

Child Protection Policy, Plan India

Functional Area : Child Protection

Owner : Director – People and Culture

Approved By : Plan India Board

Date of Approval : January 2012

Version : Final

Date of next review : June 2015

Language : English

Applicable to : Plan India, State Offices, Program Offices, Partnership Offices

Related Policies : Code of Conduct, Whistle Blowing Policy and Sponsor Visits to the Field

Procedures : Child Protection – Say ‘Yes!’ To Keeping Children Safe ; Reporting and Responding to; Child Protection Issues in Plan ; Plan’s Child Protection Policy Implementation Standards

Strategy : Keeping Children Safe – Plan India’s Strategy for Protecting Children 2012-2015

Program : National Project for Child Protection 2012-2015

Contact : Director – People & Culture

Say ‘YES!’ To Keeping Children Safe

Summary / Purpose

As an Indian child-centered community development organisation whose work is underpinned by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), Plan is committed to promoting the rights of children including their right to be protected from harmful influences, abuse and exploitation. Plan takes active measures to ensure children’s rights to protection are fully realized.

Plan acknowledges its expectation that its employees and others who work with Plan have children’s best interests at the heart of their involvement with Plan.

This child Protection Policy is Plan’s statement of intent that demonstrates our commitment to safeguarding children from harm and makes clear to all in the organisation and who come into contact with us what is required in relation to the protection of children, and that child abuse in any form is unacceptable to Plan.

Plan’s vision for child protection.

Vision

We aim to create ‘child safe’ environments, both internally and externally, where children are respected, protected, empowered and active in their own protection, and where Staff are skilled, confident, competent and well supported in meeting their protection responsibilities.

Statement

Plan is committed to actively safeguarding children from harm and ensuring children's rights to protection are fully realised.¹ We take seriously our responsibility to promote children safe practices and protect children from harm, abuse, neglect and exploitation in any form. In addition, we will take positive action to prevent child abusers from becoming involved with Plan in any way and take stringent measures against any Plan Staff and/or Associate who abuses a child. Our decisions and actions in response to child protection concerns will be guided by the principle of 'the best interests of the child'.

B. Definitions under the Child Protection Policy

1. **A child** is defined as any person under the age of 18 years.²
2. **Child Abuse** is defined as all forms of physical abuse, emotional ill-treatment, sexual abuse and exploitation, neglect or negligent treatment, commercial or other exploitation of a child and includes any actions that result in actual or potential harm to a child.³
Child abuse may be a deliberate act or it may be failing to act to prevent harm. Child abuse consists of anything which individuals, institutions or processes do or fail to do, intentionally or unintentionally, which harms a child or damages their prospect of safe and healthy development into adulthood.
3. **Child Protection**, within the scope of this policy, is defined as the responsibilities, measures and activities that Plan undertakes to safeguard children from both intentional and unintentional harm.

C. Scope of the Child Protection Policy

The Child Protection Policy applies to everyone working for or associated with Plan. It encompasses the whole of Plan and includes without limitation :

1. **Staff at all levels** – In office, in field or elsewhere.
2. **Plan Associated** – these include board members (international and National Boards). Volunteers, community volunteers, sponsors, consultants and contractors. Also the staff and/or representatives of partner organisations and local governments who have been brought into contact with children or are party to Plan child sensitive data while working for or with Plan.
3. **Plan Visitors** – (e.g. donors, journalists, media, researchers, celebrities etc) who may come into contact with children through Plan are also bound by this policy.

D. Responsibilities under the Child Protection Policy

Plan Staff, Associates and Visitors must :

1. Never abuse and/or exploit a child or act/behave in any way that places a child at risk of harm.

1. Supporting article 19 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC)

2. The UNCRC also defines a child as a person under the age of 18 years of age.

3. The document 'Reporting and Responding to Child Protection Issues in Plan' details the principles and procedures to guide Staff in responding to and Reporting child protection concerns.

2. Report any child abuse and protection concerns they have in accordance with applicable local office procedures. **This is a mandatory requirement for Staff. Failure to do so may result in disciplinary action.**
3. Responding to a Child who may have been abused or exploited in accordance with applicable local office procedures.
4. Cooperate fully and confidentially⁵ in any investigation of concerns and allegations.
5. Contribute to an environment where children are respected and encouraged to discuss their concerns and rights.
6. Always ask permission from children (or, in the case of young children, their parent or guardian) before taking images (e.g. photographs, videos) of them. Respect their decision to say no to an image being taken. Ensure that any images taken of children are respectful (For example: children should have adequate clothing that covers up the sexual organs. Images of children in sexually suggestive poses or that in any way impact negatively on their dignity or privacy are not acceptable). Stories and images of children should be based on the child's best interest.
7. Be aware that where concerns exist about the conduct of Staff or Associated in relation to child protection and/or where there has been a breach of the Child Protection Policy, this will be investigated under this policy either; by consideration of referral to statutory authorities for criminal investigation under local laws with in India and/or by Plan in accordance with disciplinary procedures. This may result in disciplinary sanctions and/or dismissal for Staff.

Be aware that Plan will sever all relations with any Plan Associate or Visitor who is proven to have committed child abuse.

8. Be aware that, if a legitimate concern about suspected child abuse is raised, which proves to be unfounded on investigation, no action will be taken against the reporter. However, any employee who makes false and malicious accusations of child abuse.

Plan Staff must not :

9. Disclose information that identifies sponsored families or children or make it available to the general public unless that disclosure is in accordance with standard Plan policies and procedures.

Plan Associates and Visitors must not :

10. Disclose information that identifies sponsored families or children or make it available to the general public without explicit consent from Plan.

All Directors, Senior Program Managers, State Managers and Program Managers must :

11. Ensure that each office has in place local procedures that are consistent with the global Child Protection Policy and with the document Reporting and Responding to Child Protection Issues in Plan to respond to incidents of child abuse. Local procedures should be developed with assistance of advisers in accordance with the local law. Any deviation therefrom must have prior formal approval from the National Director.

Ensure that local procedures are made available in local languages.

E. Personal Conduct Outside Work

We are committed to ensuring that our Staff and representatives apply high standards of behaviour towards children within both their professional and their private lives.

Plan does not intend to dictate the belief and value systems by which Plan employees conduct their personal lives. Plan's position is dependent, however, on maintaining good relations and upholding its reputation as a child-focused community development organization with numerous organisations. Unlawful or other conduct by Plan employees which jeopardizes Plan's reputation or position whether during or after business hours will not be permitted. Such conduct includes, but is not limited to: any unlawful activity related to sexual abuse; any other unlawful activity; sexual harassment; physically/verbally abusive behaviour; and public disorderly conduct.

Staff and Associates are required to bear in mind the principles of the Child Protection Policy and heighten their awareness of how their behaviour may be perceived both at work and outside work.

This policy has been reviewed and recommended for approval by :

Swapna Samuel

Director of People and Culture, Plan International (India Chapter)

This Policy has been viewed and is approved by:

Bhagyashri Dengle

Executive Director, Plan International (India Chapter)