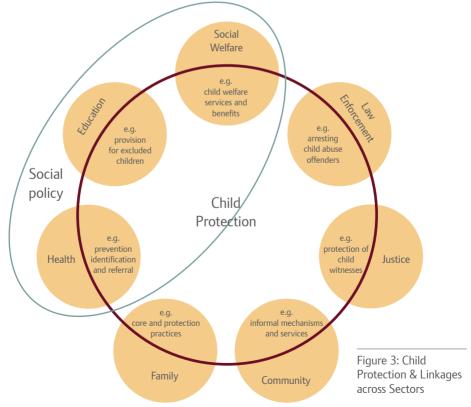
STEP TWO: MAPPING THE CHILD PROTECTION CONTEXT

STEP TWO: MAPPING THE CHILD PROTECTION CONTEXT

This step, together with Step Three, Mapping the Community, can be carried out at the same time. They provide an understanding and analysis of the overall context within which the CBCPM will have to operate.

Mapping of service providers and agencies

Before embarking on any design of a CBCPM, and certainly before implementing those ideas, it is necessary to know who else is working in the area or may be potential sources of support and what they do. This includes existing groups that work across sectors with a focus and/or mandate on child protection. It is critical to do this so as not to duplicate the work of others and instead to plug gaps or build upon the others' efforts. This is particularly important where resources are limited and scarce. One way of showing the possible linkages between different stakeholders and partners is shown in Figure 3.



Often when mapping service providers and those working in the field, it is tempting to consider only the normal, or typical partners, but thinking widely about those who might be able to contribute towards efforts to keeping children safe, not just traditional partners, can help uncover and identify additional resources that may be available. For example, there may be a community group or a vocation training project that may be able to support children and families. There might be a private sector organisation or a business, such as a training college, that might also be able to provide support.

In undertaking a mapping exercise both formal services and structures, and informal mechanisms need to be explored. Examples of formal services and structures include Child Welfare/Social Services Ministries and Departments, as well as police and NGOs and other sectors such as health and education. Examples of informal systems include traditional and religious leaders, and community structures such as village committees.

EXPERIENCE FROM THE FIELD – CASE STUDY from Cambodia: Mapping the Situation for Children

With the technical support from the project staff, the Family Protection Network (FPN) members developed a Family Protection village mapping tool to use at commune level to identify the kind of abuse and violence in their communities and service providers addressing these abuses. Three main questions which were used for discussion were included:

- 1. What kind of abuse and violence occurs in their communities?
- 2. What activities were done to address these types of abuse?
- 3. What are the key institutions/services providing help?

FPN members at commune level conducted Focus Group Discussions (FGD) with community people (parents, care-givers, youth and children) in each village. To ensure participation, discussions were conducted separately with parents and caregivers (men and women), youth group (young men and women) and children's groups (girls and boys, divided by age).

After the mapping was completed, FPN members at commune level organised dissemination workshops to share the results of the Family Protection Village Mapping with FPN members at village level, stakeholders and community people. This then provided the basis to develop common agreed action plans to address the identified abuse and also prevention activities.

As mentioned earlier, it is critical to understand what those services and agencies actually do, and not make assumptions; otherwise the mechanism may not function as intended. For example, there can be a wide variance in how helplines operate, with some offering only a confidential listening service, and others providing referral and follow up for children at risk. Similarly, as a part of the mapping it is important to understand the quality of the services which exist as they may exist in theory but in practice are virtually inactive or have little capacity to respond.

Function, Not Name

It can become confusing when mapping services, as structures are often terms and names are used differently. Therefore it is important to understand the role that persons/agencies play.

For example a common misconception can be with the role of social workers. In some places, the title social worker is given to anyone who does "good work" for the community. In professional terms though, a social worker is a qualified person with knowledge about child development, family problems and skills for working with families in difficulty.

Ideally, a social worker should act as a bridge, helping children get from a place of difficulty to a more positive and safe environment, by supporting and empowering children and families and advocating on their behalf.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES:

TOOL TWO – Mapping matrix TOOL THREE – Case mapping exercise

Understand the legal and policy framework (including economic context)

The CBCPM needs to exist and operate within the framework of the law. Even if CBCPMs are not mandated or recognised by laws, and they do not have to be, it is important to understand the duties, responsibilities and powers of other agencies, together with established procedures for protecting children (where these exist). For example, if a law exists which states that a certain type of offence against a child must be formally reported to the police, it is critical not to advise the CBCPMs to deal with the matter without referring the case, otherwise they could be acting illegally or compromising and obstructing established processes and procedures.

Since the economic situation for families may well influence the overall situation for children, this should also be explored. For example, a reason for children being especially vulnerable may be that they are "left behind" while their parents are migrating for work, or because the family often changes place of residence for different reasons.

It is also important to be familiarised with the existing legal and regulatory frameworks, for example around minimum ages defined by national laws for different types of interactions children engage in the society (child labour, child marriage, consensual sex etc). This will help determine further actions in terms of referring cases of alleged child abuse to respective agencies and deciding on pursuing further legal action.

As a follow up action, advocacy may be necessary to ensure that laws and policies are reformed/introduced to adequately ensure the protection of children. CBCPMs can also be a source of information and evidence to support advocacy efforts. Consequently the potential of CBCPMs to contribute to change should not be overlooked and this should be included in the design of the CBCPM.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES:

TOOL FOUR – Framework checklist TOOL FIVE – Reminder – International human rights legal minimum ages definitions



Foster positive and constructive working relationships and alliances with stakeholders and partners (from the formal sector)

Where it has been conducted, research and good practice highlights that child protection is a team effort – basically working together in a proactive and positive way is linked and coordinated in order to achieve better outcomes for children. This is because it is unlikely that one agency or organisation is unlikely to offer all the solutions to a child's problems. Similarly, agencies that do not engage and seek the support of communities are likely to be less successful in their efforts to protect children, as communities are able to provide a safety net/protective environment for a child.

Many communities will have already established and active children's groups, which often focus on preventing and addressing different forms of violence they are exposed to. These groups may provide significant contribution to overall awareness raising and devising child sensitive actions as a response to abuse and harm, which is why they should also be mapped out and involved in community-based mechanisms.

It is important then to try and make the process of developing a CBCPM as inclusive as possible, so that we avoid organisations, including the community-based mechanisms, working in isolation. This reflects both the complex nature of child protection as the many forms of violence against children are often interrelated and have no simple one-step solution. To do this, we need to develop good relationships.

One benefit of this is that it helps to ensure that efforts are not duplicated or undermined by other groups and their actions. In addition, change is often easier to introduce and sustain when a common vision is shared by others, including agencies that are supporting communities in various ways. Ideally, as many partners as possible should be involved in the process of establishing a CBCPM so that there is broad support and ownership.

Ways of fostering this spirit of collaboration and working together include regular coordination meetings, joint initiatives (such as advocacy campaigns), awareness raising and training. Being responsive and open to the ideas of others also helps create a positive working environment, although it may be necessary to also be clear about agreed roles, responsibilities and actions to avoid potential confusion and misunderstanding.

As a minimum, if not formally involved, it is important to ensure that stakeholders and partners are consulted over plans and kept up to date with developments, so that they continue to support the work of the CBCPMs.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES:

TOOL SIX – Template roles and responsibilities for agencies

KEY CONSIDERATIONS AND PRACTICE TIPS FROM THE FIELD

- Remember that the mapping should consider child protection specifically although reference may be made to other children's rights – otherwise the understanding of the protection of children may be limited (as the results may appear too general).
- ✓ Where possible, use existing mapping on services and agencies carried out by other agencies as a basis for the mapping as this will save time and avoid duplication. Information can be verified and added to through the process of the mapping.
- Develop alliances and partnerships with other agencies and carry out joint mapping exercises with partners to create a shared process and information.
- ✓ Think widely about those who should be included in the mapping both informal and formal service providers.
- ✓ Standardise the tools/process for mapping services so to provide consistency.
- ✓ Include consideration of the quality of services not just its presence as some services may exist in theory but not function.
- ✓ Specialist support may be necessary to understand the legal and policy framework and their implications for child protection.
- ✓ A clear understanding of the economic sector may be helpful in considering the extent to which poverty impacts upon the protection of children.



STEP THREE: EXPLORE COMMUNITY DYNAMICS AND INFLUENCES

STEP THREE: EXPLORE COMMUNITY DYNAMICS AND INFLUENCES

Through Step One, Engaging with Communities, an understanding should begin to emerge about the way the community functions. To ensure that a CBCPM is relevant in terms of the way it works and is organised, and that it meets the needs of children, in addition to mapping the external environment it is also important to give attention to the internal environment – that is, the dynamics and influences within the community. Step Two is about engaging with communities, whereas this step focuses more on understanding the community and the way it functions.

Understanding the situation for children (building on child rights situation analysis)

Closely engaging with the community is needed to gain a deeper understanding of the situation for children. This will give an understanding of the context to ensure that the CBCPM actually addresses the needs of children within the community. For example, there may be specific concerns, such as child marriage or particular dynamics, such as trafficking in border areas which may need to be taken into account when designing/ establishing the CBCPM. Where there are high levels of street children, a school-based CBCPM may not reach them. If they are a group which is especially vulnerable, this may leave a large sector of children without protection.

A key starting point for Plan programmes should be the child rights situation analysis that is conducted as a matter of established organisational processes and strategic planning. However, in addition to this there may be other pieces of research or programme evaluations (both from Plan and other agencies working in the area) which can either give additional information or validate information already owned by Plan.

This deeper understanding can be obtained through mapping and consultation exercises with different groups, including children, and be a link to exploring children's rights to protection while at the same time engaging the community in thinking about the protective influence they can play. This kind of mapping is slightly different to the whole community mapping which may take place when first engaging with the community and which aims to get a general understanding of the community. The process is the same, but what are being focussed on are specifically issues concerning the protection of children – that is specifically risks and vulnerabilities and protective influences.

While conducting the mapping, it is of utmost importance to strike the right balance between positive child focused practices nourished by the community and gaps in child protection that need to be addressed. That will help community members recognise child protective measure they have been already practicing and feel acknowledged on one hand, and realise harmful effects of risks and actual abuse perpetrated against children on the other.

Developing parameters for the mapping with the community members will also add to a sense of ownership of the CBCPM and reinforce relationships with the community.

It is also important to assess the existing child protection capacities of communities for two reasons. Firstly, so that necessary capacity building strategies can be built into the process of establishing and operating the CBCPM. The second, perhaps more critical reason, is to ensure that stakeholders have the capacity to act and respond appropriately. Typically, key community members and structures are included or form the basis of a CBCPM, but they can often be over committed with demands to participate in many activities, not just child protection. This needs to be avoided, or limited, as otherwise it may compromise the functioning of the child protection mechanisms.

When seeking to develop this deeper understanding of the situation for children, there are a number of aspects that need to be taken into account, and which should be explored with the community:

The dynamics of violence against children and protection in the community

This includes who is most at risk, and why and the prevalent forms of abuse that exist and their root causes. For example, there is little point establishing a CBCPM that focuses particularly on child marriage or trafficking if the most common problems that children face are resulting from domestic violence associated with alcohol abuse. Specific consideration must be given to ensuring that the most vulnerable children are considered, but at the same time making sure that the focus on protecting all children is not lost. It is also important to analyse the nature of traditional harmful practices, and what contributes towards the continuation of these practice.

The mapping exercise should pay specific attention to both gender perspectives and power dynamics within community. If conducted with a right kind of balance and in a positive spirit of encouraging community to ensure children are growing up in a safe environment, this mapping can create a fertile ground opening up entry points for engagement of traditionally less typically involved community members including men and boys. The child rights situation analysis will also provide useful details on sensitivities inherent to deeply embedded power relations and gender stereotypes, which need to be tackled in a gradual and respectful manner. In exploring the dynamics of the community it is critical to identify positive practices which exist for protecting children. Almost all communities have certain ways of keeping children safe and looking after children. Incorporating these practices in the CBCPM gives value to traditions, and also creates a CBCPM whose work makes sense to communities and capitalises on existing strengths and knowledge.

EXPERIENCE FROM THE FIELD – CASE STUDY from Sri Lanka: Getting it Right from the Start – Understanding the Community

In Sri Lanka, it was recognised that it might be difficult to engage communities and so it was decided to concentrate on making partnerships with the communities and to develop relationships with interested individuals and volunteer groups.

Introductory meetings about Plan and its approach on working through the community partnerships where held, especially where people (and in particular men as it was established that these were the main decision makers and their support was key) were gathering at the places of worship.

It was explained how the project could benefit their families and improve the wellbeing of the children. Social workers and government officers from those communities were also invited to join with Plan to facilitate the sessions.

This led to religious leaders and village leaders supporting the initiative and to agreeing to work with young women and children in their villages. Having a participatory process, which was democratic, with the community making decisions and Plan and the government providing technical advice demonstrated to the community that the results of the project would not be only threatening, challenging and contradictory to their own beliefs, values and life styles but would rather enhance the protection of children.

• The social/cultural influences

CBCPMs need to be accepted by and fit within the community they operate, otherwise they will not work or will be difficult to sustain. It is critical to understand what is important to communities, how children are viewed and valued, traditional child rearing practices and decision making/conflict resolution methods and the ways in which members of the communities relate to each other. Consultation with the community and children is essential to get their views and understand how the community functions. It must be remembered that in some communities it will not be possible for men and women to meet together, especially if sensitive topics are being discussed. Especially in communities where family life is regarded as being private it will be important to ensure that the mechanism takes into account that members of the community may be reluctant to intervene. This is associated with the power dynamics and key actors/decision makers within the community. These may not necessarily be those who are typically considered as influential or important. For example, where parents work away, grandparents may have a larger role in caring for children.

At the same time, and with a highly sensitive approach, awareness should be raised on harmful consequences that different forms of violence against children may have on children's development. Simple and convincing evidence on the detrimental effects violence has on children's lives in many societies should be used to set the ground for more specific exploration of more in-depth discussions on prevalence of violence typical for the respective community. This is usually conducted as a part of the overall sensitisation through the core awareness training that introduces child protection to communities, while exploring existing ways to keep children safe.

EXPERIENCE FROM THE FIELD – CASE STUDY from Thailand: Understanding the Social/Cultural Context

Child Rights Situation Analysis has been undertaken by youth, women volunteers, village heads and representatives (assessors) from sub district organisations in four different ethnic minority communities in Chiang Mai. These assessors were trained by Plan's partner "Highlander People's Task Force" on child rights, child protection, data collection, analysis and report writing.

The research methods included: focus group discussions, key informant interviews and observation. Key informant interviews were undertaken with: leaders (formal and informal), religious and spiritual leaders, male and female community members, elderly people, middle age people, children and youth.

The research helped to identify and to better understand cultural and religious practices, social norms, traditions, beliefs and power relationships which help and hinder child protection. Youth, mothers and other community members' active participation in the research has increased ownership of the results, as well as awareness and interest to take action to further child protection among community members and sub-district organisations. This knowledge is being used to inform the development of culturally appropriate CBCPM models for four ethnic minorities in Chiang Mai.

• The environmental influences

The impact of environmental factors on the situation for children is a good illustration for the complexity of violence against children and highlights the need for a integrated holistic approach which involves many sectors. Perhaps the main environmental influence is poverty, but there are other factors that can also influence, such as transportation or migration, including seasonal migration (for example when families move for crop cultivation and agriculture).

Of course, being poor does not mean that children will necessarily be abused! Poor families are often able and willing to provide protection for children. However, in some circumstances this may be difficult to do. For example, in situations of extreme poverty it may be difficult for families to meet children's basic needs, leaving them in positions of vulnerability to abuse through exploitation as a way of survival, both for children themselves and families (for examples, in situation related to child labour). If poverty is a root cause to the abuse being experienced by a child, then it may be difficult to counter this unless appropriate solutions can be found to increase the family's economic level. This could include training and income generating activities, or social support through government financial assistance schemes, including micro loans schemes or conditional cash transfers.

Interface with child protection system and formal services

The CBCPM should sit within, or be closely related to the national child protection system – it complements it, and supports and is supported by it. It is more strategic, and sustainable, to develop CBCPMs that build upon the roles of others, in particular government agencies, rather than develop stand-alone CBCPMs.

Whether this is possible depends largely upon how communities interact and understand the external context, and in particular relate to parts of the formal protection system/ external services. For example, if there is a lack of trust in police, then making the police a first point of contact for the CBCPM may require substantial work with both communities and the police in order to build trust – otherwise the mechanism may fail. The extent to which this is possible, and the required timescale, will depend on the context and these needs to be taken into account.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES:

TOOL SEVEN – Focus group discussion with community members TOOL EIGHT – Areas of consideration

KEY CONSIDERATIONS AND PRACTICE TIPS FROM THE FIELD

- ✓ Build upon existing information that has been acquired in previous consultations and from other research studies, such as the child rights situation analysis.
- ✓ Make sure that the consultation process is inclusive and covers all groups and members of the communities, including those most vulnerable. This may need careful timing to ensure that members of the communities who are not always present (such as those who migrate seasonally for work) are included.
- ✓ Working with the community to develop parameters helps to increase ownership and foster positive relationships with the community.
- ✓ Dynamics of protection and violence, including existing community practices need to be explored.
- ✓ Capacities of various key community members and structures should be considered in order to ensure that any CBCPM developed is fit for purpose.
- To understand how the CBCPM may function and what is the best form for it, the way in which the community interacts with and considers existing, formal services (where these exist) must be identified, otherwise this can compromise functioning of the CBCPM.



STEP FOUR : ESTABLISHING CBCPMs

STEP FOUR: ESTABLISHING CBCPMs

Having considered the internal and external context, it is then possible to move onto thinking about the best form for the CBCPM and its function, and move towards establishing it. There are a number of important issues to consider during this stage. It is also important at this stage to step back, and consider if establishing a CBCPM is necessary. It may be that there are already community-based protection processes that are functioning and providing protection of children. Conversely, because of the operating conditions and especially with regards to issues such a safety and sustainability, it may not always be feasible to establish a CBCPM.

While Plan supports and emphasises the need for communities to be involved, this should not be done automatically and without careful consideration. Otherwise, more harm may be caused by imposing inappropriate solutions which may result in counterproductive outcomes and community resistance towards child protection.

Considering risk and safety

As planning progresses, it is critical to consider the safety and risk towards those who will/may be involved in running the CBCPM and those who are benefiting from it. This needs to take place at different levels:

- An initial assessment of risk before engaging in any work with communities and children – this needs to be based upon existing knowledge of the community and its specifics.
- A more detailed assessment of risks based upon the more detailed knowledge that will be obtained through consultation with communities.
- Specific risk assessment for involvement of children in CBCPMs and different related processes and events.

Risks should be reviewed regularly and it may be decided that it is not safe to work with communities to establish CBCPMs or that the design of the mechanism may need to take into account risks identified or additional support provided. A reality is that by establishing a CBCPM this might create or increase risks to community members involved, and those working with organisations supporting the CBCPM, particularly if they are also members of the community, or children who are referred to child protective services. This could be for a number of reasons, but in particular:

- Community members and staff and children may be threatened, intimidated or stigmatised by other members of the community if they are unhappy with the activities of the CBCPM. This can be because they are directly targets of the work of the CBCPM (i.e. an abuser) or because the work of the CBCPM is seen as undermining or going against traditional community practices or raising taboo issues.
- Where the work of the CBCPM disrupts criminal activities, such as trafficking or other exploitation of children which creates an income, for example child labour, this could cause serious security problems.
- When authority of community elders and/or adults in general is perceived to be undermined or challenged by children's opinions and actions supported by the CBCPMs.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES:

TOOL NINE – Risk evaluation form, Plan International

EXPERIENCE FROM THE FIELD – CASE STUDY from Vietnam: Fitting the Context

The purpose of forming the community-based child protection mechanism (CBCPM) in Vietnam is to ensure that the community-based prevention and response efforts are an integral part of the child protection system building efforts at the commune, district, provincial and national levels. At the commune level the main community based child protection structures are the Commune Child Protection Board/Committee, the network of village collaborators (adults) and Children's Core Groups.

In Vietnam there is uniformity in establishing the Commune Child Protection Board/Committee, and its dominant central authority ensures that there is strong government oversight in all aspects of child protection at all levels. From the beginning there were clear regulations,¹⁶ provided by the Government, on roles and responsibilities, and workshops were organised by Government, UNICEF, Plan and partners to build their capacity.

Ownership at the Commune Level is key to both the sustainability and implementation of the laws and policies surrounding child and family welfare and protection services. Thus, if a child is considered to be at risk, the village collaborators will inform the Child Protection Board or the commune level People's Committee, so to ensure a collective and effectively coordinated response.

¹⁶ Developed in collaboration with Government, UNICEF, Save the Children and Plan International.

Designing for context

Although it is useful to consider examples of CBCPMs in other locations, the CBCPM should be designed specifically for the community, taking into account the existing services and resources, the social/cultural context and the situation of child rights. The comparative analysis conducted by Plan in Asia documents a number of different mechanisms as examples of practice in its outcome report "Lessons for Protection".

It is important to **build upon traditional practices and mechanisms where possible**. For example, if there is already a mechanism for solving problems/conflict resolution or an existing village committee, efforts should be made to use this as a basis for the CBCPM rather than introducing another structure such as a Child Protection Committee in order to prevent duplication and overloading of community members.

However, while traditional practices relating to child care, decision making and problem solving may be acceptable to the community these must be reviewed to ensure that children are protected and their rights are not further violated. For example, the practice of settling conflicts or cases of abuse by paying compensation to families by abusers may be acceptable to community and family members, it does not protect children, or prevents violence from reoccurring or continuing to affect other children.

In addition, it is important to give attention to:

• Acceptance of the CBCPM

It is critical to **create legitimacy within the community** by ensuring that leaders and decision-makers understand and embrace child protection and support the CBCPM. This may require their participation in the mechanism in some settings in a more formalised way (such as being part of decision making processes), or can be more limited to working with the CBCPM to provide support and encouraging communities to use the CBCPM. This depends on the context and specific community dynamics.

When including leaders and decision makers formally it is important to ensure that the CBCPM does not mirror inequalities and reinforce power dynamics that lead to discrimination and child abuse. **Representation of the whole community**, including women and those from minority and marginalised groups, should be built into the mechanism. This is, of course, easier said than done in some places. It may require considerable sensitisation and negotiation to ensure it is acceptable to the community, such as in environments where decision making is largely seen as being the responsibility of males or elders.

Objectives and aspirations - Mandate

It is important to be realistic about the scope of the work of the CBCPM and what it can achieve – and to consult communities on this. This should be based both on the capacities of those working in the CBCPM and the resources and services available to support. Not being realistic about what can be achieved or imposing organisational agendas may lead to a situation where the presence of a CBCPM creates the illusion that children are protected, but in practice it does not function successfully and children are left at risk or exposed to harm.

Careful consideration is needed in terms of expectations of those working with the CBCPM. Volunteer turnover may be high – and if too much time is expected from volunteers, they may have other commitments and may not be able to devote the time necessary.

Having said that, there is a need to be reasonable and not overly ambitious in many ways in order to be realistic, in some circumstances it will be important to have greater aspirations of what can be achieved by the CBCPMs. For example, where there are few services to refer to, it may be important for the CBCPM to be able to intervene and solve problems more proactively to ensure children are protected, for example by providing basic counselling services. This will need additional resources to build capacity initially and in on-going mentoring and support.

In some circumstances, CBCPMs are involved with the formal services beyond making a referral, for example being involved in investigations. Although this may be necessary in situations where there is a lack of formal structures, very careful consideration should be given to whether this is a sustainable and appropriate in the longer term.

Apart from concerns about whether the situation is durable, there are other possible dilemmas which may arise as a result – for example putting community members at risk, the ethics of asking people to take on tasks for which they have little or no training and perhaps without ongoing support and the fact that the mechanism may end up mirroring unhelpful power dynamics which exist in the community and which may leave children unprotected.

STEP BY STEP - Towards Child Safer Communities

Personnel/membership

As mentioned previously, if it is to be successful the membership of the CBCPM will need to be seen as legitimate and credible. In some contexts, specific people may have to be included because they are critical in terms of influencing the community. Other members of the mechanism may be made up by those who are interested in participating for a variety of reasons. Across Asia, men (and boys) tend to be less active as part of the CBCPM, although men may be influential in terms of decision making. It is important that males are also included in CBCPMs and take specific responsibilities to ensure that it is truly representative, and because the importance of role men are playing in reducing violence is being increasingly recognised.

Even if certain influential members of the community are regarded as essential participants, it is a good idea to explore with communities what kind of person would be most effective and appropriate to take part, and who should not be necessarily regarded as acceptable. For example, it will be important to ensure that through their work with the CBCPMs unsafe or potentially threatening adults are not given access to children.

Volunteers may become resentful or question why they are working for free – especially if the time demanded is high and their activities complicated. Sometimes a small stipend is paid to volunteers to overcome these problems. The payment of volunteers needs to be carefully considered as it can cause other problems with competition for roles becoming motivated on the fact that it generates income rather than because it is about protecting children.

Payment of allowances to volunteers may create problems for sustainability in the longer term as there is a risk that when support is withdrawn and there are no longer any payments those volunteers will leave and the mechanism will not be sustained. If payment is to be given, then it is important to identify if and how this can be maintained in the longer term so that the work of the CBCPM is not disrupted – for example, by getting the mechanism recognised by the national child protection system or having community members agree to contribute.

Excessive reliance on volunteers may prove equally unsustainable, for a variety of reasons: they face other competing priorities in their daily lives, including necessity to earn their living; despite their good will, they often lack capacity and skills to respond to expectations and issues that may go beyond child protection; they will move on with their lives and frequently leave their communities to study in big cities or be looking for better job opportunities. It is therefore critical to ensure linkages with existing child protection systems and have in place processes to regularly enable transfer of skills, knowledge and experience to the incoming generation of volunteers.

What makes a good CBCPM member

Ideal skills and qualities include:

- Commitment to promoting welfare of children, and advocating on their behalf
- Respect for children's rights
- Respected and trusted in the community
- Able to give time and energy necessary
- Able to maintain confidentiality
- Able to communicate and get on with a variety of people children, families and community members and professionals/workers
- · Able to communicate in child friendly and sensitive manner

Availability of resources and capacity

Reviews of CBCPMs indicate that the ones that are most successful and sustainable are those where capacities have been built and where on-going support and encouragement is provided over the longer term. This is especially the case where CBCPMs may be more involved with investigation, ongoing responses and where they may need additional specialist training (for example in case management and record keeping). Unless as part of the setting up of the CBCPM appropriate resources – both for initial set up and on-going support – are identified and made available, it is unlikely that the CBCPM will meet expectations. Capacity building and awareness raising on the mechanism will be needed and should be planned from the very beginning. This may need considerable advocacy and lobbying for integration into child protection system and appropriate budget allocations.

Linkages with child protection system

Careful thought should be given to how the CBCPM links with, or is part of, the national child protection system. This will need to be done with specific consideration to the nature of the child protection system which is being developed and the operating context as understanding of what constitutes and forms part of the national child protection system, and its stage of development varies from country to country. How the CBCPM links with the wider national system will depend partly on the nature of the system itself.

In some countries, the intention may be that the CBCPM becomes part of the legal/ policy framework (and as such become recognised in the law). One example of this could be the identification of cases which the CBCPM can deal with independently, and when they must refer to formal services (assuming these exist).

Even where the CBCPM is formally linked with the system, in order to promote sustainability it is a good idea to try and formalise the linkages between the

CBCPM and any formal services which exit. For example, through establishing referral mechanisms for reporting cases, or protocols for the involvement of CBCPM in specific circumstances.

Remember that while the CBCPM may not be formally linked to the national child protection system, because the system is non-existent or ill-functioning, weak or in the early stages of development, considering how the CBCPM might be linked in the future can help strengthen wider efforts to contribute towards developing and strengthening the child protection system (in line with Plan's overall strategic efforts).

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES:

Plan ARO (2012) Lessons for Protection – A comparative analysis of community-based child protection mechanisms supported by Plan (2012); Plan Asia Regional Office, Bangkok, Thailand

Papers produced on child protection systems produced by various agencies – as included in Reference Section.

Organisation and working arrangements

Having considered the scope and design of the CBCPM (that is what and who) attention must be given to how the CBCPM will be managed, how members will work together, and how it will work with children, families and other agencies/services. This may include:

- Management/governance/organisational structure for example is it going to be a committee or will one person take responsibility for chairing, and if so, how will that person be selected;
- Roles and responsibilities, and expectations, of members;
- Coordination arrangements and protocols for referring to and working with other agencies;
- Thresholds for cases that can be dealt with, with referring to other agencies;
- Rules for confidentiality and sharing information including that any records kept are safe and that there are protocols in place for destroying any records which are made where necessary (for example, if security rapidly deteriorates and confidential information may pose threat to community members).

Clarifying and establishing the working arrangements for CBCPMs will help keep both the members of the CBCPM safe, and ensure that there is consistency in the way that cases or concerns are handled. It will also reduce the risk that children who are identified or referred to the CBCPM are not stigmatised or face increased/repeated violence for speaking out as a result of frustration and anger from those involved in the case.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES/samples to be adapted:

TOOL TEN – Selection criteria for membership TOOL ELEVEN – Self declaration form TOOL TWELVE – Code of conduct for members

Suggested Reading:

Wessells M (2009) What Are We Learning About Protecting Children in the Community? An Inter-Agency review of evidence on community-based child protection mechanisms; Save the Children available from: http://www.unicef.org/protection/files/What_Are_ We_Learning_About_Protecting_Children_in_the_Community_Summary.pdf

Joint report of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence against Children and the Special Rapporteur on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography Special Rapporteur (2012) Safe and Child Sensitive counselling complaint and reporting mechanisms – available from: http://srsg.violenceagainstchildren.org/ sites/default/files/publications_final/web_safe_final.pdf

KEY CONSIDERATIONS AND PRACTICE TIPS FROM THE FIELD

- Remember to step back and think about whether establishing a CBCPM is necessary and viable – do not assume that it is automatically required.
- ✓ Carry out, and continually revisiting risk assessments are essential to be able to ensure safety, and that the CBCPM can function as foreseen.
- ✓ Design fit for context, and build upon positive traditional and existing practices that protect children. Failure to do this may result in the CBCPM not functioning as intended.
- Pay attention to power balances and dynamics in order to ensure the support of the powerful decision makers in the community, but at the same time not mirror any power imbalances that may put children at risk or further increase inequalities.
- ✓ The mandate and extent of the work of the CBCPM needs to be carefully balanced in relation to what else exits and what it is reasonable to expect.
- ✓ Think carefully about the capacities of various stakeholders key of the CBCPM, and also demands on them for other areas will they have the time and abilities to carry out the roles intended for them? This may also be related to how many people need to be involved, and who.
- ✓ Where possible, link the CBCPM to the wider protection system including sharing working methods and protocols for referrals etc.

STEP FIVE: CHILDREN'S INVOLVEMENT

STEP FIVE: CHILDREN'S INVOLVEMENT

Mention has already been made of the need to ensure that children are actively consulted as part of the design and development of the CBCPM. Children can also play a role in the management and operation of CBCPMs if they are allowed to and given any necessary support. Given that Plan already works with children in many Programme Units, and has a network of children's groups established, these groups can be excellent entry points to engaging and involving children.

Involving children usually starts with raising their awareness of different existing forms of violence and the fact that any form of abuse is unacceptable. Within children's groups, ideas for action are then shared as to how to prevent and address violence affecting children in the community. Their collective action is subsequently supported to work together with adults on reducing and eliminating violence, to make their communities safer places for all children.

In brief - why involve children?

Children have a right to participation and to be involved in their own protection, so their contribution to CBCPMs can provide a number of benefits including supporting the empowerment and development of children, ensuring that the mechanism is relevant for children and increasing the safety net for children (as children often first confide in other children).

This section area gives a brief overview of some of the issues when involving children in CBCPMs. In particular it is important to remember that:

Children's involvement can encompass a wide variety of activities – not just consultation.

Children can be involved in designing and implementing the mechanism through a number of ways, including awareness raising and advocacy and support to their peers and outreach.

Safety and security of children must be a key consideration in their involvement.

Safety and security includes both physical and emotional wellbeing. Where this cannot be guaranteed, such as in conflict areas where children may become targets through their involvement then the appropriateness of the involvement of children should be carefully considered. **Although it has been said, it must be reiterated that risk assessments must always be conducted before any involvement of children, and these assessments must be reviewed and revised continuously.** • **Careful consideration needs to be given to the scope of involvement of children.** In some cases children are active members of the mechanism itself – for example, being part of a child protection committee, but it is important to consider the implications of this both for those children participating and also for other children who may be left out or not properly represented. **At an individual level, children should always be involved and consulted in decisions regarding their own situation/case.**

• **Preparation may be necessary of adults in order to ensure that children can actively participate.** This may include awareness raising, sensitising and training adults in the skills to work with children. This is especially important in communities where children are expected to do as adults say, and are not expected to have an active role or voice. Awareness raising may be necessary not only with community members but also with partner organisations of the CBCPM to ensure that participation does not end up getting compromised.

• The level and extent of participation should be based on children's evolving capacities and understanding. The principle of 'do no harm', which implies the best interest of the child in all actions, should always apply and support should be given to help children cope with their roles. For example, if children play an active part in supporting other children then they must be given appropriate emotional support.

EXPERIENCE FROM THE FIELD – CASE STUDY from Thailand: Minority Youth Being Active in Protection

Vieng Hang and Chiang Dao are among the districts of Chiang Mai Province in Thailand that are situated along the border with Myanmar. The majority of the population in the two districts is ethnic minorities from hill tribes. Some are stateless and are particularly vulnerable to trafficking.

Youth groups were supported as advocates on child rights and protection in the districts because of their openness to accept new ideas; ability to read, write and speak Thai language; their communication skills in local dialect with their community members; and their available time to attend the training and conduct activities in their communities.

A Youth Safe Club, comprised of 60 members, was formed in March 2011. They were provided with training and support on child rights and child protection (including the roles of CBCPMs) and how to conduct a community campaign. Since then, members of the club have been actively promoting the protection of children in their own communities.

• **Balance in children's lives is important.** Participation is important, but this must be considered in relation to the whole life of the child. Children have other responsibilities and demands on their time – from school work, to help with household chores through to play and free time.

• Participation should be inclusive and children from all groups, especially the most marginalised should be involved. This may include special consideration as to how boys and girls are differently affected by violence and how they participate differently and also how to involve children with disabilities, younger children, refugee and other minority children.

• It is critical to ensure that the message remains clear that adults are ultimately responsible for protecting children. While children can play an important role in protecting themselves and keeping themselves safer, it is essential to ensure that there is no misunderstanding and that it is understood that the protection of children is the responsibility of adults. If this is not done then children may be 'blamed' for their own abuse (for example because of their own behaviour).

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

TOOL THIRTEEN – Summary of recommendations for involving children in CBCPMs

Additional Materials:

Plan ARO (2011) Bamboo Shoots - A training manual on child-centred community development / child-led community actions for facilitators working with children and youth groups; Plan Asia, Bangkok, Thailand

Plan ARO (2013) Sticks and Stones - A training manual for facilitators on how to increase the involvement of children in their own protection; Plan Asia, Bangkok, Thailand

Suggested Reading:

Plan ARO (2013) Towards Minimum Standards for Adult Facilitators Supporting Children's Groups; Plan Asia, Bangkok, Thailand

KEY CONSIDERATIONS AND PRACTICE TIPS FROM THE FIELD

- Children have the right to be involved, but also have key insights entry points such as other activities with children, and children's groups, can be important ways of ensuring that children are involved.
- ✓ Think widely about how children can be involved this can be from consultation, through to the membership and operation of the CBCPM. However, safety and support for children must be considered carefully.
- ✓ Involve children, where possible, in sensitising adults to the need for protection and children's rights.
- ✓ Participation should be inclusive, although different groups of children may take on different roles.
- ✓ It is essential to constantly emphasise that the protection of children remains adults' responsibility.



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STEP SIX: CAPACITY BUILDING AND SUPPORT FOR CBCPMs

To be effective, CBCPMs are likely to need ongoing and continuous capacity building and support. This includes both initial training, and follow-up or refresher training and mentoring, and support once established on an on-going basis, especially in dealing with cases. This can be provided through a variety of ways, and it may be appropriate for Plan to provide initial training and support.

For sustainability reasons, it is desirable to identify other actors, especially those from formal services that may be able to provide assistance in the longer term. This is one reason why trying to link the CBCPM to the national child protection system is a useful strategy or to establish relationships with locally available educational and training institutions, such as colleges and universities, or professional associations. Obviously this is the ideal situation, and it is recognised that this will not always be possible. Expectations for the role of CBCPMs needs to be closely aligned with the support and capacity building available.

It may also be necessary to raise adequate awareness of partner organisations, so that they can support the CBCPM and to ensure the effective operation of the mechanism. For example, if a CBCPM is established, but the value is not recognised by other agencies, they may not place appropriate emphasis on requests for assistance from the CBCPM.

EXPERIENCE FROM THE FIELD – CASE STUDY from India: Getting started and making it work

Initially interested adult group leaders, volunteers, and community leaders etc. were suggested by children and NGO representatives as possible members of the Community Protection Committee (CPC). Then a joint meeting was organised in the community to seek agreement of the identified members. After referral checks from children and adult groups, 20-25 CPC members were selected to constitute the CPCs locally.

The member of the CPCs include representatives of women's solidarity groups, youth groups, *mahila panchayat*, local government (including health and education), lawyers, local medical practitioners, Village Kalyan Samiti (VKS)/

Parent-Teacher Association (PTA) chair person, and local police personnel (juvenile welfare officer).

The selected members have been given orientation on Plan India's child protection policy and code of conduct with children. They also signed both the documents to give their consent and commitment.

The CPCs have been trained on importance of group formation, child rights, child protection, scenario of child sexual abuse and counselling skills. A list of important referral statutory bodies, individuals and institutions have also been given to these committees. As a result, they have emerged as knowledge banks and pressure groups in the community.

Capacity building requirements

Ideally, capacities and training needs should be based upon the specifics of the CBCPMs rather than just generic training. Where generic training is provided, it must be contextualised. However there are a number of core areas of knowledge and skills that will be needed by CBCPMs, including:

- Knowledge about child protection and the consequences/effects of abuse and mistreatment on children;
- Recognising signs and symptoms of possible abuse;
- Skills for communicating with children and families;
- Negotiation and mediation skills;
- Knowledge about child rights generally including principle of the best interest of the child;
- Roles and responsibilities of CBCPM and other child protection actors;
- Appreciation of legal context for protecting children/work of CBCPMs;
- Operational process for the CBCPM for example how and when to make a referral/awareness of other child protection actors/understanding confidentiality etc;
- Advocacy and awareness building skills for work with the community;
- Involving children in their own protection;
- Protecting children in emergency situations and the actions of CBCPMs.

Depending on context, CBCPMs may need other specialist training such as knowledge about harmful traditional practices or how to work with particular concerns within their community, such as alcohol abuse or domestic violence.

EXPERIENCE FROM THE FIELD - CASE STUDY from India: Community-based child protection responses to flooding in Uttarakhand

In the recent flood in Uttarakhand, 2013, many communities were facing crisis and a lack of basic amenities such as food and shelter. Due to continuous rains and cold weather little relief was available from the government. The Child Protection Committees (CPCs) in the programme villages initiated a small Child Friendly Space (CFS) to support the children not only from their programme area, but also for children from other regions who were passing through. The CPCs managed to arrange supplies with the help of the Plan Disaster Management Team for affect families. As part of the CFS activities lists of children were created, and basic counselling and family repatriation were supported.



ADDITIONAL RESOURCES:

TOOL FOURTEEN – Training needs assessment template TOOL FIFTEEN – Checklist of traditional harmful practices

Other materials:

Plan International Training Toolkit on Core Child Protection Awareness - http:// reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/Community_Child_Protection_ Committees_HandbookEnglish.pdf

CPWG Sudan (2012) Working with Community Based Child Protection Committees and Networks - A Handbook for Facilitators

KEY CONSIDERATIONS AND PRACTICE TIPS FROM THE FIELD

- ✓ Capacity building should be linked to the expectations and roles of the CBCPM this includes not only those working for the CBCPM, but also for other stakeholders working with the CBCPM, such as from government agencies. This is needed to ensure that the CBCPM can function efficiently.
- Remember that capacity building extends past training, and should include mentoring and ongoing support.
- ✓ Develop a simple manual to act as a guide for those working with and for the CBCPM. This will help both with capacity building and also with managing the day to day activities of the CBCPM.
- ✓ Include the actions that may be required of CBCPMs in an emergency during capacity building activities.





STEP SEVEN: ACTIONS FOR CBCPMs

STEP SEVEN: ACTIONS FOR CBCPMs

Since the CBCPM should be designed to fit the context, the actions for the CBCPM will be influenced by those choices. As has been discussed earlier in this handbook and can be seen from the diagram below, there are various different levels that the CBCPM can operate in/across within the community.

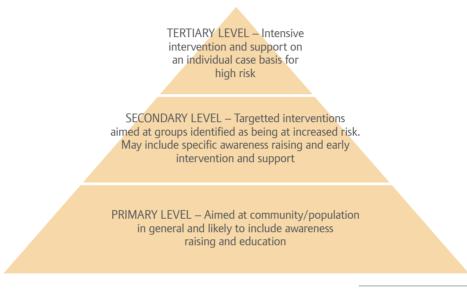


Diagram 4: Levels of intervention¹⁷

Depending on the context CBCPMs may be involved in all levels of intervention, or more likely working more generally at primary or secondary levels within their communities. However, even though CBCPMs should be designed for the context it is likely two main features of their work will be advocacy and awareness raising as these tend to be common activities undertaken by all CBCPMs.

While the work of the CBCPM may be primarily **prevention** (including early intervention) they also need to respond to situations of abuse/concerns when abuse is alleged. Actions in relation to responding to concerns are discussed in the following section, Step Eight.

¹⁷ Note this module is widely used to illustrate the different levels of intervention – although it is generally used to discuss populations more widely rather than in relation to a specific community.

Two primary actions relating to prevention work include awareness raising and advocacy. Both of these are important because they have the possibility to contribute towards changes in behaviour and policy which could have a long term impact on children's lives. The CBCPM can speak directly about the experiences of children within their community and this can be a very powerful influence.

EXPERIENCE FROM THE FIELD – CASE STUDY from China: Developing effective awareness raising materials

In order to develop effective public awareness raising activities and communication strategies to improve child protection, Plan China undertook research involving media experts and community members (children, caregivers and teachers) in Shaanxi Province. The research enabled different stakeholders to explore preferred and effective ways of creating messages for different target groups – children, caregivers and teachers etc.

Based on this research different materials were developed for different target groups in different contexts including: a child friendly child protection booklet and wall posters for children; a calendar for caregivers; a public drama on child protection for community members; and a mobile broadcast on child protection in remote areas. Child-led advocacy activities were also undertaken in schools and child protection public awareness raising was organised on national days/festival (e.g. on June 1st - International Children's Day).

Key lessons learned from this process included: the importance of using user friendly language to convey the key message; the benefits of integrating child protection messages and activities into community and school routine activities to increase efficiency; and recognition that while it is more cost effective to cover a large population by using IEC materials, it can be more effective to do an indepth activity with a specific target group, especially when seeking to reach and involve the most marginalised children in the community.

Awareness raising and sensitisation

Creating a safe community involves building the awareness of communities both in relation to children's right to protection and also regarding the roles and responsibilities of community members in protecting children. This includes working with and including children as part of those efforts.¹⁸

¹⁸ Of course, this needs to be done in a safe and appropriate way. The Plan ARO Manual Sticks and Stones previously mentioned and the child friendly resources developed by Plan Asia – as included in the reference section – can be used to support the inclusion of children.



Activities such as parenting education and positive discipline have proved effective in terms of both raising awareness within communities, and in preventing/reducing the incidents of mistreatment and abuse.¹⁹ To this extent they can also be considered as early intervention initiatives because they seek to reduce risk to children. Other early intervention strategies include mediation in cases of family/community conflicts. CBCPMs can also work with children to increase knowledge and awareness around issues such as peer to peer bullying.

Other activities, including awareness campaigns, can also sensitise communities on a range of issues including where to seek additional support.

Advocacy and influencing policy

An important part that CBCPMs can play in creating safer environments for all children, which is not always capitalised on, is in advocating for and influencing policy change. Through their work with children and their families, and their knowledge of the community, CBCPMs are uniquely placed to provide information and insights and to create an upwards force that can drive change. In addition, they are very well placed to create demands critical for establishment or strengthening of community-based services.

¹⁹ From Lessons for Protection.

It is essential to ensure that CBCPMs are given the necessary skills and support to be able to undertake awareness raising/early intervention activities and advocacy work in order to maximise their efforts and ensure the quality of their actions. CBCPMs should also seek to align and coordinate their activities with children's groups, or to make sure that their own action also involves children.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES:

Plan ARO (2014) Advocating for Child Safe Communities in Asia Region - Mapping of Advocacy for Community Based Child Protection Mechanisms (CBCPMs); Plan Asia, Bangkok, Thailand

Child Friendly materials developed by Plan ARO (and others) and included in the resources section of this handbook and also referenced in Plan ARO Manual Sticks and Stones.

KEY CONSIDERATIONS AND PRACTICE TIPS FROM THE FIELD

- Encouraging CBCPMs to align with other actors/develop networks will maximize efforts for awareness raising and advocacy.
- ✓ Collect examples of good practice from the community, and other neighbouring communities so that ideas can be shared.
- ✓ Conduct action oriented research to provide relevant inputs into designing community based initiatives.
- ✓ Conduct regular consultations with children on their own perspectives of different forms of violence.
- Ensure that support and capacity building is provided to CBCPM members so that they know how to sensitively raise issues with families and communities – especially when these are concerned with harmful traditional practices such as early marriage and corporal punishment.
- ✓ Support CBCPMs to identify appropriate priorities for action.

STEP EIGHT: RESPONDING TO CHILD PROTECTION CONCERNS

STEP EIGHT: RESPONDING TO CHILD PROTECTION CONCERNS

Although the activities of CBCPMs are often focussed primarily upon prevention through awareness raising and early interventions to support families and mitigate conflict situations, it is likely that at some point there will be a need to respond to child protection concerns – that is a situation where a child is either being abused, it is suspected they are being abused or it is likely they will be abused. The extent of the involvement of the CBCPM will depend on the specifics and location of the CBCPM but is likely to raise a number of issues and dilemmas which are discussed in this section.

It should be noted that the involvement of CBCPMs in response to violence against children needs to be very carefully considered, and kept to a minimum. This is not to say that CBCPMs do not have a significant role to play – such as helping to provide support in the community, participating in assessments or contributing towards implementing care plans and in monitoring/follow up. However, complex child abuse situations, especially where there are high levels of risk, are likely to require specific skills and expertise that go beyond CBCPM capacities. In addition, as mentioned in Step Five, Establishing CBCPMs, serious consideration must be given to the risk to the CBCPM members. It may place members of the community in danger or in difficult positions in terms of their relationships with other community members if they are asked to take on a more proactive role.

Child friendly reporting mechanisms

To feel confident in reporting concerns, children and adults, need to trust the CBCPM and believe that it will make a difference. A clear method for reporting concerns should be identified and communicated with community members, including children, which also includes the steps that are involved once a report is made.

These need not be especially complicated and complex – they can be as simple as letting the children and community members know who the members of the CBCPM are, and that they can speak to any of them, and then the person contacted advised what the next steps involve. In other places, the CBCPM might decide to produce a leaflet or poster or carry out a community activity to raise awareness. This further underlines importance of initially conducted mapping of locally available resources discussed previously in Step Two.

Reporting mechanisms need to be accessible and should make it as easy as possible to report concerns rather than acting as a barrier and there needs to be multiple ways of reporting concerns. For example, there is little purpose in asking for a report to be made to a specific person if their availability is restricted to working hours or having a box for lodging reports which is kept in the head teacher's office and opened by school staff who may be the subject of those complaints.

Processes must be child focused. They should be simple and also involve as few people as possible in terms of questioning and being involved directly. Asking children to repeat their story multiple times or speak about very private matters in an open forum or in front of large group is unethical and unlikely to lead to children feeling anything other than further upset or embarrassed. Members of the CBCPM should be given special orientation to understand the needs of children who may be victims of abuse and how to deal with these issues in a sensitive way, including how to appropriately talk with children and manage a disclosure.

EXPERIENCE FROM THE FIELD – CASE STUDY from Pakistan: Responding to violence in schools

A teacher in a school scolded and physically assaulted a student in front of the entire class. Other students in the class informed the Child Protection Committee (CPC) about the incident. The Committee immediately contacted the teacher, student and his family to find out more.

The CPC has nine members including teachers, a female health worker, and representatives of the community and members of the youth forum.

The Committee applied its influence to resolve the issue amicably; they met the parents of student and the teacher individually and convinced them to sit down together to solve the issue. All the stakeholders responded to the call of the Committee and agreed to sit together and also expressed great confidence in the Committee. The parents and the student had confidence that their rights will be protected and the teacher was also of the view that the Committee could resolve the issue better than the police and politicians. The Committee managed to get the teacher to extend an apology and assured the community that such incident would not be repeated.

Identifying cases and risk assessment

A dilemma that can present itself for some CBCPMs is **when** to make a referral for a case to another agency, such as the Department of Social Welfare. This is particularly where the CBCPM does more than awareness raising and sensitisation of the community but also intervenes directly in cases in order to help support children and find solutions to problems. It can be difficult to assess at what stage a referral is needed. This assumes that it has been possible to identify a child who is experiencing abuse in the first place – for different reasons children can be very loyal even to those who harm them.

Understanding the other partners in the child protection system, and their roles, is key to effective referrals. This is another reason why the initial mapping of services and agencies involved in protection children is so necessary. As is the need for guidelines to be established so that CBCPMs are clear about their responsibilities and when they should refer cases.

Where it is likely that a criminal offence has occurred, in theory this should always be reported to the police/child welfare agency. In practice this can be difficult to do – especially where the family is reluctant. This can be for a variety of reasons such as fear of adverse effect or stigma, or the consequences for their family. For example if the father is the cause for concern, if he is removed from the household the family may lose their only source of income. Alternatively, the formal services may not be trusted or fully functional.

Case management

Case management is a process or a set of procedures which are established to ensure that cases, including cases of abuse, are handled in a systematic and timely manner. Increasing interest is being placed on the introduction of case management practice within child protection as a way of ensuring quality and access to services, and that the way cases are handled meets children's needs.

While CBCPMs can participate in the case management process – for example by providing support in the village and monitoring the situation for the child, it is generally not acceptable for CBCPMs to be encouraged to manage cases. This is because it requires substantial skills, which are unlikely to be available, and because the ultimate responsibility for the protection of children must remain with the state (in line with the UNCRC and domestic laws).

In other cases, families may make a decision that they do not want formal services to be involved because they see little value in pursuing the matter as the process might cause further harm to the child. Another scenario may be that the family prefer payment of compensation, even though this denies the child's right to justice and may leave the child at risk of repeated abuse and place other children in harm's way.

In other cases, it may not be so clear cut in terms of the harm that the child has experienced or whether they have been abused. Sometimes there is no clear evidence and CBCPMs have to deal with partial information or rumours. Those working with the CBCPM should understand that even when there are only suspicions about child abuse, these still need to be taken seriously.

In the absence of criteria for when to refer to a formal service (for example in the case of suspected sexual abuse), it can be useful for members of CBCPMs to have a framework for assessing risk in order to be able to help determine when/if a formal report to another service needs to be made. Even when such criteria exist, it is likely that some cases will fall in the "grey area" when it is not so clear if a referral should be made. For example, in the case of physical violence (where this is not necessarily illegal) and is used as a discipline within families (also known as corporal punishment), it may be difficult to know if a referral should be made.

Understanding the level of risk and possible protective influences can be useful not only in terms of helping CBCPM members to be able to decide if a referral is necessary, but also in helping to develop plans to support children. Factors which tend to point towards a higher level of risk include:

- Younger children
- Families where there is little external support or who are isolated
- Children who are marginalised and lack access to other supportive adults
- Children with disabilities
- Parents with mental health or drug and alcohol problems
- In especially challenging situations such as disaster/post disaster and conflict/ post conflict environment
- Where children are in closed situations such as residential institutions, and religious and boarding schools
- Where there are taboo issues which cannot be addressed openly, such as sexual abuse of boys, or traditional harmful practices which are widely adopted and deeply embedded

In working with such cases directly, it is important to appreciate that often it will not be possible to totally solve problems. Sometimes the best outcome will be to be able to reduce or manage the risk so that it is at an acceptable level – such as by helping children/families to identify triggers/when the occurrence is most likely to happen and what could be done to keep the child safer. For example, if violence typically occurs

when a child is alone with the father, one way of removing/reducing the risk would be to ensure that the child went to stay with a neighbour or other family member while the mother is out.

Ombudsman/child rights commissioners

Many countries have established or are in the process of establishing Ombudsmen/ Commissioners Services. While their remit may vary, especially in terms of whether their recommendations are purely advisory or mandatory, they provide a mechanism for independent review of services.

Linking with such offices can help ensure that lessons learned, and the experiences of the CBCPM are reflected as policy and practice develops.

Especially challenging situations

During the mapping of the context and as work proceeds with the community, it will become apparent whether there are any prevalent or especially challenging situations that the CBCPM may need to address. Examples of this could include domestic violence, drug and alcohol abuse and harmful traditional practices.

Depending on these, it is likely that the CBCPM may need additional training and support to be able to work safely and appropriately around these issues in that particular context – both in terms of the safety of children and also of the members of the CBCPM.

Violence can take many forms, and can range from emotional/verbal violence which can be damaging in the long term to self-esteem and confidence, through to physical violence which in extremes can result with severe injury and death. When there is a violent member of the family, even if it is not directed at the child it still poses a risk to children. This can be either because the child may be accidentally hurt or may be traumatised by witnessing the violence. Another problem when there are high levels of violence in the family is that children can learn this as behaviour and begin to use violence in their own lives, thus perpetuating the cycle of abuse. Finally, a number of children flee their families to avoid domestic violence, ending up in the streets and thus getting exposed to multiple new forms of violence.

Working with violent people takes special care, because if the person feels that they have been humiliated or have lost their status or power, they may become angry with the person that they feel is to blame. If a child reports violence it is important to consider how they may be kept safe, such as ensuring that there is another adult available to provide support or the child has somewhere safe to stay.

Violence is often precipitated or made worse were drug and alcohol use is a feature. Peer violence and bullying occurs, unfortunately, in many communities. By linking with children's groups, CBCPMs are well placed to be able to resolve and counter such issues before they become severe.

An important feature of CBCPMs, if they are to be successful, is that there is a safe and accessible way for children to be able to speak out and raise concerns.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

TOOL SIXTEEN – Sample referral form TOOL SEVENTEEN – Risk assessment exercise

Suggested Reading:

Joint report of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence against Children and the Special Rapporteur on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography Special Rapporteur (2012) Safe and Child Sensitive counselling complaint and reporting mechanisms - available from

http://srsg.violenceagainstchildren.org/sites/default/files/publications_final/web_ safe_final.pdf

KEY CONSIDERATIONS AND PRACTICE TIPS FROM THE FIELD

- ✓ Advice and guidance given to CBCPMs must be specific and linked to the particular context and the scope/mandate of the CBCPM.
- ✓ Protocols and shared working processes must be identified with partners, so that there is a clear understanding about expectations of the various parties.
- ✓ Accessible and child friendly procedures for reporting and raising concerns should be integrated into the CBCPM.

STEP NINE: MONITORING AND REVIEW/EVALUATION

STEP NINE: MONITORING AND REVIEW/ EVALUATION

It is important to monitor and review the work of CBCPMs and to evaluate their effectiveness. This is likely to be needed to be done formally, for example as part of project agreements, but should also be encouraged at a more informal level by the members of the CBCPM. This could include issues such as how the mechanism operates and the opinions of children and communities and other stakeholders as to how the work of the CBCPM can be made more effective. Tracking trends may help CBCPMs plan future activities. Also, regular monitoring and data collection should be viewed as contributing to the growing body of evidence both in terms of harmful effects of violence on children and effectiveness of different good practice identified in the area of child protection.

In monitoring and evaluating the work of CBCPMs, the following should be kept in mind:

- Monitoring and review processes should be established from the start through baseline data collection, otherwise it may be difficult to collect data retrospectively.
- Indicators need to be realistic and focussed on the expected role and scope of the CBCPM and the support that will be provided in monitoring. For example if one of the roles of the CBCPM is to refer to other agencies or provide awareness raising then it would be appropriate and relatively simple to keep records of numbers that could be used for monitoring.
- Levels of functionality of the CBCPMs should be jointly defined based on their expected roles, to ensure these are measured on an ongoing basis and assist in timely addressing gaps identified. Simple parameters for CBCPM functionality may include their involvement in raising awareness in the community on different forms of violence against children; preventing violence against children through early detection and intervention; and contributing towards timely reporting and referring alleged cases of child abuse to the relevant child protective services.
- Keep the monitoring system as simple as possible. Asking for too much information which is difficult to collate or which is asked for multiple times but in different formats by different stakeholders is likely to result in data not being accurately collated. Where different organisations, including governments, are seeking

information from the CBCPM, try to coordinate this so that the community does not become overwhelmed.

• Keep expectations realistic. CBCPMs can play a significant role in protecting children and it is proper that their work should be evaluated. However, they can have their limitations and it is important that these are taken into account when reviewing their work, and also in designing data collection systems. For example, there is little point and value in designing elaborate record keeping and expecting detailed records if there are low rates of literacy.

Remember, a very broad indicator such as 'reduce violence and abuse' will be much harder to measure without substantial external support, and will be also difficult to attribute directly to the CBCPM without extensive research.

Plan ARO has developed a specific monitoring framework to gather data regarding the work done to establish and support CBCPMs in the region. This is included in the Appendix.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES:

TOOL EIGHTEEN – Sample data collection form



SUMMARY AND FINAL THOUGHTS

Throughout this handbook we have emphasised both the importance of involving communities in efforts to protect children and also the need to ensure that this is done in ways that are appropriate to the community, inclusive of all children and are safe (both for members of the CBCPM and children and their families).

As mentioned previously, there is no one set way of involving communities nor is there a template which can be easily introduced into other contexts. Involving communities in the protection of children is not an 'easy fix' that can be done without effort and resources if it is to be appropriate and sustainable.

By presenting the necessary stages for developing and supporting CBCPMs as a series of steps, we hope to have been able to show in a logical way the actions that are required to try to ensure that the CBCPM is both workable and sustainable in the longer term – and crucially that it actually protects children.

However, contexts change. Communities grow and develop, and new situations and circumstances occur (such as a different phenomenon of child abuse occurs or a disaster impacts on the community's ability to protect children). This means that the work and nature of the CBCPM may also need to change over time to adapt to new and evolving situations.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES:

TOOL NINETEEN – Checklist for establishing and upporting CBCPMs

RESOURCES AND REFERENCES

Actions for facilitators working with children and youth groups; Plan Asia Regional Office, Thailand, Bangkok

Plan Materials (including reports commissioned by Plan)

ICPREC (2014) Regional Evaluation of the Effectiveness of Community Based Child Protection Mechanisms supported by Plan in Asia: Plan ARO, Bangkok, Thailand.

Plan ARO (2011) Bamboo Shoots - A training manual on child-centred community development/ Child-led. Community actions for facilitators working with children and youth groups; Plan Asia, Bangkok, Thailand.

Plan ARO (2012a) Lessons for Protection - A comparative analysis of communitybased child protection mechanisms supported by Plan (2012); Plan Asia Regional Office, Bangkok, Thailand see: http://plan-international.org/about-plan/resources/ publications/protection/lessons-for-protection

Plan ARO (2013a) Safe and Sound - Growing up with Protection: Regional Sub-Strategy Child Protection in Development; Plan ARO, Bangkok, Asia.

Plan ARO (2013b) Sticks and Stones - A training manual for facilitators on how to increase the involvement of children in their own protection; Plan Asia, Bangkok, Thailand.

Plan ARO (2013c) Towards Minimum Standards for Adult Facilitators Supporting Children's Groups; Plan Asia, Bangkok, Thailand.

Plan ARO (2014) Advocating for Child Safe Communities in Asia Region - Mapping of Advocacy for Community Based Child Protection Mechanisms (CBCPMs); Plan Asia, Bangkok, Thailand.

Plan International (2012) Getting it Right: Gender and Child Rights Training Manual; Plan Asia Regional Office, Thailand, Bangkok.

Plan International (revised 2013) 'Say Yes to Protecting Children' Global Child Protection Policy; Plan International, Woking UK.

Plan International (2014) Protection from Violence is Every Child's Right: Plan International's Global Strategy for Child Protection Programming; Plan International, Woking, UK.

Plan Child Friendly Materials

Plan ARO (2012b) Your personal guide to violence against children; Plan Asia Regional Office, Thailand, Bangkok.

Plan ARO (2012c) Violence Against Children Action Booklet; Plan Asia Regional Office, Thailand, Bangkok.

Plan ARO (2012d) Child Protection Policy - Child Friendly Version; Plan Asia Regional Office, Thailand, Bangkok.

Working with Communities/CBCPMs

CPWG (2012) Strengthening Child Protection Systems in Sub-Saharan Africa - A working paper, Inter-agency Group on Child Protection Systems in sub-Saharan Africa - see http://www.unicef.org/wcaro/english/strengthening_child_protection_systems_ in_sub-Saharan_Africa_-August_2012_.pdf

CPWG Sudan (2012) Working with Community Based Child Protection Committees and Networks – A Handbook for Facilitators http://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/ files/resources/Community_Child_Protection_Committees_HandbookEnglish.pdf

Save the Children (2007) Children at the Center: A guide to supporting community groups caring for vulnerable children - see http://www.crin.org/docs/Children%20 At%20the%20Centre%20Text.pdf

Joint report of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence against Children and the Special Rapporteur on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography Special Rapporteur (2012) Safe and Child Sensitive counselling complaint and reporting mechanisms - available from

http://srsg.violenceagainstchildren.org/sites/default/files/publications_final/web_ safe_final.pdf

Wessells M (2009) What Are We Learning About Protecting Children in the Community? An Inter - Agency review of evidence on community - based child protection mechanisms; Save the Children available from:

http://www.unicef.org/protection/files/What_Are_We_Learning_About_ Protecting_Children_in_the_Community_Summary.pdf

General Information on Child Protection Systems & Child Protection

Save the Children Fund (2010) Strengthening National Child Protection Systems in Emergencies through Community Based Mechanisms; Save the Children, London, UK.

Terre des homes (2012) Thematic Policy, Enhancing Child Protection Systems - see www.tdh.ch

UNHCR (2010) Protecting children of concern through a systems approach United Nations (2005) Report on the Violence against Children Study - see www.unviolencestudy.org

World Vision (2011) A Systems Approach to Child Protection, A World Vision Discussion Paper.

Wukczyn et al (2010) Adapting a Systems Approach to Child Protection: Key Concepts and Considerations - see http://www.unicef.org/protection/files/Adapting_Systems_ Child_Protection_Jan__2010.pdf



TOOLS

Resource Handbook for Working with Communities to Enhance Child Protection TOOLS

PLAN ASIA REGIONAL OFFICE 2014 TOOL ONE Protection and risk target exercise

This exercise has appeared in various forms in different training manuals. Its purpose is to help communities identify the various different risks and protective influences that children in their community face.

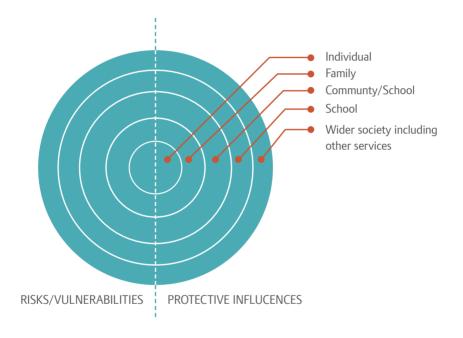
It can be run either with different groups of the community, including children, to get different perspectives or with members of the CBCPM to deepen their understanding and gain their insights into protection issues and protective influences.

Instructions

- 1. Draw the target, as shown in the diagram below. This can be done either on large paper, and pinned to the wall, or drawn on the floor, depending on resources and space.
- 2. Explain to participants that this exercise is going to get them to explore the risks to children in their communities and also what are the protective factors. By identifying these two elements it will be possible to then consider how might risks be reduced and protective factors increased.
- 3. In small groups, participants should discuss the risks that they think children might be exposed to at each level writing/drawing each risk on a small piece of paper.
- 4. After about 15 minutes for discussion, groups should pin their risks on the target in the appropriate area.
- 5. Facilitator should then lead a large group discussion, reviewing each of the risks and supplementing where necessary.
- 6. Exercise should be repeated with protective factors in particular asking participants to see if they can identify a protective factor to counter/reduced each risk.

As an alternative groups of participants could be asked to consider the experiences of different children – for example boys and girls, or disabled children in order to explore differences.





Target Diagram (note levels can be adapted depending on context)

TOOL TWO Mapping matrix

This template can be used to collate and analysis information gained through mapping the child protection situation – including the contexts and resources.

Country	

1. Legal age of consent in country:	
Legislation covering legal age of consent	

2. Child Protection Risks and Issues

List of main protection risks and issues facing children	Where in the country does this take place?	Is this a common place practice?	Is this a culturally accepted practice?	What is the local attitude towards this form of abuse/ protection issue? (also detail any form of reprisals towards victim, perpetrator, informant, witness etc)	Detail any legislation governing this type of issue and a brief analysis of implementation/ enforcement as far as is known?	Detail the police position on this type of issue including the likelihood of investigation and prosecution?	Detail any other provisions for this type of risk/ issue (e.g. community based/ informal protection, faith groups, provisions for victim etc)	What are the gaps in the provisions?
2.1								
2.2								
2.3								
2.4								
2.5								

3. Legal Framework²⁰

Legislation governing welfare/ protection of children (also include any international conventions to which the country is a signatory or has ratified e.g. UNCRC)	Detail whether this legislation is implemented and or enforced.	Any other comments
3.1		
3.2		
3.3		
3.4		

²⁰ If you have already comments on this under section 2 please reference.

4. Child Protection Network

Statutory Child Protection					
List of ministries/ bodies/ agencies with statutory authority for the protection of children	Type of agency/ service offered.	Location	How effective is this agency/ body?	Contact details of Senior Officer/s that may be contacted in the event of an issue. Give: Name, position, telephone and email contact.	Any other comments
4.1					
4.2					
4.3					
4.4					

Criminal issues – reporting , investigation and prosecution					
Name of police who can be contacted in the event of a criminal Child Protection issue	Location	Contact details Give: position, telephone and email contact	Any other comments		
4.5					
4.6					
4.7					
4.8					

Other country agencies for victim response					
Name of agency/service	Type of agency/ service (medical, health, safe housing, child centre, refugee centre, etc)	Location	How effective is this agency/ body?	Detail any local joint arrangements for dealing with child protection issues.	Contact details of Senior Officer/s that may be contacted in the event of an issue. Give: Name, position, telephone and email contact.
4.9					
4.10					
4.11					
4.12					

NGOs (local and international), professional networks etc for victim response						
Name of NGO, professional network etc	Type of agency/ service offered	Location	How effective is this agency/ body?	Detail any local joint arrangements for dealing with child protection issues.	Contact details of Senior Officer/s that may be contacted in the event of an issue. Give: Name, position, telephone and email contact.	
4.13						
4.14						
4.15						
4.16						

Community-based						
Name of community- based resource, group or body (informal groups, faith groups etc)	Detail how this group works and what is offered.	Location	How effective is this group/ resource?	Detail any local joint arrangements for dealing with child protection issues.	Details of Senior Contact that may be contacted in the event of an issue. Give: Name, position, telephone and any other contact details	
4.17						
4.18						
4.19						
4.20						



TOOL THREE Case mapping exercise

Sometimes it is difficult for communities, or even professionals, to explain how the current protection system works/where are the gaps in the system in practice or where traditional/informal systems might step in to protect children.

For this reason it is sometimes easiest to give people a short case study and then to ask them to map what might happen in that particular situation. This can be done in small groups – either separating different groups (for example, parents, community leaders or children) to get different perspectives which can be compared later, or in mixed groups to come to a consensus.

It is important when developing the case study that it is not too long (otherwise too much time will be spent discussing the details and the most important thing to discuss is the process) and that it should be a fairly common or typical scenario that might be encountered in the community.

After presenting the case study, participants should be asked to develop a flow chart showing what would happen next (until the conclusion of the case). They should note who would be involved (people and services) and likely timescales. Participants can also be asked to note where there may be differences between what should happen (for example according to the law) and what would happen in practice.



TOOL FOUR Framework checklist

This checklist summarises some of the key questions to be considered in relation to policy and legal framework for protecting children.

Economic framework

What social protection mechanisms (if any) exist for families? For example financial safety nets for poor families? If so what is the eligibility criteria?

Are there any special assistance schemes that families/children can participate in? For example for children with disabilities or other special needs?

Is there a funded health scheme/provision for medical support to children?

Policy and legal framework

Is there an overarching state policy framework/strategy for child wellbeing?

Is there a law for protecting children? How effective is its implementation?

Is there an agency which has a mandate for protecting children? If so how does it function? Are there any other agencies who are involved in protecting children or who take the lead in protecting children in reality?

What are the coordination mechanisms between the different agencies?

What is the situation for children without parental care? Are children in institutions or is there alternative care available? What about adoption?

To what extent are families expected to 'solve' their own problems? To what extent is the government involved/community support available?

TOOL FIVE Reminder - International human rights legal minimum ages definitions

Although the UNCRC defines a child as being anyone under the age of 18 years old, of course there are various minimum ages defined under national laws. The table below is included as a reminder of the different minimum age definitions across the Asia Region. Also included in this tool is a summary of different age definitions as included in International Human Rights Law.

Minimum ages of children for different social interactions as defined by the international human rights law

1. THE AGE OF CONSENT (FOR SEXUAL INTERCOURSE)

There is no any explicit international law or guidelines governing this aspect. However, The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child explicitly states that every child — defining a child as a person under the age of 18 years — must be protected from sexual abuse (article 19) and from involvement in pornography and prostitution (article 34).

2. THE MINIMUM AGE FOR MARRIAGE

The determination of marriageable age is left to the national level jurisdictions. However The Convention on Consent to Marriage, Minimum Age for Marriage and Registration of Marriages (521 U.N.T.S. 231, entered into force Dec 9, 1964) provides that:

"no marriage shall be legally entered into without the full and free consent of both parties, such consent to be expressed by them in person after due publicity and in the presence of the authority competent to solemnize the marriage and of witnesses, as prescribed by law"

The Article 2 of this Convention further specifies that "State Parties to the present Convention shall take legislative action to specify a minimum age for marriage. No marriage shall be legally entered into by any person under this age, except where a competent authority has granted a dispensation as to age, for serious reasons, in the interest of the intending spouses"

3. THE MINIMUM AGE FOR CRIMINAL RESPONSIBILITY (MACR)

Under Article 40(3) of the UNCRC, States parties are encouraged to establish a minimum age below which children are presumed not to have the capacity to infringe the criminal law.

In its General Comment no. 10 (Children's Rights in Juvenile Justice), the CRC Committee recommends that the State Parties should not to set a MACR at a too low level and to increase an existing MACR to an internationally acceptable level concluding that the MACR below the age of 12 is considered unacceptable.

The committee understands this provision as an obligation for States parties to set a minimum age of criminal responsibility (MACR). This minimum age means the following:

- Children who commit an offence at an age below that minimum cannot be held responsible in a penal law procedure. Even (very) young children do have the capacity to infringe the penal law but if they commit an offence when below MACR the irrefutable assumption is that they cannot be formally charged and held responsible in a penal law procedure. For these children special protective measures can be taken if necessary in their best interests;
- Children at or above the MACR at the time of the commission of an offence (or: infringement of the penal law) but younger than 18 years (see also paragraphs 35-38) can be formally charged and subject to penal law procedures. But these procedures, including the final outcome, must be in full compliance with the principles and provisions of CRC as elaborated in the present general comment.

The GC further elaborates that "if there is no proof of age and it cannot be established that the child is at or above the MACR, the child shall not be held criminally responsible"

Guidance is also found in Rule 4 of the Beijing Rules which recommends that any minimum age of criminal responsibility "shall not be fixed at too low an age level, bearing in mind the facts of emotional, mental and intellectual maturity". The Commentary to this Rule states that 'the modern approach is to consider whether a child can live up to the moral and psychological components of criminal responsibility; that is, whether a child, by virtue of her or his individual discernment and understanding, can be held responsible for essentially anti-social behaviour...The Rules advise that in general there should be a close relationship between the notion of criminal responsibility and other social rights and responsibilities (such as marital status, civil majority, etc).'

4. MINIMUM AGE FOR ADMISSION TO EMPLOYMENT

C138 Minimum Age Convention, 1973 introduced by the ILO sets international standards regarding the minimum age for admission to employment.

This Convention sets the minimum working age at 15 years and 13 years for light work. For dangerous work, the Convention set the bar for admission to employment at 18 years (16 years under certain conditions). The Convention allows developing countries, whose economy and educational facilities are insufficiently developed, to temporarily set the minimum age for admission to employment at 14 years. However, it requires that this decision to be thoroughly justified.

5. COMPULSORY EDUCATION

The Article 28 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child provides that "States Parties recognize the right of the child to education and with a view to achieving this right progressively and on the basis of equal opportunity, they shall, in particular, make primary education compulsory and available free to all".

6. AGE OF MAJORITY (REACHING ADULTHOOD)

There is no any explicit international law or guidelines governing this aspect. However, the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, in its article 1, defines everyone under the age of 18 as children.

7. VOTING AGE

The determination of voting age is largely left to the discretion of national jurisdictions. 18 is by far the most common voting age across the nations. However the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) and International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) guarantee this right consecutively in article 21 and 25.

Article 21 of the UDHR

- Everyone has the right to take part in the government of his country, directly or through freely chosen representatives.
- Everyone has the right of equal access to public service in his country.
- The will of the people shall be the basis of the authority of government; this will shall be expressed in periodic and genuine elections which shall be by universal and equal suffrage and shall be held by secret vote or by equivalent free voting procedures.

Article 25 of the ICCPR

Every citizen shall have the right and the opportunity, without any of the distinctions mentioned in article 2 and without unreasonable restrictions:

- To take part in the conduct of public affairs, directly or through freely chosen representatives.
- To vote and to be elected at genuine periodic elections which shall be by universal and equal suffrage and shall be held by secret ballot, guaranteeing the free expression of the will of the electors.

TOOL SIX Template roles and responsibilities for agencies

This template can be used to collate the different roles and responsibilities of the different agencies that might work together to protect a child. This can be useful to complete both in terms of helping to understand the system and to clarify expectations between agencies and the CBCPM.

Note the different elements are included as examples, and should be defined at community level.

SERVICE /AGENCY					
	Health	Police	Social Services	CBCPM	
Legal support					
Medical/health					
Education					
Monitoring					
Support of family					



TOOL SEVEN Focus group discussion with community members

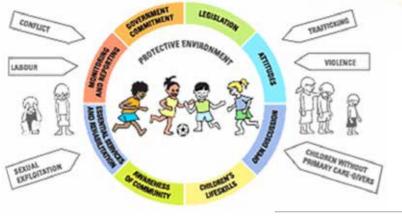
In addition to asking community members to consider the case study exercise (Tool 3) a ranking exercise can also be explored as part of a Focus Group Discussion with community members, which aim to gain a broader understanding of the views of the community towards children, the priorities for children as understood by community members, and also community mechanisms to protect children.

Ranking Exercise (Time: 45 minutes)

Objective: To understand participants' perspectives on child wellbeing and child protection challenges.

- 1. Ask participants to identify factors that make children feel bad, unsafe, and insecure.
- 2. Ask participants to rank all of the answers in order of importance.
- 3. Participants can discuss, explain and debate among themselves, further explaining why different things are important.
- 4. Once the ranking has been finalised ask the group to explain why this ranking was agreed upon and highlight areas of doubt or where disagreement could not be resolved.
- 5. Repeat steps (1 to 4) to answer the question of: what makes children feel good, safe, and secure?

TOOL EIGHT Areas of consideration



UNICEF Protective Environment (2004)

When thinking about the work of the CBCPM and the situation for children, it is useful to reflect on the Protective Environment model developed by UNICEF and which identifies key elements in protecting children, and to reflect on where and how the CBCPM can contribute towards strengthening the protective environment.

Attitudes, traditions, customs, behaviours and practices

The environment will not be protective for children in societies in which attitudes or traditions facilitate abuse. Children are more likely to be protected in societies in which all forms of abuse and violence against children are not acceptable and in which the rights of children are broadly respected by custom and tradition.

Government commitment to fulfilling protection rights

Government commitment to respecting, protecting and fulfilling child protection is of great importance to the development of a protective environment. Governments have a fundamental role and need to show commitment to creating strong legal frameworks and to enforcing them.

Open discussion and engagement with child protection issues

Children and communities need to be free to speak up about child protection concerns affecting them or other children. Media attention and civil society engagement with child protection issues also strengthens the protective environment.

Protective legislation and enforcement

An adequate legislative framework designed to protect children from abuse and its enforcement is an essential element of a protective environment.

The capacity of people around children to protect them

Members of community-based child protection mechanisms, parents, traditional and religious leaders, health workers, teachers, police, social workers and many others who interact with children need to be equipped with the motivation, capacity and authority to protect children.

Children's life skills, knowledge and participation

Children are less vulnerable to abuse when they and their caregivers are aware of their right not to be exploited and of services available to protect them. With the right information, children can draw upon their knowledge, life skills and resilience to reduce their risk of abuse, violence or experience.

Monitoring and reporting

An effective monitoring system records the incidence and nature of child protection abuses and allows for informed responses. Such systems are more effective when they are participatory and locally based. Community-based monitoring also helps to increase awareness of the causes of child protection concerns, which children are more vulnerable and the places and situations where risks occur.

Services for recovery and reintegration

Children who experience any form of abuse, violence, exploitation or neglect are entitled to care and access to basic social services. These services must be provided in an environment where the dignity of the child is respected.

TOOL NINE Risk evaluation form

Appendix V – Child Protection Risk Assessment Form

For Identifying and a ssessing risks for:

- $\boldsymbol{\cdot}$ planning events involving children
- · individuals/groups/a gencies impacted by child protection issues

Description of Event or Child Protection Incident:

Date of Risk Assessment:

		Ris	sk Assessment	Risk Management					
Step 1 ¹ : What is the event stage or activity?	Step 2: Who is at risk? (Think about the factors which put	Step 3: What are the risks.	Step 4: What are the control measures currently in place.	Step 5: Risk Calculation		Step 6: What are the agreed addittional controls/actions to be put in place to mitigate the risk.	By Whom	Be When	
	them at risk).		in placer	Impact Likelihood Risk Level					

Prepared By: Management Sign off: Print Name Print Name Signature Signature Date Date

		Impact				
		L	М	Н		
	H-3	М				
Likelihood	M-2	L	М			
	L-1	L	L	М		

TOOL TEN Selection criteria for membership

The selection criteria for membership of the CBCPM will depend to some extent on what model of CBCPM is selected and the role the members are expected to carry out. This will in turn be dependent upon the context. However, a number of ideal skills and qualities are desirable, irrespective of the model of CBCPM.

These include:

- · Commitment to promoting welfare of children, and advocating on their behalf
- Respect for children's rights
- Respected and trusted in the community/be of good standing within the community
- Able to give time and energy necessary
- Able to maintain confidentiality
- Able to communicate and get on with a variety of people children, families and community members and professionals/workers
- Able to communicate in child friendly and sensitive manner
- · Able to accept and work within the Code of Conduct
- No criminal records or concerns regarding appropriateness to work with children

TOOL ELEVEN Self declaration form

As part of ensuring that those who are working with the CBCPM are safe to work with children, steps should be taken to ensure that members are safe and appropriate to work with children. In practice this might include getting references and police checks.

In addition or as an alternative when it is not possible to get such assurances, members can be asked to sign a self – declaration form, which gives an undertaking that they are safe to work with children. Of course, those who mean children harm may still sign the form, but research indicates that asking for such an undertaking can be a deterrent. It also sends a clear message to all those working with the CBCPM about the importance place on ensuring the 'right people' are selected to work with the CBCPM.

Sample Self-Declaration Form

I(name) declare that I know of no reason why anyone would think that I am not suitable to work with children. Furthermore I have never been accused, suspected or convicted of mistreating, abusing or exploiting a child.

Signed Date



TOOL TWELVE Code of conduct for members

It is a good idea to ask members of the CBCPM to develop and agree to abide by a code of conduct. This ensures that expectations of each other and behaviour towards children and families are made explicit. Ideally each member should sign the code of conduct.

To promote ownership (and thus agreement) the code should be developed by members. It should also be written specifically for the context. However, typical contents of a code of conduct include:

I agree to:

- Treat all children and young people with respect and equity.
- Provide a welcoming, inclusive and safe environment for all children, young people, parents, staff and volunteers.
- Respect cultural and other differences.
- Encourage open communication between all children, young people, parents, staff and volunteers and have children and young people participate in the decisions that affect them.
- Report any concerns of child abuse.
- Exercise care in all matters related to my function and not to divulge any confidential information about a child and other child protection network-related matters.
- At all times, be transparent in my actions and whereabouts.
- Take responsibility for ensuring I am accountable and do not place myself in any positions in which there is a risk of allegations being made.
- Speak up when I observe behaviour of colleagues that cause concern.

I agree I will not:

- Engage in behaviour that is intended to shame, humiliate, belittle or degrade children.
- Use inappropriate, offensive or discriminatory language when speaking with a child or young person.
- Request any service or favour from a child or family in return for protection or assistance.
- Do things of a personal nature that a child can do for him/herself, such as assistance with toileting or changing clothes.
- Take children to my own home or sleep in the same room or bed as a child.
- Smack, hit or physically assault children.
- Develop a sexual relationship with a child or a relationship with a child that may be deemed exploitive or abusive.
- Behave provocatively or inappropriately with a child.
- Condone or participate in behaviour of children that is illegal, unsafe or abusive.
- Act in a way that shows unfair or differential treatment to children.
- Photograph or video a child without the consent of the child and his/her parents or guardians.



TOOL THIRTEEN Summary of recommendations for involving children in CBCPMs

Plan Asia's regional comparative analysis of community based child protection mechanisms identified the extent to which children participated, and also highlighted some key learnings from work being carried out across Asia. These included :

- ✓ By empowering children as active citizens, girls and boys are more able to assert their rights to protection and are more able to protect themselves.
- ✓ Many CBCPMs include child representatives; and many CBCPMs work collaboratively with child groups.
- ✓ Children and young people are playing important roles in awareness-raising, identification and reporting of child protection concerns, mapping of risks, and organising action to prevent or respond to child protection concerns (such as beating, child marriage etc) through early intervention home visits, discussions and actions with other concerned stakeholders.
- Creative forms of awareness raising including drama, theatre for development, music, art and child-led media initiatives (newsletters, wall magazines, radio or TV programmes) have been effectively used by children to raise awareness and action on child protection.
- ✓ Support for meaningful participation is an ongoing process as it involves profound changes in cultural attitudes and beliefs that take time. As a result of sociocultural traditions towards children some parents/caregivers, community elders and local
- ✓ Officials still do not understand the importance of children's participation, and many adults continue to under estimate girls' and boys' capacities.
- ✓ Increased efforts are needed by Plan and their partners to reach and engage the most marginalised children (children with disabilities, indigenous children, out-of-school working children, child domestic workers etc.) in child groups/clubs and in CBCPMs.

- ✓ Time constraints for participation for children as they are busy with education/ tuition, household or other work, and leisure activities. Some child protection meetings are organised during study time. Increased efforts are needed to support children's participation in protection activities at times that suit them.
- ✓ To strengthen their groups, members would like increased opportunities to network with, and learn from, children's groups to enhance their action and advocacy initiatives on child protection.

The following six general principles, from Plan's Code of Ethics, should guide work with children and their participation:

- 1. **Non-discrimination and inclusiveness** treating everybody equally and including all.
- 2. **Democracy and equality of opportunity** giving everyone the same chances, and allowing people to have their say.
- 3. **Physical, emotional and psychological safety of participants** making sure that everyone is looked after, nobody is harmed ('Do No Harm') and that the best interests of the child take priority.
- 4. **Adult responsibility** although children's voices are important, and children have skills, it is an adult's role to ensure that children are safe.
- Voluntarism, informed consent and transparency children should be asked if they want to take part, know what they are agreeing to do and what will happen as a result.
- 6. **Participation should be an enjoyable and stimulating experience** even if it is a serious topic or issue, it does not have to be boring!

TOOL FOURTEEN Training needs assessment template

This template can be used to identify what needs for capacity building members of CBCPM identify. It can also be used to measure learning on training courses (by completing before the course, and then afterwards).

The areas of capacity building identified will depend upon the context and nature of CBCPM; those included below are examples of some typical skills and knowledge required.

LEARNING NEEDS								
YOUR NAME:	DAT	DATE:						
AREA OF LEARNING	Ratin	g (1=lo	w, 4=h	igh)	COMMENTS/NOTES			
	1	2	3	4				
1. Your knowledge of child abuse and protection								
2. Your knowledge about other services to protect children								
3. Your experience in working with children and families								
4. Your confidence in dealing with difficult situations								
5. Insight into your own strengths & weaknesses								
6.								
7.								
8.								
9.								
10.								

TOOL FIFTEEN Checklist of traditional harmful practices

Traditional Harmful Practices (including both harmful religious and cultural practices) can be especially difficult to counter and change, since they are, by their nature, longstanding and typically strongly supported by the majority of the community. Nevertheless, harmful traditional practices must be addressed if children are to be protected. One of the ways CBCPMs can be part of the effort to eradicate harmful traditional practices is through awareness raising.

The Committee on the Rights of the Child (2011) *General Comment No. 13, The right of the child to freedom from all forms of violence* describes a number of traditional harmful practices, including:

- ✓ Corporal punishment and other cruel or degrading forms of punishment;
- ✓ Female genital mutilation and cutting;
- ✓ Amputations, binding, scarring, burning and branding and teeth extraction;
- ✓ Violent and degrading initiation rites; force feeding of girls; fattening; virginity testing (inspecting girls' genitalia);
- ✓ Forced marriage and child marriage;
- "Honour" crimes; "retribution" acts of violence (where disputes between different groups are taken out on children of the parties involved);
- ✓ Dowry-related death and violence; and
- ✓ Accusations of "witchcraft" and related harmful practices such as "exorcism".

TOOL SIXTEEN Sample referral form

REPORTING FORM AND RECORD – CHILD PROTECTION CONCE	RNS
Name and Details of Child – age /date of birth, gender (including identity papers/numbers) :	Case Number:
	Please specify any special needs the child may have (e.g. disabilities):
Where does the child stay, and who is responsible for them?	Name of person and organisation completing report form and who spoke with the child about the incident:
Is this safe? (If not alternative living arrangements need to be organised)	Date of Report:
Names/contact of other family members/people who will care for the child if necessary:	Who is the alleged abuser/abusers? (record as much information as possible – where names are not known include descriptions)
What happened?/Reason for Concern	
What were the circumstances? (i.e. place time etc) Who else was there?	Who else knows about the incident/concern? – including details of other organisations working with the child

What support/action has been taken so far?

What would the child like to happen next?/What are their views about the situation?

What services does the child need? (such as medical & support) who should provide these and when?

Is there any other action that needs to be taken? (specify by who and when)

Who will follow up the case, and what is the timescale?

Are there any lessons that can be learnt from this incident which can be used to protect children in the future? If so, what steps will be taken to ensure that such an incident does not occur again?

TOOL SEVENTEEN Risk assessment exercise

This is a very useful exercise to carry out, either in small groups or individually, with members of the CBCPM. It aims to help tease out and explore how people understand risk and what influences their decisions. This can then form the basis of discussion about risk in order to come to common understandings. This is especially important where CBCPM members are required to refer cases to other services.

Note that the scenarios are examples only – they should be written to reflect the actual cases that CBCPM members are likely to encounter.

Below are 10 cases. You only have brief information about each case, so you need to do an INITIAL ASSESSMENT of the level of risk and rank in order of seriousness. As you make your decisions, keep a note about what influenced your choices.

- A. A 6 month old baby being shaken by mother.
- B. An 11 year old child living on the streets with parents in an area where sex workers work.
- C. An 8 year old boy living with his parents there are allegations of domestic violence between the mother and father.
- D. A 3 year old child living on the streets with parents in an area where sex workers work.
- E. A 15 year old boy living with parents where there are allegations of domestic violence.
- F. A 12 year old boy covered in bruises he reports that his father, who he lives with has hit him.
- G. A 12 year old boy covered in bruises he reports that his uncle, who lives in the next village hit him while visiting.
- H. An 18 month baby living alone with a mother who has severe mental health problems and suffers from mood swings.
- I. An 18 month baby living with parents and extended family his mother has severe mental health problems and suffers from mood swings.
- J. A 9 year girl who is sent out to beg by her family.

TOOL EIGHTEEN Sample data collection form – Plan ARO

PU Summary Report

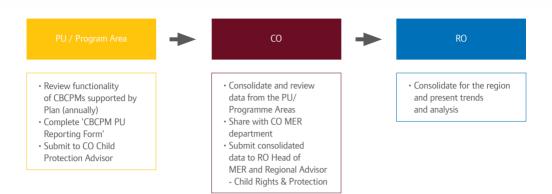
To be completed by Child Protection focal Point and submitted to CO Child Protection Advisor

Name of staff completing this form:	
Date report submitted to CO (dd/mm/yy):	
definition of communities (defined at CO level):	

A	В	С		D		E		F		G		Н	
PU/ Programe Area	Community name	Has the CBCPM raised awareness		Has the CBCPM prevented		Has the CBCPM comtributed		Have children /youth		Have children /youth		Have children /youth	
name													
			_										
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Number of functioning CBCPMs monitoring indicator - Plan ARO

Process summary



Basic Guidelines

1. Agree on key definitions at the country level	 The CO Child Protection Advisor, working together with the CO MER team, agree on definitions for the following terms: Communities It is recommended to use the established country definition. For reference, please also refer to the definition provided in the current version of the global Child Protection Strategy: 'A group of interacting people who live in some geographical proximity to one another and usually shares common values and interests. The term refers to a social unit larger than the household. This definition applies equally to rural and urban settings'. Children/youth groups Functional children/youth groups (defined at CO level)
2. Identify all CBCPMs supported by Plan	 Share definitions with all PU/Program Area Child Protection Focal Points Each PU Child Protection Focal Point: Identify all CBCPMs supported by Plan in your area. Complete columns A and B in 'CBCPM PU Reporting Form'. NB: Plans working definition of CBCPMs is: Community based child protection mechanisms are formal and informal prevention and referral groups to address child protection within communities, progressively becoming formal and linked to the state system.
3. Assess functionality of the CBCPM	 Each PU Child Protection Focal Point: Assess the functionality of the CBCPM. For the purpose of this indicator, a CBCPM is classified as functioning when there is evidence that it has: 1. Raised awareness in the community on different forms of violence against children 2. Prevented violence against children through early detection and intervention 3. Contributed towards timely reporting and referring alleged cases of child abuse to the relevant child protective services Complete columns C, D and E 'CBCPM PU Reporting Form'

TOOL NINETEEN Checklist for establishing and supporting CBCPMs

This handbook has identified a number of steps to establishing and support CBCPMs. While there are many factors that influence the success of a CBCPMs, analysis conducted by child protection organisations has identified seven factors that particularly influence effectiveness:²²

This checklist has been included so that Programme Units can critically evaluate the CBCPMs in their area and identify what actions may be necessary in order to ensure that the effectiveness and sustainability of the CBCPM can be maximised.

FACTOR	Level (0= none)				INDICATOR	WORK REQUIRED
	0	1	2	3		
Community ownership						
Building on and respect for existing resources						
Support from community leaders						
Child participation						
Management of issues of power, diversity and inclusivity						
Access to resources						
Links with other CP groups and agencies						

²² 61 Save the Children Fund, What are We Learning about Protecting Children in the Community? An inter-agency review of evidence on community-based child protection mechanisms, Executive Summary, November 2009.



The Step by Step resource handbook seeks to address, in a practical way, issues which can be encountered in developing and supporting community based child protection mechanisms (CBCPMs). The handbook is intended to offer child protection practitioners concrete tips and ideas based on and informed by Plan's experiences, primarily from the Asia Region. It is not designed to be prescriptive, nor will it be able to offer definitive actions because of the wide variances in the communities with which Plan works. The resource is providing ideas derived from common practice, to be further adapted to local context and explores typical dilemmas, while offering suggestions for practical solutions.

While the handbook is primarily intended to be a resource for those working at field level and in Plan Programme Units, it may also be useful for technical specialists engaged at programme level as they plan interventions and activities which are centred on community based child protection and are expected to extend support to the field level practitioners. It is also expected to be shared with partner organisations and other stakeholders, in particular with government counterparts, to aide with common understandings and commitment. The handbook could also be given to community members who may become part of the CBCPM to support them in understanding their role and the processes involved in establishing a CBCPM.

About Plan

Founded over 70 years ago, Plan is one of the oldest and largest children's development organisations in the world. We work in 48 developing countries across Africa, Asia and the Americas to promote child rights and lift millions of children out of poverty.

Plan works with more than 3,500,000 families and their communities each year.

Plan is independent, with no religious, political or governmental affiliations.

Plan Asia Regional Office 14th Floor, 253 Asoke Building Sukhumvit 21, Klongtoey Nua Wattana, Bangkok 10110, THAILAND

asia.ro@plan-international.org www.plan-international.org



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About Plan

Plan is a child-centred community development organisation working with children, their families, communities, organisations and governments to promote child rights to end child poverty. When children and adults work together as part of the change process, it is more likely that programmes will be successful and sustainable.

Founded over 70 years ago, Plan is one of the oldest and largest children's development organisations in the world. We work in 50 developing countries across Africa, Asia and the Americas to promote child rights and lift millions of children out of poverty.

Plan's vision is of a world in which all children realise their full potential in societies that respect people's rights and dignity. Plan works with more than 3.5 million families and their communities each year. We are independent, with no religious, political or governmental affiliations.

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