

LESSONS FOR PROTECTION

A comparative analysis of community-based child protection mechanisms supported by Plan in Asia

SUMMARY REPORT



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Acknowledgements

This comparative analysis report presents learning from a participatory research process that has taken place over nine months, involving over 500 children and almost 800 adults. These children and adults represented community-based child protection mechanisms (CBCPMs), child groups, civil society organisations, government departments and Plan offices. We would like to acknowledge and appreciate the time and insights shared with us by each of these individuals and agencies.

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Foreword

FROM LEARNING TO ACTION: TOWARDS VIOLENCE FREE COMMUNITIES

Violence against children occurs in many different forms, visible or hidden, starting in communities as one of the most central settings. Within their own boundaries, often porous and difficult to define, communities encompass other important environments, including families, schools and places of work or residential care, where children tend to get exposed to different abuse-related risks. It is in communities where initial efforts are made to establish safety nets involving all key actors, along with a wide variety of preventive mechanisms to protect children from any form of harm.

With its focus on child-centred community development (CCCD), Plan International has been investing considerable efforts across the Asia region in contributing towards child-safe communities that are free of violence and exploitative harmful practices, creating a conducive environment for children's overall development and growth. Along that path, significant challenges have been faced and addressed, and gradually have become opportunities for all community members to play a role in ending violence against children.

This regional comparative analysis brings up a wealth of learning to inform our further actions to sustain standing mechanisms at the community level that will contribute towards the strengthening of comprehensive national child protection systems. We learnt about the importance of analysing and integrating positive indigenous practices to safeguard children and build on their historical achievements; the need to follow holistic approaches to child protection, while focusing on preventive actions, including aspects of disaster-related risks in community-based actions to minimise exposure to, and damage from, natural and man-made calamities – to name but a few key findings.

The involvement of children in their own protection is an inspiring finding, indicating the critical role children can play to better protect themselves from harm while learning to recognise and avoid risks they are exposed to in various situations. This analysis also tells us about the essential role of civil society actors, including community-based organisations, in delivering on child protection targets. It was reiterated that effective child protection, particularly the prevention of violence against children, calls for close collaboration and coordination between all stakeholders involved, including parents, community leaders, teachers, responsible professionals within statutory bodies and agencies at all levels.

This analysis also helps us recognise and scale up emerging good practices, which ideally remain to be promoted for replication in all communities. As an essential precondition for overall child development, protection remains at the very core of all interventions aimed at unlocking children's full potential.

It is our pleasure to offer this important organisational learning to all other child-focused agencies striving to ensure child protection through their own work – so to increase our shared knowledge and repertoire of skills needed for timely and effective prevention and response to violence against children. It is also hoped that this shared learning will further encourage our joint efforts and help us grow together to ensure children in all communities across Asia grow into adulthood safe, protected and respected.

Raša Sekulović



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Acronyms

ARO	Asia Regional Office
BIAAG	Because I am a Girl
BCPC/LCPC	Barangay/Local Council for the Protection of Children
CBCPM	Community-based child protection mechanism
CBCPS	Community-based child protection system
CBOs	Community-based organisations
CCCD	Child-centred community development
CPC	Child protection committee
CPG	Child protection group
CPiD	Child protection in development
CPiE	Child protection in emergencies
CPN	Child protection network
CPU	Child protection unit
CRC	Convention on the rights of the child
CRSA	Child Rights Situational Analysis
DRR	Disaster risk reduction
DRM	Disaster risk management
ECCD	Early childhood care development
ERPAT	Empowerment and Reaffirmation of Paternal Abilities
FGD	Focus group discussion
FPN	Family protection network
HIV	Human immune deficiency virus
ICPREC	International child protection rights and evaluation consultants
IEC	Information, Education and Communication
KPAD	Child protection committee, Indonesia
LWF	Learn Without Fear
M&E	Monitoring and evaluation
MER	Monitoring, evaluation and research
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
SPG	Social protection group
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
WCPU	Women and Child Protection Unit





Executive Summary

Child protection is a priority area for Plan International. Focussing on community-based child protection (CBCP), Plan's increasing efforts are channelled into establishing and sustaining a variety of local mechanisms, that aim to create protective networks and environments expected to ensure protection of all children and to contribute towards strengthening national child protection systems.

From December 2011 – September 2012 a regional comparative analysis of CBCPMs supported by Plan in the Asia region was undertaken to increase learning of various structural and functional aspects of the existing CBCPMs, and to provide a comprehensive report on their potential for increased impact and sustainability.

The analysis covered 13 countries, including field studies in five countries (in red): Bangladesh, **Cambodia**, China, **East Timor**, Indonesia, Laos, **Nepal**, **Pakistan**, the Philippines, Sri Lanka, Thailand and **Vietnam**, with coordination from the Plan Asia Regional Office. A total of 1,313 stakeholders – 797 adults (362 men, 435 women) and 516 children (202 boys and 314 girls aged 10-18 years) – were actively involved in the comparative analysis process.

Key recommendations for Plan to strengthen CBCPMs in the Asia region include:

- Increase support to strengthen CBCPMs which are recognised and directly linked to the formal child protection system; and avoid the establishment of parallel structures.
- Increase advocacy and engagement with the Ministry of Social Welfare (or its equivalent) at the national level; and inter-agency efforts to strengthen the child protection system.
- Increase research and analysis to build upon traditional practices which support children's protection and participation, particularly in indigenous communities; and to transform harmful traditional practices.
- Increase attention to gender analysis and gender sensitivity in all stages of child protection system developments; including greater efforts to mainstream the engagement and role of men and fathers.
- Internationally agreed basic requirements on children's participation¹ need to be more systematically applied by Plan staff and partners; including increased efforts to reach and empower the most marginalised children in CBCP work.
- Increase advocacy and partnerships to strengthen child-friendly child protection services that support children's recovery and reintegration if they have faced abuse, violence, neglect or exploitation.

1 CRC/C/GC/12 (July 2009) Committee on the Rights of the Child General Comment No.12, The Right of the Child to be Heard.

- Increase advocacy and/or capacity building roles to support the government and civil society agencies to further develop social work capacity for child protection case management.
- Learn from, replicate and scale up efforts to strengthen ‘multidisciplinary teams’ (like the Child Protection Units in the Philippines or the ‘One Stop Crisis Centres’ in Thailand).
- Support government efforts to strengthen child protection data collection (disaggregated by gender, ethnicity, age and other factors).
- Improve Plan’s own monitoring and evaluation systems and processes for measuring child protection outcomes.
- Strengthen capacity building for Plan staff, partners and CBCP system stakeholders that contribute to integrated efforts to strengthen the child protection system at community, district and higher levels.
- Develop new or improved training modules on: sensitive reporting and response to child sexual abuse; child protection case management and referrals; and advocacy to strengthen child protection systems.
- Learn from existing CBCPM work in urban settings, and to increase research, piloting and scale up CBCPMs in urban settings in every country.
- Increase planning, training and support to CBCPMs to integrate emergency preparedness as one of the CBCPM tasks.



1

Introducing the comparative analysis of CBCPMs in Asia

A brief introduction to Plan's strategic child protection work in the Asia region:

Plan is an international child-centred development organisation working in 50 developing countries across Africa, Asia and the Americas. 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's child rights approach is grounded in its child-centred community development (CCCD) approach in which children, families and communities are active and leading participants in their own development. This approach recognises the intrinsic link between poverty and rights, where poverty is both a cause and consequence of the denial of rights. Plan has identified eight thematic impact areas in which it can effectively contribute to the realisation of child rights by applying its CCCD approach. Child protection is one of these areas.

Asia is one of the most diverse regions in terms of its cultural, religious, ethnic, socio-economic and political contexts. The underlying causes of child poverty are many and interrelated. Rapid development over the past decade has not been matched by adequate investment in welfare systems and services and this has increased the gap in social inequalities. Moreover, violence against children is found across the region in all settings – in families, schools, in communities, on the streets, in residential institutions, in the workplace and in prisons.² Much violence is still hidden, and most children are not able to report acts of violence due to a lack of child-friendly, safe reporting and response mechanisms. Legislation to protect children from violence, abuse and exploitation has improved in many countries, yet its implementation still lags behind.

Over the last decade, momentum has steadily increased to recognise the importance of child abuse as a phenomenon of concern, and to direct actions towards both preventing and responding to such violations of children's rights to freedom from violence and harm. A growing body of research is providing compelling evidence of the detrimental, and often long-term, impact of child abuse and violence, not just on an individual level but also on the socio-economic development of countries.

² Pinheiro, P. (2006). World Report on Violence Against Children, UN.

Defining violence against children and child protection

The UN Study on Violence against Children (2006) definition of violence draws on Article 19 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child as “*all forms of physical or mental violence, injury and abuse, neglect or negligent treatment, maltreatment or exploitation, including sexual abuse.*”³

Child protection as defined by Plan: “*Child protection is the term used to describe the responsibilities and activities undertaken to prevent or to stop children being abused or ill-treated. In more detail this means protecting children from specific acts of intentional or unintentional harm which may harm them physically, emotionally, sexually or by neglect.*”⁴

In recent years many international child protection agencies, including Plan International, have moved from a child protection issue focus (programming which focused on street children, child labour, trafficked children etc.) to a more integrated strategic focus on strengthening child protection systems.⁵ Since 2006, child protection has become a key programming and thematic area for Plan International. More recently, it became one of the two global priorities for Plan, alongside education. Plan incorporates work on child protection in emergencies (CPiE), programming referred to as child protection in development (CPiD) and Plan’s policy to safe guard children, ‘Say Yes! to keeping children safe’.

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

Purpose of the comparative analysis of community-based child protection mechanisms:

This summary report shares key findings from a comparative analysis of CBCPMs supported by Plan in the Asia region. More details of the process and more specific findings relating to specific countries are shared in the main version of the report⁶ and in separate country reports.⁷


3 United Nations, Convention on the Rights of the Child, Article 19.

4 Plan International, ARO Child Protection Programme Framework Safe and Sound, Growing up with Protection, 2011.

5 Save the Children, A Rough Guide to Child Protection Systems, 2009.

6 ICPREC, O’Kane, C. and Moore, K. (2012) Lessons for Protection: A comparative analysis of community based child protection mechanisms supported by Plan in Asia.

7 See ICPREC reports on CBCPMs for each country.



The **overall objective of this comparative analysis** is to increase learning of various structural and functional aspects of the existing CBCPMs in Plan Asia and to provide a comprehensive report on their potential for increased impact and sustainability. The analysis covered Plan's CBCP work in 13 Asian countries: Bangladesh, Cambodia, China, East Timor, Indonesia, Laos, Nepal, Pakistan, the Philippines, Sri Lanka, Thailand and Vietnam. The Plan Asia Regional Office (ARO) provided coordination throughout the process.

An overview of the research methodology:

An analytical framework was developed to inform the methodology and comparative analysis process of the CBCPMs supported by Plan across the Asia region. The comparative analysis has been carried out by a consultancy group⁸ in three key stages involving data collection, analysis and synthesis:

- 1) Data collection through a desk review of available information and mapping existing CBCPMs across Asia (*January – April 2012*).
- 2) Data collection and participatory analysis through field visits in five countries (Cambodia, East Timor, Nepal, Pakistan and Vietnam) using child/user-friendly participatory tools, interviews, focus group discussions (FGDs) and observations with all relevant stakeholders (*May – June 2012*).
- 3) Analysis and synthesis: comparative analysis of existing models and report writing (*May – September 2012*).

The methodology used was primarily qualitative, but quantitative data was also collected. The use of different methods (desk-based reviews, participatory mapping, child-friendly participatory tools, interviews, FGDs, observation and an e-discussion) with different stakeholders (e.g. children, young people, grass-root CBOs, parents, caregivers, community/religious elders, volunteers, NGO staff, Plan staff, government officials etc.) enabled the research team to gather rich information and to cross-check and validate findings.

A total of 1,313 stakeholders – 797 adults (362 men, 435 women) and 516 children (202 boys and 314 girls aged 10-18 years) – were actively involved in FGDs, interviews and/or participatory tools to share their views, experiences and perspectives on the CBCPMs.

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

⁸ ICPREC – International Child Protection Rights and Evaluation Consultants led by Claire O'Kane and Kunera Moore; with field work studies undertaken by either one of the lead consultants or other ICPREC team members: Chandrika Khatiwada (Nepal), Shikha Ghildyal (East Timor) and Naghma Imdad (Pakistan).

2

Overview of the scope of CBCPMs in the region

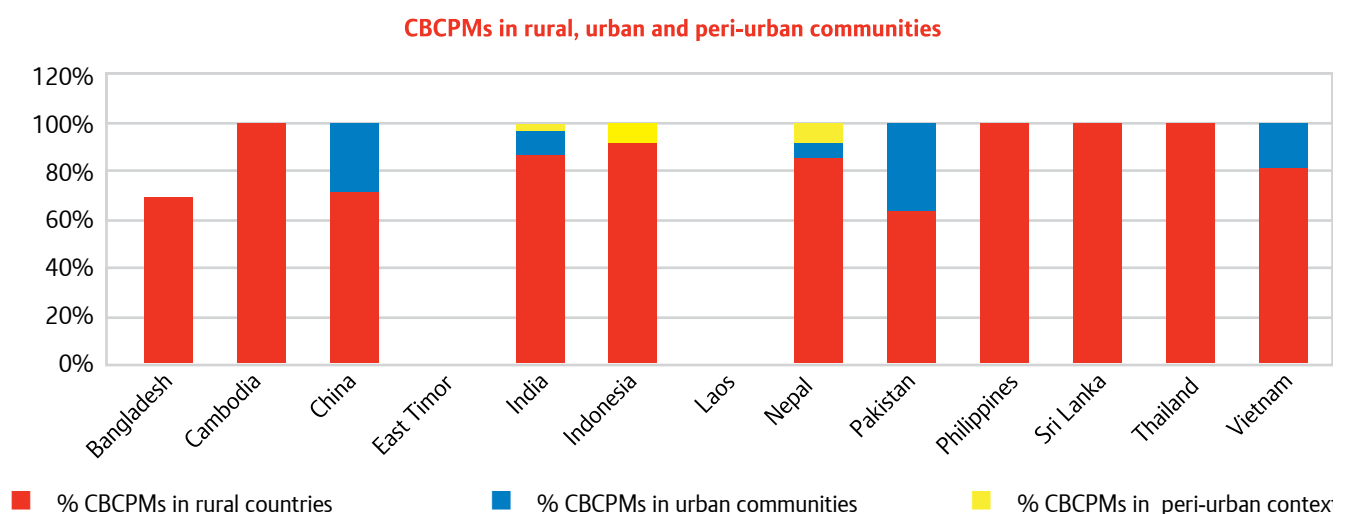
Overview and main locations of CBCPMs supported by Plan countries in Asia:

Plan’s programming on child protection is relatively new in terms of its organisational work. Despite working in some countries in Asia for more than 30 years, most countries had only started their child protection programmes between 2004 and 2006. In most Plan country programmes the CBCPM work had not been implemented until 2005.

Figure 1 shows the main locations and types of CBCPMs supported across 13 countries in the Asia region, however in two of these 13 countries – East Timor and Laos – CBCPMs are not yet established. As of June 2012, CBCPMs were being supported by Plan in 2,427 communities across 11 country programmes.⁹ In addition, over 4,000 children’s groups are being supported in child protection programming areas. The country programmes supporting CBCPMs in the highest number of communities are in India, the Philippines, Cambodia and Nepal.

Plan country programmes have supported significantly more CBCPMs in rural communities, with relatively few in urban or peri-urban settings. Overall, 89 percent of the CBCPMs supported by Plan in Asia are in rural communities, with 8 percent in urban and 3 percent in peri-urban settings.

Figure 1: Overview of settings of CBCPMs per country



⁹ However, this number of communities includes some commune, VDC and municipality level communities (from China, Nepal, the Philippines and Vietnam), thus the actual number of village communities reached will be higher.

Considering the trends towards urbanisation¹⁰ and increased protection risks faced by children in urban poor areas, there is a recognised need within Plan to learn from existing CBCPM work in urban settings, and to increase piloting and scale up of CBCPMs in these areas across the region. With urbanisation comes increased numbers of children working and living on the street, and child domestic workers. The most marginalised children are facing increased protection risks in urban centres, including the risks of economic and sexual exploitation, drug use, and coming into conflict with the law. Rising youth unemployment and inequality increase youth's frustrations due to the social divides. Such frustration can lead to increased violence, crime and drug use.

Figure 2: Overview of CBCPMs supported by Plan across Asia region

- 1. Bangladesh**
43 child protection group,
24 social protection groups
- 2. Cambodia**
Family protection groups
in 129 villages
- 3. China**
Village committees
in 7 villages
- 4. East Timor**
CBCPMs not yet established
- 5. India**
More than 1,300 Child
protection committees/groups
across 7 States
- 6. Indonesia**
Village child protection body
(KPAD) in 147 villages and
10 urban areas
- 7. Laos**
CBCPMs not yet established
- 8. Nepal**
Child protection committees in
229 VDCs and 9 municipalities
- 9. Pakistan**
Child Protection committees
or watch groups
in 30 communities
- 10. Philippines**
Strengthening *Barangay*
Councils for Protection of
Children in 387 communities
- 11. Sri Lanka**
Child protection committees
in 30 communities
- 12. Thailand**
54 village child protection
committees
- 13. Vietnam**
CBCPS in 27 communes



10 UNICEF, The State of the World's Children: Children in an Urban World, 2012.

CBCPMs as part of longer-term programming and/or in emergency programming:

Climate change and natural disasters disproportionately affect children and families in the Asia region.¹¹ At the time the comparative analysis was undertaken, no CBCPMs were functional in communities that were affected by natural disasters or armed conflicts. In the past, child protection committees have been established as part of the flood response in Pakistan; the tsunami response in Sri Lanka; and in camps of internally displaced people following political violence in East Timor. The majority of current CBCPMs are being supported as part of longer-term development programming. However, there is increased dialogue and planning to integrate emergency preparedness as one of the CBCPM tasks, so that community members, including children, have increased knowledge and skills to prevent risks and to increase the care and protection of children in the event of an emergency.

Plan's child protection work in IDP Camps, East Timor:¹² The political and ethnic violence of April and May of 2006 resulted in the displacement of over 150,000 people to host communities and camps. Plan's emergency response activities included taking responsibility for coordination in 13 camps for internally displaced persons (IDPs). Plan focussed its work on children and collaborated closely with UNICEF and the government to bring other child protection actors together to form a child protection working group. Through this it developed a structure for child protection work that encompassed both community groups and elements of the formal child protection mechanism.

Summary of key learning on the scope of CBCPMs:

- Plan's programming on child protection is relatively new in terms of its organisational work.
- As of June 2012, CBCPMs were being supported by Plan in 2,427 communities across 11 country programmes.¹³ More than 50 percent of these CBCPMs are in India.
- The majority of Plan supported CBCPMs (89 percent) are in rural communities; with only 8 percent in urban and 3 percent in peri-urban settings.
- Due to current trends in urbanisation and the increased protection risks facing children in urban poor areas there is a greater recognition within Plan to pilot and scale up CBCPMs in urban settings.
- Most CBCPMs are being supported as part of longer-term development programming. However, there is increased planning to integrate emergency preparedness as one of the CBCPM tasks for child protection in emergencies.

11 United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific at <http://www.unescap.org/stat/data/syb2011/II-Environment/Natural-disasters.asp> accessed on 14-08-2012.

12 Save the Children UK, Discussion Paper: Strengthening National Child Protection Systems in Emergency through Community based Mechanism; Published on behalf of the Child Protection Working Group of the UN Protection Cluster, 2010.

13 However, this number of communities includes some commune, VDC and municipality level communities (from China, Nepal, the Philippines and Vietnam), thus the actual number of village communities reached will be higher.

3

Structural aspects of CBCPMs

Main models and approaches to establishing community-based child protection structures:

In most contexts Plan has an explicit focus on engaging with, sensitising and strengthening local government actors to fulfil roles and responsibilities for child protection, either directly or through government support to community protection groups. Only in some contexts Plan is working directly and/or through civil society partners to mobilise community involvement in child protection committees. Thus, we have built upon the typology of agency engagement with community-based child protection groups (CPGs) developed by Behnam¹⁴ to include a fifth category, which emphasises an agency's engagement with local governments in fulfilling the governments' responsibilities for child protection, including support for community-based CPGs.

Category 1 Direct implementation by agency: the agency is a service provider, and community members are beneficiaries.

Category 2 Community involvement in agency initiative: the agency is a promoter of its own initiative, a planner and a trainer, and community members are volunteers and beneficiaries.

Category 3 Community owned and managed activities mobilised by external agency: the agency is a catalyst, capacity builder, a facilitator of linkages, and a funder after community ownership has developed. The community members are analysts, planners, implementers, assessors, and beneficiaries.

Category 4 Community owned and managed activities initiated from within the community: the agency is a capacity builder and funder, community members are analysts, planners, implementers, assessors, and beneficiaries.

Category 5: Builds upon local government structures and community involvement mobilised by external agency: the agency is a catalyst, capacity builder, a facilitator of linkages, and an initial interim funder until local/national government resources can be secured to ensure the sustainability of the community protection groups. The local government and community members are analysts, planners, implementers, assessors, and beneficiaries.

¹⁴ Behnam, N 'Agencies, communities and children: a report of the Inter-Agency Learning Initiative: Engaging communities for Children's Well-being', 2008 pp. 12-19.

Table 1: Main models and approaches used by Plan to form community-based child protection structures.

Plan country:	Comments on CBCPM model/structures:
Direct implementation by agency	
<i>In all of its community-based protection work Plan is engaging and mobilising community members (women, men and children) and/or concerned local authorities to form some kind of CBCP structure to engage local people in identifying and responding to child protection concerns in their community.</i>	
Community involvement in agency initiative	
Pakistan	Child protection committees (CPCs) and/or watch groups are in the early stages of formation. Plan and their NGO partners are engaging with existing CBOs to enlist, train and support community volunteers to carry out child protection tasks.
East Timor	Plan is in the very early stages of developing CBCPMs. Child protection networks (CPNs) have been established at district (and higher) levels and efforts are underway to establish community-based CPGs building upon traditional structures.
Community owned and managed activities mobilised by external agency	
India	Plan India is supporting CBCPMs in seven States. In addition to sensitising and mobilising members of local governance institutions (<i>see below</i>), Plan and local NGO partners are supporting the formation of community-based CPCs and their collaboration with child groups.
Nepal	Plan Nepal is working in 13 districts. In addition to supporting village CPCs (<i>see below</i>), Plan is also supporting more informal CPGs, vigilance/surveillance groups, women's groups, adolescents groups and child clubs in some districts. Some of these structures are linked to specific projects (e.g. surveillance groups promoting safe migration and anti-trafficking) while others have broader objectives to empower children and/or women.
Philippines	In addition to supporting the local government child protection councils (<i>see below</i>), Plan is supporting more informal community owned and managed initiatives on child protection and parenting, including family watch groups, parenting education groups and men's groups.
Community owned and managed activities initiated from within the community	
<i>There is no documentation of examples where Plan has supported community CPGs which have been initiated within the community.</i>	
Builds upon local government structures and community involvement mobilised by external agency	
Bangladesh	Sixty-four CPGs/social protection groups (SPGs) have been formed in seven districts. The CPGs are formed under the umbrella of Union Parishad (the lowest level of local governance/administration), specifically under the government mandated 'women and children repression and prevention standing committee'. In addition, school management committees (SMCs) are being supported by Plan to establish and implement child protection reporting mechanisms, with links from the union to higher level education offices.
Cambodia	Plan and their NGO partners supported the formation of family protection networks (FPNs) in 129 villages in 17 communes, in two districts in Siem Reap and one district in Kampong Cham provinces. Plan has advocated for these FPNs to be recognised as the lowest level of the National Children and Women's Protection Network that is implementing the 2010 Ministry of Interior's "Safety village commune/Sangkat Policy Guideline". ¹ The village level FPNs includes the village chief, parents and children representatives, and elderly persons or monks. The community level FPNs link with, and are supported by, the Commune Council on Women and Children (CCWC).
China	Plan China has piloted CBCPMs in seven communities in three counties. The women's federation (WF) is Plan's primary partner. WF township staff members will be responsible for coordinating the child protection work of village committees and school committees. The village committee is the elected seat of the Communist Party representatives, with a women's representative, village mediator and the village leader.
India	Plan and their NGO partners are supporting the formation of community-based CPCs in seven States. Plan is advocating for the CPCs to be recognised as the lowest level child protection structure, with formal links to the local government and to strengthen links with protection structures and welfare mechanisms at the block, district and state levels as envisaged in the government's Integrated Child Protection Scheme (ICPS). Furthermore, in Uttarkhand, Plan and partners are strengthening the capacity of existing village councils to act as CPCs.
Indonesia	Plan has supported the formation of Child Protection Village Committees (KPADs) in 147 villages and 10 semi-urban areas, in the nine 'regencies' (districts). The committees are licensed by the local government, through a 'letter of decree'. KPADs usually have three to five government members, the village leaders, teachers, health workers, CBO representatives, religious leaders, traditional leaders, youth/children, and village government members, in line with the official letter of decree.
Laos	Plan Laos is in the early stages of collaboration with the government to form a provincial level child protection network (CPN) Committee in Bokeo province. Plan will consider replicating and scaling up UNICEF's model of CPNs in three districts and their respective villages in Bokeo province.

Plan country:	Comments on CBCPM model/structures:
Nepal	Plan Nepal is supporting the formation and strengthening of Village Child Protection and Promotion Sub-Committees (previously known as Village Child Protection Committee-VCPC), which are established under government guidelines to promote child rights and protect children from harm. Plan Nepal works with the VCPCs (mainly in rural villages), by collaborating with district child welfare boards (DCWBs) in its working districts. Child club representatives are included in VCPCs.
Philippines	Plan is strengthening local councils for the protection of children, at the <i>barangay</i> level in 387 rural communities as well as the higher level of the municipal and provincial level councils for the protection of children in West Mindoro, North Samar, East Samar, West Samar, Southern Leyte, and Masbate. These structures are mandated by law and are thus part of a formal child protection system. Most BCPCs have 11-15 members, and the BCPC chair is usually the <i>barangay</i> Captain.
Sri Lanka	Plan Sri Lanka supports CBCPMs in four divisions in Uva and North Central provinces. The main structures are the community-based CPC involving 10-24 members including: community volunteers, the lowest administrative officers, teachers and police officials. The CPCs link with, and are able to make referrals to the divisional child protection committees, which link to district CPCs (mandated structures under the National Child Protection Authority (NCPA)). In addition, Plan is also supporting school-based CPCs.
Thailand	Plan is supporting provincial level committees on child protection, mandated under the government's Child Protection Act 2003. Plan has strengthened village committees in 54 communities in Chiang Mai and Chang Rai provinces and 22 in Chiang Rai province). The village committees are government supported administrative bodies managing local administrative and development issues. The village committees have 11-15 members and no children's representatives.
Vietnam	Plan is supporting the establishment of commune level child protection boards/committees in 27 communes in three provinces. The commune child protection board involves the head of the commune people's committee, local government officials (child protection officers, heads of school, judicial officers, police officials, and members of mass organisations (women's union, youth union). Members of the network of village collaborators (mostly women) and children's core group representatives also attend commune child protection board meetings. Child protection boards have also been established at some provincial and district levels, and bring together government department leaders. These boards are supported by inter-agency working groups, involving technical advisers and government officers.

It is more strategic to strengthen community-based CPCs which build upon government mandates and guidelines, rather than supporting different structures linked to specific projects (e.g. on safe migration, child labour and trafficking).

Examples of some CBCPM structures:

Figure 3: CBCPM structure Sri Lanka

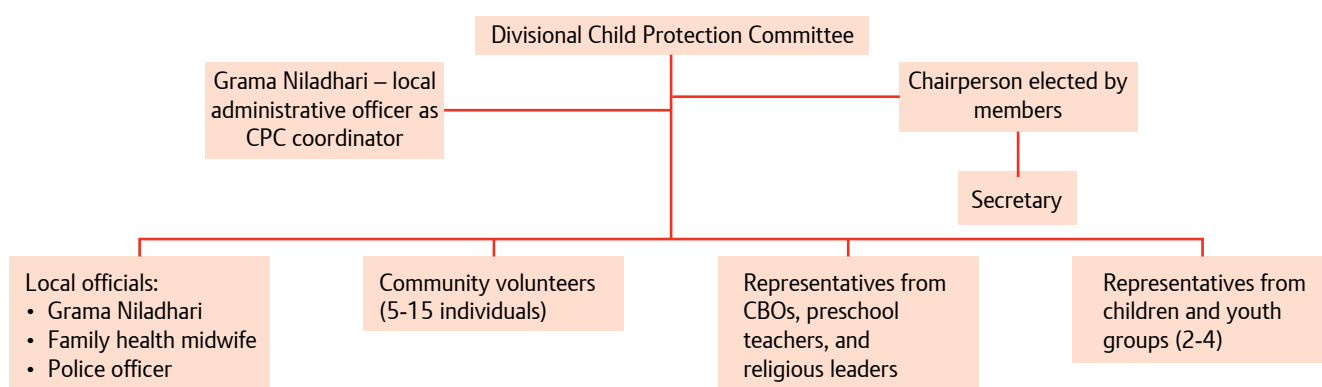
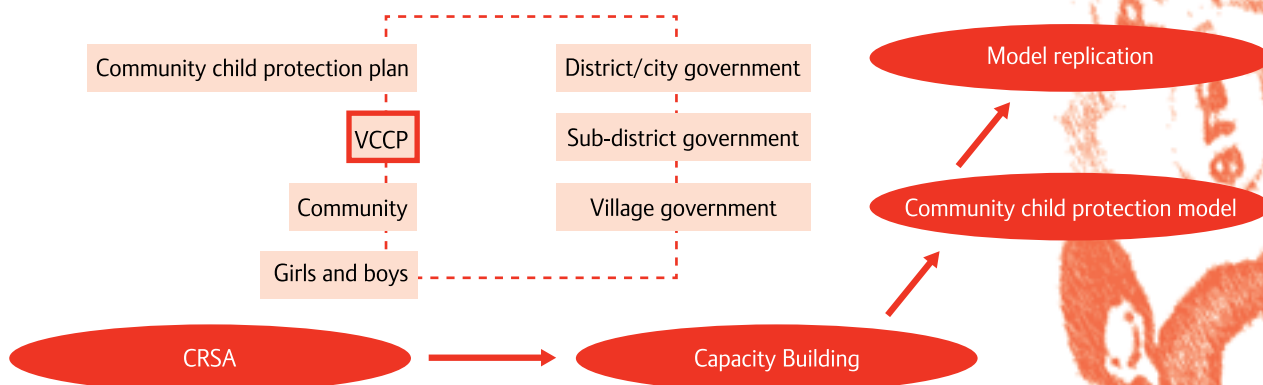


Figure 4: Plan Indonesia



Processes for mobilising communities and local authorities on child protection:

Many Plan staff recognise the importance of gaining an understanding of the local perceptions, beliefs and practices relating to childhood, child development and child protection, and to determine how existing good practices can be strengthened prior to CBCP structures. Plan’s child-centred community development (CCCD) approach has demonstrated its usefulness in establishing CBCPMs, as the approach helps mobilise and sensitise community members to the needs and rights of children, and encourages them to identify and respond to children’s concerns.

As Plan builds upon partnerships with existing local government structures to establish CBCPMs across the region, the majority of the CBCP structures involve local government/administrative officials and key local professionals (teachers, health workers, village policeman etc). However, their inclusion in the CPC is based on their government role or their profession, rather than their interest or commitment to children. Plan and its NGO partners are playing a crucial role in sensitising local government officials and other relevant actors to child protection.

In efforts to ensure active child protection structures, Plan is advocating for representational space for community representatives (women, men, girls and boys) who are committed to, and ready to play an active role in, preventing and responding to child protection. For example in Vietnam, while the commune child protection board involves local officials and members of mass organisations, members of a network of village collaborators and children’s core group members also participate in monthly meetings.

The number and type of members in community-based child protection structures:

The most common structure for CBCP supported by Plan across the region is the community level CPC. The structures involve 6-50 members, although the average is 7-20 members. Members often include: village chiefs/administrative leaders, teachers, health workers, leaders from existing women's groups, CBOs and children or youth groups, and other interested community volunteers. The CBCPMs in all countries, except Pakistan, include local government/local administration officials. Experiences from India suggests that a community-based CPC can be more effective when it has a small number of dedicated members, as this enables better coordination and clearer roles.

As a result of existing gender discrimination and unequal representation of women in local governance across Asia, many of the local government officials, village elders, and CBCP members are males. In contrast, more of the community volunteers are female, and children's CBCPM representatives are generally 50 percent female. Thus, most CBCPMs have a reasonable gender balance in terms of membership. However, increased efforts to engage fathers and men in parenting and CBCP initiatives (example from the Philippines) should be applied in other settings.

A small number of countries (India, Nepal, the Philippines, and Sri Lanka) are actively including representatives from marginalised families as members of the CBCPMs. The limited process for membership rotation or renewal of membership in CBCPMs may contribute to a less inclusive representation and democratic governance processes. While recognising the dedication, skills and sensitivities needed to be a committed CBCPMs, there should be opportunities for other interested community members to join, with special efforts to reach and involve the most marginalised women, men, girls and boys.



Summary of key learning on structural aspects of CBCPMs:

- A fifth category has been added to Behnam's typology of agency engagement with community-based CPGs¹⁵ which emphasises an agency's engagement with local governments and their responsibilities for child protection, including support for community-based CPGs to better reflect Plan's CBCPM work in the Asia region.
- The most common structure for CBCP supported by Plan across the region is the community level CPC.
- It is more strategic to strengthen community-based CPCs which build upon government mandates and guidelines, rather than supporting different structures linked to specific projects.
- CPCs in most countries involve 7-20 members including: village chiefs/administrative leaders, teachers, health workers, leaders from existing women's groups, CBOs and children or youth groups, and other interested community volunteers.
- While it is strategic to engage local government officials and village leaders/chiefs in CBCP structures, due to their responsibilities they may have limited time and/or interest to dedicate to child protection monitoring, prevention and response. Thus, it is crucial to engage community actors (women, men, boys and girls) who have the interest and time to contribute to child protection initiatives.
- A finding from India, to be further explored, indicated that CPCs can be more effective when they have fewer dedicated members who can effectively coordinate with one another, rather than having too many members who may be less clear on their roles.
- Due to existing gender discrimination many of the local government officials and village elders, who are members of the CBCPMs, are males. In contrast, more of the community volunteers are female, with girls and boys representatives often included in CBCPMs. Increased efforts to engage fathers and men in parenting and CBCP initiatives are needed.
- Increased efforts are needed to actively involve representatives from the most marginalised families and children in CBCPMs.



15 Behnam, N (2008), pp. 12-19,

4

Functional aspects of CBCPMs

Objectives of CBCPMs:

The overall purpose of CBCPMs in each country is in line with Plan’s child protection programming guidelines.¹⁶ These include a focus on creating safer communities by instituting permanent structures to increase the prospects of a safe childhood. The CBCPMs are established to strengthen local duty bearers’ (parents, community leaders, local government officials) knowledge and skills to increase the fulfilment of children’s protection rights. While the remit is generally broad focusing on all forms of violence, in some country programmes there is also an explicit focus on specific protection issues such as child trafficking (in Bangladesh, Cambodia, the Philippines, Nepal) or migration (Nepal).

Table 2: Comparative analysis of specific objectives of CBCPMs

Articulated specific objectives:	Bangladesh	Cambodia	China	East Timor ²	India	Indonesia	Laos	Nepal	Pakistan	Philippines	Sri Lanka	Thailand	Vietnam
To monitor and identify child protection concerns	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
To identify vulnerable and/or at risk children and to take action to reduce children’s vulnerability and risks	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓		✓		✓	✓		✓
To empower children with knowledge and skills that increase their self protection	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓
To increase parents/caregivers awareness and skills on child protection and positive parenting skills		✓	✓							✓			✓
To increase duty bearers/CBCPM stakeholders knowledge and skills to prevent and respond to child protection concerns	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
To undertake case management to resolve child protection concerns			✓					✓		✓	✓		✓
To make referrals for legal, psychosocial, health, education, social protection or other services	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
To link CBCPMs with government child protection structures	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Develop local codes (village/commune rules) on child protection									✓	✓			✓
Develop a local development plan for children, and a local investment plan for children										✓			✓

16 Plan International, Plan Asia Regional Office. Safe and Sound – Growing up with Protection. Child Protection Programme Framework Programming Guidelines, 2011.

Main activities of CBCPMs:

CBCPMs across country contexts have a very strong focus on prevention. In most countries the strongest focus of the CBCPMs is on prevention through awareness raising with community members (women, men, girls and boys) about child rights and protection issues, parenting education and early interventions. In Cambodia for example, the FPNs predominantly work on prevention, by sharing knowledge and awareness on child rights and protection issues with the community members, including children and youth. Plan's implementing partner has organised evening video shows for its awareness campaigns on sexual abuse, domestic violence and drug abuse in some of the new communities. Youth and children have shared child protection information with their club members and other youth through peer education.

Gathering information on children and registration of vulnerable and at risk children, Vietnam: In Vietnam there is a strong focus on prevention work through parenting education and awareness raising on child rights and protection; and on gathering information on children, especially on registering and responding to vulnerable children/children in need of special protection¹⁷ and children at risk. In accordance with government policies, specific groups of vulnerable children are supported to access social protection schemes. In addition, early interventions (including home visits and parental guidance) are undertaken with children and families at risk (e.g. children living with parents who regularly abuse alcohol) to reduce vulnerabilities and risks of protection violations. Monitoring, identification and response to child protection concerns in families, schools and communities are also supported through the CBCPS.

A focus on direct response to child protection concerns by CBCPMs is strong in Bangladesh, the Philippines and Vietnam; and is less of a focus in other countries. The establishment and use of referral mechanisms to ensure further interventions and responses to child protection concerns are variable across country contexts. While referral mechanisms are well established and used in the Philippines, Sri Lanka, Thailand, and in some Nepali communities, they remain relatively weak and/or under-used in other country contexts. Referral mechanisms are fairly strong at the commune level in Vietnam, however they require strengthening at the district and provincial level. Furthermore, across country contexts there is a limited focus on reintegrating children into their families, though there is relatively more focus on this in the Philippines, Vietnam and Nepal.

17 Under the 2004 law of child protection, care and education the Vietnam government defines 10 categories of disadvantaged children including: orphans having no one to rely on, abandoned children; disabled children; child victims of toxic chemicals; children infected with HIV/AIDS; children doing hard or hazardous jobs or contacting noxious substances; children working far from their families; street children; sexually-abused children; children addicted to narcotics and juvenile offenders.

The roles and responsibilities of different CBCPM members/actors:

In most models, different members of the CBCP structure have different roles and responsibilities, with the chairperson having the most responsibility for coordination and leadership; while other members, especially community volunteers and children's group members, may have more responsibilities for awareness-raising, prevention, monitoring and reporting on child protection. For example, in the FPNs in Cambodia, the village leader (who is almost always male) has the most influential role. He is the person to whom all cases are referred and arranges referrals where necessary. Parent members should share information with other parents and should organise parents' meetings. Youth members should do this for their peers. The village commune safety focal point deals with issues related to his mandate and the teacher deals with educational matters.

In the Philippines, in addition to strengthening the local councils for the protection of children (at *barangay*, municipal and provincial levels), Plan is supporting more informal child protection groups involving parents, women, men, and other community volunteers, to prevent and address domestic violence and gender-based violence (including sexual abuse). Women's group representatives are actively involved in CBCPMs in at least 75 percent of the countries.

The role of fathers and men in preventing and responding to violence, Philippines:¹⁸ In appreciating the significant role of parents to their children, sessions on Parent Effectiveness (PES) and ERPAT covering topics on child abuse prevention and child protection have been supported by Plan in the *barangays*. Through '*the Proud ERPATs experience*' Plan has supported an organisation among fathers at the municipal level wherein a core of 26 men were initially trained as trainers and then dispatched to organise training among men in different *barangays* in the locality.

Religious elders (Islamic, Buddhist or Christian depending on the context) play important roles in raising awareness, influencing practices on child protection, resolving disputes and/or mobilising local resources to support the most marginalised children and families. For example, in Thailand, religious elders in Christian communities have attended child rights and protection workshops and have integrated child protection into their teaching to children and community members. However, risks of children being physically and/or sexually abused by religious leaders are also recognised, thus careful sensitisation, preparation and monitoring is required.

18 Dela Cruz, L. B. & Escalante, B. A. Empowering communities towards child protection: Final Evaluation 2006-2008. Plan Philippines, 2009.

Summary of key learning on functional aspects of CBCPMs:

- The main purpose of the CBCPMs is to prevent and protect children in the community from all forms of abuse, neglect, violence and exploitation. CBCPMs have a primary focus on prevention work through awareness raising and early interventions.
- Work on positive discipline and parenting education within communities has been effective in creating an environment within families and communities for child protection prevention work.
- CBCPMs provide a means through which children, parents/caregivers and other community members can report child protection concerns.
- CBCPMs coordinate a response either through direct action by their members or through referrals to higher level child protection bodies.
- Referral mechanisms are well established and used in the Philippines, Sri Lanka, Thailand, and in some Nepali communities, while they remain relatively weak in other country contexts.
- CBCPMs have a limited focus on reintegrating children into their families (after trafficking or abuse), though there is relatively more focus on this in the Philippines, Vietnam and Nepal.
- In many CBCPMs the chairperson tends to have the most responsibility for coordination and leadership; while community volunteers and children's group members have more responsibilities in awareness-raising, prevention, monitoring and reporting on child protection.
- In many CBCPMs, members' responsibilities relate to their official function.
- In the Philippines, men's groups are actively involved in the prevention of violence against women and children. In other countries there is more engagement of women's groups and the need for increased efforts to include men.
- Religious elders play important roles in raising awareness, influencing practices on child protection, resolving disputes and/or mobilising local resources to support the most marginalised children and families.



5

Children's participation and involvement in CBCPMs

The nature of children's engagement and their roles in the CBCPMs:

Recognising children as right holders and active citizens, and supporting children's participation is a key element of Plan's CCCD approach. Children and young people are empowered with knowledge on child rights, and with the skills and confidence to assert their rights and ensure their self protection.

In most countries across the region girls and boys aged 11-18 years old are being supported to develop their own child groups/clubs to create a space for children's regular discussions, analysis, problem solving and action planning on issues affecting them. Adults (parents, community elders, teachers) have been sensitised to listen to children's voices. Over 4,000 community-based and/or school-based children's groups/clubs are actively supported through the child protection programme by Plan in the Asia region.

Support for children's organisations and children's involvement CPGs, Bangladesh: In Bangladesh, Plan is supporting 463 children's organisations involving children aged 8-18 years of age. Girls and boys are given training in child rights, child protection and life skills. In communities where CPGs are being formed, members of the children's organisations are informed about CPGs and are encouraged to be actively involved in the CPG. Plan also sensitises officials in the Union Parishad (local government) about the presence and role of children's organisations and the capacity of children. Children representatives are usually invited by the Union Parishad officials to join the community meetings relating to the formation of the CPGs; and most CPGs have involved five to six children (60 percent girls, 40 percent boys).

In many countries in the region children and young people play very active roles in CBCP work. Their roles include:

- Identifying and reporting child protection concerns;
- Raising awareness of child rights and child protection among their peers, family members and community members (often through creative initiatives including drama, newspapers, magazines, films, wall paintings, drawing etc.);
- Mapping risks and vulnerabilities;
- 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; peer education;

- Raising their concerns with government officials at different levels (village, commune/*panchayat*/municipality, district, province/state) so that practice and policies can be developed and implemented in their best interests.

Child clubs and CPG identifies and responds to child sexual abuse, Delhi, India:¹⁹ While going to a community shop to buy some toffee a four year old girl was lured by a 40 year old man and taken to a community park. Other children, including child club members noticed the man touching the little girl inappropriately. They rushed home to their families and narrated the incident to them. The community members approached the CPG members who filed a case with the police. The police intervened and the perpetrator was arrested. The family members of the child were pressurised to surrender the case, but with the support of CPG members and youth club members the family continued the legal case. Following this incident child club members have been oriented on appropriate and inappropriate touch.

In some countries such as Nepal, networks of child clubs at village and district level have been formed, enhancing opportunities for children's representation and roles in higher level child protection structures such as the district child welfare boards.

Training provided to children and how children reach others:

Plan and/or its NGO partners have provided training to children, especially to children involved in child groups/clubs. In almost all countries training is provided to girls and boys (aged 11-18 years old) on: child rights; child protection; national child protection laws; children's participation; life skills and peer education. In many countries, children have also received training in theatre and/or media skills.

Plan's 'Bamboo Shoots' training manual²⁰ on child-led community action planning is being used in many countries in the region. In addition, Plan has recently started the "Asia Civil Society Training on Involving Children in their own Protection" programme, with training of children's representatives in Sri Lanka in April 2012.

Children who are actively involved in community-based children's organisations often reach out to other children in their community through child-to-child approaches and peer education. 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.

19 Shared by CPG members during CBCPM consultation activities organised as part of the study in May 2012.

20 Plan International, Plan Asia Regional Office, Bamboo Shoots: A Training Manual on Child Centred Community Development/Child Led Community Actions for Facilitators working with Children and Youth Groups, 2010.

Children’s training in journalism, Nepal: All the child clubs supported/facilitated by Plan Nepal have received training in journalism and are producing their own wall magazine. Some of the members of media groups in child clubs are running children’s programmes on the local FM Radio. Plan Nepal is broadcasting Jingle against human trafficking and for safer migration in collaboration with local FMs under each programme unit (issues might be different as per the priority issues in the district).

In some contexts (e.g. in Cambodia, Nepal, and Sri Lanka) child group ‘leaders’ are trained and expected to share the training with other group members. However, while children and young people are effective in sharing key messages, roll out of skill-based training initiatives does not always occur. Thus, Plan is encouraged to reflect on the model of training leaders to determine if more inclusive training opportunities can be supported.

The benefits of children’s participation in CBCP initiatives:

Many benefits of children’s participation in CBCP initiatives have been identified by children and adults during the comparative study (see Table 3 below). However, increased systematic research, monitoring and evaluation on children’s participation in CBCPMs would clearly increase the evidence base to support ongoing practice and policy developments in children’s participation and protection.

Table 3: Advantages of child participation in CBCP initiatives²¹

<i>Advantages of children’s participation in CBCP initiatives:</i>	Bangladesh	Cambodia	China	East Timor	India	Indonesia	Laos	Nepal	Pakistan	Philippines	Sri Lanka	Thailand	Vietnam
Children are more visible in the community and there is increased value in listening to children	✓	✓			✓	✓		✓		✓	✓	✓	✓
Children have increased confidence	✓				✓	✓		✓			✓	✓	✓
Children have increased information	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓		✓		✓	✓	✓	✓
Children have improved communication, negotiation and problem solving skills	✓	✓			✓	✓		✓		✓	✓		✓
Children are more able to defend their rights and their own self protection	✓	✓			✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓
Children have contributed to improved protection of other children	✓	✓			✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓
Children have played a role in reducing school dropouts		✓			✓	✓		✓		✓	✓		✓
More attention is given to children’s needs and priorities	✓					✓		✓			✓	✓	✓
Children are influencing community/commune development plans and/or budgets		✓				✓		✓			✓		✓

21 Identified during the regional CBCPM desk analysis, mapping and/or field work.

In some countries (including Bangladesh, Cambodia, Vietnam) Plan, often in collaboration with other child focused agencies, has supported children's participation in higher level (district, state or national level) children's forums, parliaments or networks.

Challenges concerning children's participation in CBCP initiatives:

Traditional sociocultural barriers towards children continue to be a challenge in every country, and ongoing efforts are required to sensitise concerned stakeholders on the value of children's participation. In every sociocultural political context it is crucial that potential ethical issues and risks faced by participating children are analysed (by adults and children), and efforts are taken to address and minimise such concerns.

"One of my friends got married recently. He is my age. When we talked to the family, they did not listen to us and scolded my friend for disclosing the matter with us. Later my friend approached me and requested to stay away from the matter as otherwise his family will become more aggressive. Hence we did not go again to the family."
(Boy, child club member, Delhi, India)²²

Across every country programme 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.

While children's representatives are included in village child protection committees in a number of countries, in contexts where only two children's representatives are included there are questions around the power of two children to influence adult dominated decision making processes. Thus, there is a need to advocate and support increased collaborative efforts between child groups/clubs and CBCPMs and opportunities for at least four or five children's representatives in CBCPM structures. Furthermore, increased efforts are needed to ensure that marginalised children are actively included in child clubs/groups and that they have opportunities to represent their peers.

Time constraints faced by children (due to study, household and other work responsibilities) continue to be a challenge. Ongoing efforts are needed to consult and work with girls and boys at times that suit them.

22 Shared by a boy during Plan India Annual Participatory Programme Review, 2011.



Summary of key learning on children's participation in CBCPMs:

- 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.
- Children and young people are playing important roles in awareness raising, identifying and reporting child protection concerns, mapping of risks, and organising action to prevent or respond 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, have been effectively used by children on the subject of child protection.
- Support for meaningful participation is an ongoing process, involving 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 underestimate children's capacities.
- Increased efforts are needed by Plan and their partners to reach and engage the most marginalised children in child groups/clubs and in CBCPMs.
- 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.



6

Responding to child protection concerns

Processes by which child protection concerns are identified and followed up by CBCPMs:

The main processes by which child protection issues are identified include:

- Observation of child protection concerns by neighbours which is shared with members of the CBCPM and/or with the village chief (who is generally a member of the CBCPM);
- Observation of a child protection concern by a child in school or in the community which is shared with child group members and/or with adult members of CBCPMs or teachers;
- Children sharing their own concerns within their child group;
- Victims/survivors reporting their concerns directly to members of the CBCPMs or to their parents/caregivers who report to the CBCPM;
- Teachers identifying child protection concerns;
- CBCPM members identifying child protection risks/concerns through home visits;
- Identifying child protection concerns through mapping and/or CRSA activities.

In some country and community contexts (for example in Cambodia, Indonesia, Nepal, and Vietnam) the most active ‘reporters’ of child protection concerns are children. Once child protection concerns have been identified and shared within a child group and/or with members of CBCPMs, such concerns are usually discussed and analysed, and ideas on how to solve the concerns are shared. Furthermore, across Asia, cases are also reported through school-based CPCs, formed under the ‘Learn Without Fear’ campaign.

In the more established CPCs/Gs,²³ such decision making is informed by the principle of the best interests of the child, and by further consultations and/or assessments involving the child, family members and/or other concerned stakeholders. If required, a few of the CPC members may meet with and influence a positive response from the concerned perpetrator. If CPC members do not have sufficient power to influence an appropriate response, they may involve local officials. If either of these community-based approaches are not effective, and especially when the child protection concerns are grave (e.g. child sexual abuse or child trafficking cases), the CPC members usually report to the police and/or to higher level formal child protection structures to resolve cases through the legal system.

23 Within some communities in some country programmes in the Philippines, India, Nepal and Vietnam.

Identifying and responding to cases by CPGs, Bangladesh: The main protection issues that the CPGs are identifying and responding to include: physical abuse, child sexual abuse, child marriage, and child trafficking. When a child protection concern is observed (by an adult or child) or shared within a children's organisation meeting, it will be reported to the CPG. Depending on the severity of the case, the CPG can either arrange a special emergency meeting to take steps to respond to the child protection violation, or they discuss the child protection concern in their regular monthly meeting. In cases of domestic violence and family conflict, CPG members may intervene to counsel, raise awareness and to negotiate with concerned family members to change their behaviour to mitigate family violence and conflict. In cases of child sexual abuse or severe physical abuse they refer the victim to a health centre for health services; and to the police station and lawyer for legal support to take action against the perpetrator.

Through the establishment and strengthening of CBCPMs there is increased awareness and understanding about child protection. Practices which may have been considered normal, such as beating children, arranging their marriages at a young age, or expecting children to do regular and/or heavy work are increasingly identified as protection concerns.

Which child protection cases are easier or harder to resolve by CBCPM members:

The emerging pattern of CBCP cases across the region demonstrate that while many CBCPMs are increasingly being effective in preventing and changing parents', caregivers' and teachers' behaviour to reduce physical punishment and abuse of children, CBCPMs find it difficult to prevent and respond to child sexual abuse cases. Cases with legal implications are often harder for CBCPMs to resolve themselves as they require technical inputs and response from concerned duty bearers at higher levels.

In many areas under-reporting on child sexual abuse, early marriage, harmful child work, discrimination in schools and emotional abuse within families remains due to existing sociocultural traditions. Child sexual abuse is particularly difficult for CBCPMs, due to the social stigma associated with sexual abuse; power structures within families and society; the possibility of receiving threats from perpetrators; as well as legal barriers and delays. The traditional practice of making settlements out of court, often as a financial settlement to the victim or the family, remain common across Asia. Such practices are often not made in the best interests of the child.

WCPC efforts to overcome the practice of out of court settlements, Philippines:²⁴ The Women and Children Protection Unit (WCPU) has been operational for two years in Pintuyan, Southern Leyte. The team underwent specialised training in the management of child abuse to equip them with the proper skills and attitudes in handling cases of abuse. Though most victims want to pursue legal action against the perpetrator, most of them eventually withdraw the case and agree with the perpetrator's financial offer to settle the case out of court. Some of the factors that influence the parents' decision are when the perpetrator is a family member, or a prominent/influential person in the community. Others are afraid of retaliation/threats from the perpetrator and family members. Another contributing factor is poverty, thus victim and family agree to receive the financial offer. Families also remain ignorant about the justice system and are misguided on what to do. With this reality, members of the WCPU are now coordinating with Plan Philippines and the Crusade against Violence, a victim-run private organisation to provide legal assistance and counselling support to victims and their families.

Identifying and responding to domestic violence is also variable, in some contexts community members are considered to be 'meddling' in private family matters. Furthermore, in some cases concerning domestic violence against women, the wives are reluctant to report their own husbands, for fear that their husband may be taken away from home.

Child protection concerns such as neglect or children's engagement in work that may be rooted in poverty are often harder for CBCPMs to solve, unless there are relevant social protection or livelihood schemes that they can refer vulnerable families to.

While CBCPMs are undertaking effective work to prevent and respond to child marriage in some countries, CBCPM members in other countries still find it difficult to transform traditional beliefs and practices to end child marriage. However, both Plan's Universal Birth Registration campaign and their 'Because I am a Girl' campaign are contributing to efforts to prevent and respond to child marriage.

A focus on children without parental care appears to be weak among many CBCPMs across the Asia region. CBCPMs can play an important role in identifying and supporting children without parental care, including the care of children in kinship care (living with grandparents, aunts, uncles etc), as well as other forms of family-based care.

Case management has been defined²⁵ as: 'The process of assisting an individual child (and their family) through direct support and referral to other needed services, and the activities that case workers, social workers or other project staff carry out in working with children and families in addressing their protection concerns.'

24 Shared by members of a WCPU in April 2012 as part of the participatory data collection process for the CBCPM regional study.

25 Save the Children, Case management practice within Save the Children Protection Programme, 2011.

Child protection case management:

Case management approaches vary for different countries. Only a few countries have fully formalised their case management approach, most notably the Philippines, Thailand and Sri Lanka, where multi-disciplinary government teams at district level assess the case and the types of referrals that are needed to assist the victim.

In many CBCPMs where sub-national child protection systems have not been well established, social workers with the capacity to undertake case management are not present. Thus many individual cases are not assessed, followed up or monitored in a systematic manner.

One problem consistently reported by committees across Asia, is the fact that few CBCPMs have access to emergency funds to directly assist victims when necessary. CBCPM members described how this undermined their effectiveness as they depend on NGOs or government services to access small funds to pay for transport to the nearest hospital/police station.

Summary of key learning on response to child protection issues and case management:

- CBCPMs have resulted in increased understanding at family/community levels about child protection. Practices which may have been considered normal are increasingly identified as protection concerns.
- The majority of CBCPMs are dealing with child protection cases, which are either solved within the community or referred to available services or to statutory child protection.
- While many CBCPMs are increasingly effective in preventing and changing parents', caregivers' and teachers' behaviour to reduce physical punishment and abuse of children, CBCPMs often find it difficult to prevent and respond to child sexual abuse cases.
- Child protection concerns such as neglect or children's engagement in work, which may be rooted in poverty, are harder for CBCPMs to solve unless there are relevant social protection or livelihood schemes that they can refer vulnerable families to.
- In many areas under-reporting on child sexual abuse, early marriage, harmful child work, and emotional abuse within families remains due to sociocultural traditions. Furthermore, in the case of child sexual abuse, secrecy is often maintained as a result of shame.
- CBCP committees across Asia continue to support the local settlement of rape and sexual abuse cases, due to cultural reasons and a lack of trust in judiciary and police systems. Increased efforts are needed in countries across the region to support a sensitive and systematic response to child sexual abuse cases, to ensure that decisions are made in the best interests of the child.
- Governments are in different stages of developing national child protection systems. Child protection case management is under-developed in the region, with insufficient government social workers and functioning referral mechanisms to support CBCPMs.
- It is crucial that Plan staff increase their engagement in national level advocacy and inter-agency efforts to strengthen the child protection system at national and district levels.

- Plan should find local solutions to ensure committees can provide emergency follow-up for cases that require it, without the committees depending on outside resources, especially Plan and partners. This could involve mobilisation of local community resources (human, financial or material) and/or through local government funding.



7

Linkages with stakeholders, structures and sectors

Community-based linkages:

Across Asia, linkages between the CBCPMs and other community-based actors, civil society groups and/or local governance mechanisms are established within the community (rural and/or urban) to ensure more integrated and effective community mobilisation to identify, prevent and respond to child protection issues. As described earlier, village elders/village administration leaders are often included as members (often as the chair) of the community CPG/C to increase the group's power, legitimacy and ability to coordinate with other relevant community actors. Furthermore, in many countries, CBCPMs directly include representatives of women's groups, CBOs, local schools and other important stakeholders. Through such representation they are more able to reach out and engage others to increase partnerships and action for child protection (e.g. through support of other women's group members, CBO members, teachers etc).

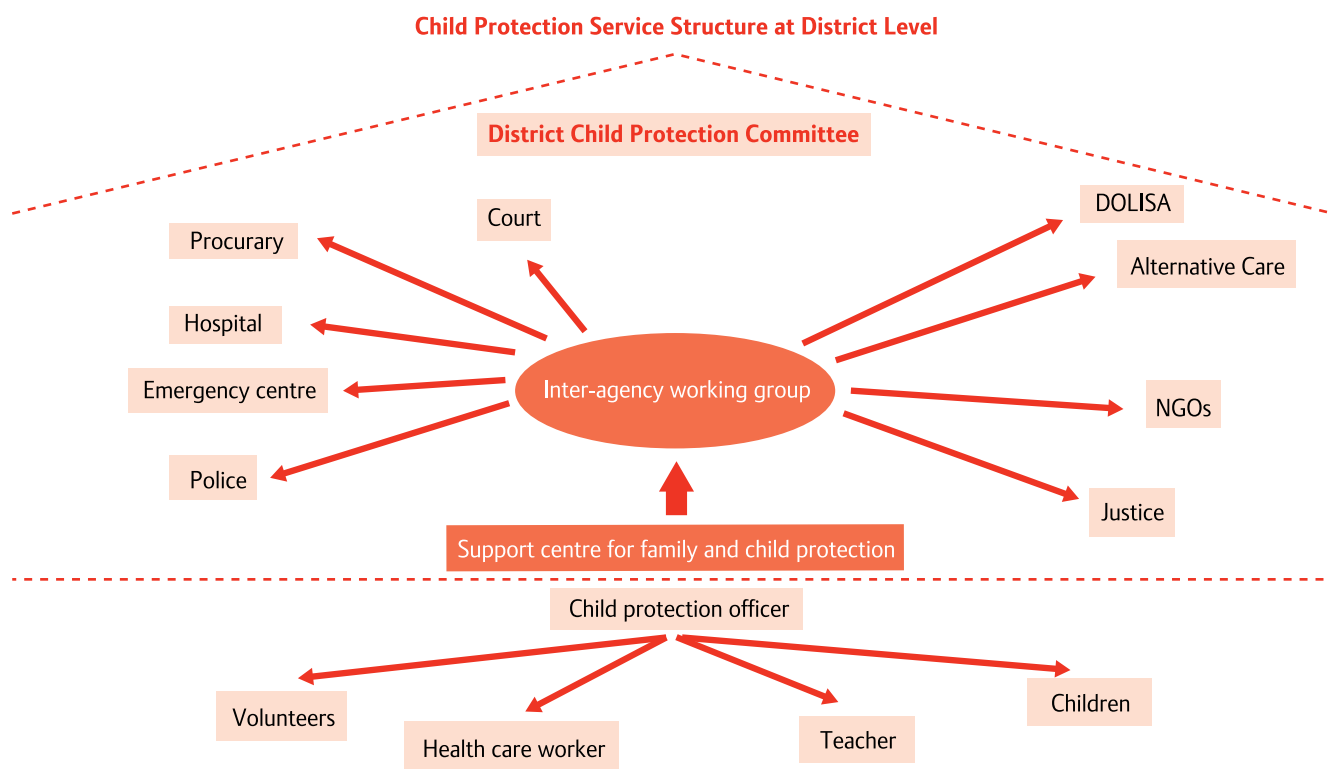
Linkages between CBCPMs and child protection structures and system developments at different levels:

Plan is making significant efforts to activate and strengthen district level child protection structures across many countries in the region to ensure referrals to child protection structures at higher levels are effectively followed up. However, while district level child protection structures are mandated through government policies in a number of countries (including Bangladesh, Cambodia, East Timor, India, Laos, Nepal, the Philippines, Sri Lanka and Vietnam) – in the majority of these countries these structures are not yet functioning effectively. Plan needs to analyse – ideally together with other child protection actors at national level – how it can optimise its efforts in linking the CBCPMs it supports to *effective* government child protection services.

Piloting and scale up of CBCPMs by the government, Vietnam: The Vietnamese national child protection system is progressive, and has strong government ownership and leadership at national and provincial levels. On a national level, the Department of Protection and Care for Children strongly supports the development of the national child protection system, which includes significant efforts to pilot and scale up the CBCPS.³ While the CBCPS was initially piloted in 15 provinces across Vietnam, government plans and budgets are now in place to scale up the CBCPS to 30 provinces and cities reaching at least 50 percent of communes in each of these provinces. Furthermore, as part of the national programme, the provincial people's committees are requested to develop a provincial programme on child protection, with planned interventions and an allocated budget.

Inter-agency work is highly developed in both the Philippines and Thailand where multi-disciplinary government run teams in provincial and district level centres form a one stop service point for child victims of violence and in some cases, also for women victims.

Figure 5: Vietnam CBCPS



Networking among CBCPMs:

Efforts to support networking among CBCPMs can support mutual learning, capacity building, and/or joint advocacy on child protection issues. Some countries (including Bangladesh, Cambodia, India, Nepal and Sri Lanka) are currently support networking among CBCPMs. In Bangladesh, study visits among CPGs are organised once a year to support mutual learning. In Cambodia, joint training events as well as quarterly meetings between FPN chairmen/village leaders and focal points were organised at the beginning and the end of the first programme period.

Federations of CPCs, India: In locations where the village CPCs are empowered to effectively address child protection issues, village CPCs have formed federations. This has enabled them to foster cross-learning, mutual collaboration and joint advocacy, especially when trying to secure services and support from higher levels.



Regional cooperation:

Regional level cooperation, in particular Plan ARO's active engagement with initiatives such as SAIEVAC (the South Asia Initiative to End Violence Against Children) and the East Asia and Pacific Inter-agency Working Group on Child Protection, support national child protection system developments. SAIEVAC was established by the governments of Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka in 2005, to reiterate their commitment to addressing violence against children in all forms in the region. The 5-year work plan (2010-2015) aims at developing and strengthening national child protection systems, including related CBCPMs, to effectively protect girls and boys from all forms of violence. In addition, Plan was also actively involved in the 2011 Beijing Declaration on South-South cooperation for Child Rights in the Asia Pacific.²⁶

CBCPMs and inter-sector work among Plan sectors:

Plan's CCCD approach provides important opportunities for inter-sector work. Plan works in eight impact areas.²⁷ Inter-sector collaborations are generally more established between child protection and programmes on children's rights to participate as citizens, and on education. Increasing linkages are also being established to integrate DRR and emergency preparedness as CBCPM activities in a number of countries.

Through the child protection programme, parenting on child rights, child protection and positive discipline is strengthened. Strong links with school-based initiatives exist in many country programmes including: training of teachers on child rights, child protection and positive discipline; empowering children with knowledge on child rights, child protection and life skills through school-based sessions; establishing child protection reporting and response mechanisms in schools; and efforts to create child-friendly schools. These initiatives contribute to Plan's global campaign on 'Learn Without Fear'.

Considering the care and protection needs of children affected or infected by HIV/AIDS, there were surprisingly few descriptions by Plan staff of programme linkages between child protection and addressing children's rights to sexual and reproductive health, including HIV/AIDS prevention, care and treatment. Links with health programmes are only made explicit in a minority of country programmes.

²⁶ The Beijing Declaration on South-South cooperation for Child Rights in the Asia Pacific http://srsg.violenceagainstchildren.org/sites/default/files/political_declarations/Beijing_Declaration.pdf

²⁷ 1) health; 2) sexual reproductive health and HIV; 3) education; 4) WASH; 5) economic security; 6) participation as citizens; 7) DRM; and 8) protection.

Summary of key learning on linkages:

- CBCPMs across the region are closely coordinating and collaborating with both local government and local civil society actors within their communities.
- Where national child protection systems exist and extend to district levels, CBCPMs are connected to these systems, refer cases to them and regularly coordinate with them.
- Close linkages with government are essential to enable sustainability and scale up of CBCPMs/Ss.
- Within Plan country offices, the strongest linkages exist between the CBCP programmes and Plan's education programmes across the region. This is mostly through Plan's universal 'Learn Without Fear' and 'Because I am a Girl' campaigns.
- There are increasing efforts by Plan to integrate disaster risk reduction and emergency preparedness into all programme areas, including child protection.
- There is relatively little evidence of cross-sectoral cooperation on HIV/AIDS or on livelihoods, with the exception of India and Cambodia.



8

Summary of key achievements and challenges

Key achievements

Increased systematic monitoring and evaluation is required across the region to develop a stronger evidence base to identify the scale and sustainability of key achievements. Key achievements shared by concerned stakeholders (children and adults) during the regional comparative analysis process are summarised in this section.

- **Reported decrease in violence against children in schools and at home:** Decreased levels of violence against children are reported across Asia in communities where CBCPMs have been established, including physical or humiliating punishment of children by parents and teachers, and reductions in early marriage.
- **Increased awareness and reporting on child protection and child rights in communities:** Across Asia, increased awareness on child protection, child rights and children's needs is a common outcome of the CBCP work. An increase in cases being reported through the CBCPM demonstrates a greater awareness about children's rights to protection, and confidence in the CBCPM to respond to child protection concerns.
- **Increased participation of, recognition and respect for children:** Children are increasingly being recognised as agents of change, their opinions are more respected and their right to be heard is increasingly realised. All countries report enhanced levels of children's participation in the CBCPMs either through direct representation or through collaboration with child clubs/groups.
- **Community or district child protection policy or ordinance developed:** An emerging good practice is the development of village codes/policies on child protection. These are usually developed by the community at large and approved by the local government.
- **Increased birth registration:** Through Plan's 'Every Child Counts' birth registration campaign, many of Plan's CBCPMs have been working on this campaign by creating awareness about birth registration and citizen rights, and by assisting with registering births.

- ***CBCP groups' link with government child protection system and services:*** Across Asia, CBCP groups have formed structural links with government child protection systems and mechanisms at different levels, where these exist. This has led to more effective case management and referrals to respond to child protection cases in children's best interests – especially in countries like Thailand and the Philippines where multi-disciplinary teams have been established.
- ***Increased government capacity and involvement in child protection:*** Most Plan Asia country offices are training government partners (especially at commune and district levels) in child rights, child protection, the CBCPM; and to some extent on case management and referral. This has contributed to increased capacity of, and increased partnership with, government actors and has improved linkages between the CBCPM and the government child protection system.
- ***Increased police responsiveness to victims' needs:*** In some countries (Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, the Philippines) Plan has trained the police to become more aware of child rights and child protection and their legal role in providing this protection to children. This has reportedly led to more child-friendly services for child victims/survivors of abuse. However, increased efforts to train police are needed because of their direct interaction with child victims on a regular basis.
- ***Inter-agency work on different levels and advocacy contributing to improved child protection policies and practices:*** Plan is collaborating with a host of other agencies across Asia in establishing referral networks for the CBCPMs on district and provincial levels, and in setting up coordination mechanisms for government and civil society involved in CBCP and/or the national child protection system.
- ***Some close collaboration across Plan programme areas:*** As, described earlier evidence from across the region demonstrates that ECCD, 'Learn Without Fear' and CBCP programmes not only complement but also strengthen each other's programme results, particularly in relation to decreasing violence against children at home and in schools. There are also initial efforts which need to be built upon between CBCPMs and Disaster Risk Management.


Key challenges

This section presents a summary of key challenges or weakness faced at the community level, and within Plan in relation to implementing CBCPMs.

Challenges at community level

- ***Violence against children continues to take place:*** Social norms, including physical discipline of children can take a long time to change. This underlines

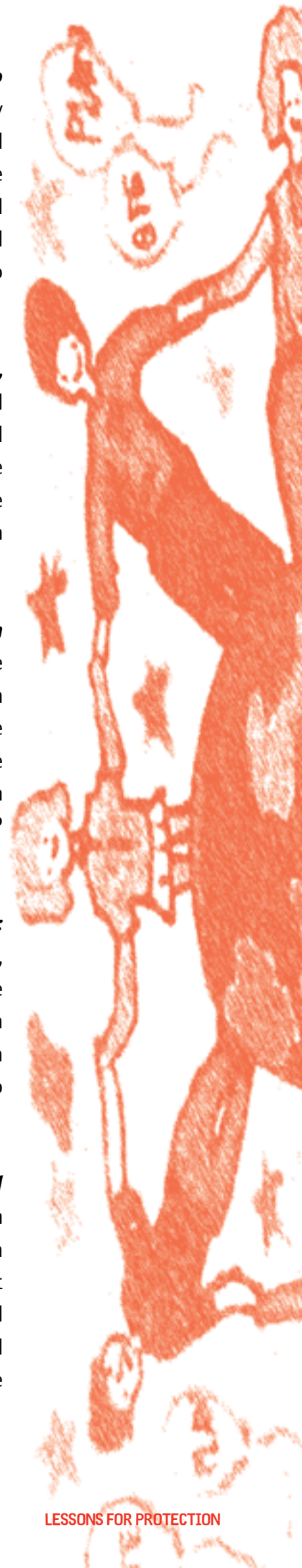




the need for more guidance to committees (and thus front field staff) to learn about behaviour change processes and what they can do to help these processes progress. In addition, alternatives to corporal punishment need to be discussed with parents and teachers, who sometimes stated that even if they wanted to stop using violence, they did not know how else to manage their children or classrooms.

- **Low levels of awareness on child rights/child protection and how to report cases:** CBCPMs have – together with Plan and partners – organised awareness raising events in their communities about child rights, child protection or more specific child protection issues that programmes focus on. However, there is little follow up to refresh people’s awareness. Considering how entrenched social norms towards children are, increased targeted awareness raising is required to change practices.
- **Children’s participation is not yet fully optimised or supported:** Children participate in most of the community-based CPCs across Asia, either as representatives of child clubs or as direct members. However, some country offices reported that involvement of children’s representatives remained artificial in nature. The cultural notion that children should only listen and not be heard remains strong across the region. There is also resistance among some parents and groups within society to understand the concept of children as change agents.
- **Marginalised groups are not participating equally in CBCP activities:** Across Asia, participation of marginalised and out-of-school children and adults is limited, although steps are being taken to change this. Plan conducts community mapping in many of its target areas, and as such, information on marginalised groups is often available, but this has not led to their participation.
- **CBCP committees are not very active:** For different reasons, some CBCP committees do not meet regularly and members sometimes do not attend. This is related to the limited time people have, and is caused by a lack of understanding of their roles and responsibilities. In addition, the pressing needs of volunteering committee members to feed their families and run their households means that volunteers cannot always attend meetings and do not always have time to follow up on cases.
- **Confidentiality of cases often not guaranteed:** Insufficient safeguards are in place to guarantee confidentiality and the principles of ‘do no harm’ and ‘best interests of the child’ across Asia. When child protection concerns are discussed within the community it can affect the dignity, privacy and security of the parties involved. The principle of best interest needs to be more realistically practiced, and impartial processes need to be ensured while responding to the victim and the perpetrator.

- **Committees receive insufficient capacity support and financial support to function independently:** CPCs struggle to deal with more complex cases. They have received little guidance on their roles and responsibilities in these cases and often lack police and Ministry of Justice backing. There is insufficient guidance available to support CPCs sensitive response to child sexual abuse, bullying, and child migration. Many CBCP groups shared their need for an emergency fund that they could use to transport victims of violence/abuse to the hospital and to pay for referral services, where necessary.
- **Preference to solve cases through local settlement and compensation, contrary to ‘best interests of the child’ principle:** Across Asia, Plan supported CBCPMs resort to the traditional practices of seeking justice through the local informal justice system, which includes settling compensation payments to the victim from the perpetrators, who are not held accountable and who do not face charges, contrary to the best interests of the victim. High levels of corruption amongst police and Ministry of Justice officials exacerbates this problem.
- **Committee members are sometimes exposed to dangers, especially when dealing with certain cases involving powerful people:** In countries where the child protection law is not clear in relation to a number of child protection concerns, committee members face risks when intervening, as their mandate to intervene is questioned. When perpetrators of child rape and murder are powerful, the committee members may be threatened and endangered when following up on these cases. This is an ethical concern for Plan as both CBCP and child club members put themselves at risk when they monitor child abuse.
- **Weak referral mechanisms and statutory support for case management:** With the exception of a few countries, most notably Thailand and the Philippines, referral mechanisms are weak and government partners rarely take a proactive approach in creating the necessary services for child victims/survivors. Plan needs to push for the government to take on a leading coordination role in ensuring case management and referral mechanisms are properly connected to community committees and available for children.
- **Government committees with multiple responsibilities where child protection is one, often do not prioritise it, resulting in limited action:** In some countries, notably China, the Philippines, and Thailand, child protection responsibilities have been added on to local government committees, that are often elected representatives of the community. This often results in child protection not receiving adequate attention, follow-up or the necessary financial resources, as the local administrators have competing priorities with more powerful backers.



Challenges within Plan

- **Plan Asia country offices have insufficient human resources in child protection:** There are not enough Plan child protection staff, and some staff do not have the relevant professional qualifications. Across Asia, front field staff have multiple responsibilities that they need to manage. They are often responsible for large areas. Due to this heavy workload, they do not have sufficient time to always follow up on cases, make linkages with other Plan programmes, or provide backstopping to the committees where needed. There is a need for more child protection staff and more capacity building of this staff.
- **Plan staff are transitioning from a service delivery-based approach to a rights-based approach:** There is still a tendency to focus on delivering services, rather than on a rights-based approach. This results in Plan being seen as a donor and a provider of services in some contexts, rather than as a partner that is strengthening government authorities and local agencies to fulfil their duties to protect children.
- **Insufficient planned support for CBCPMs and for partnering agencies:** There is often insufficient funding for the mentoring of both partnering agencies and the committees in the initial years of establishing CBCPMs. This hampers their effectiveness, quality and sustainability. Partner staff and CBCPM members need to fully understand ‘best interests’ and ‘do no harm’ principles so that they can apply these principles in practice.
- **Limited coordination with other child protection NGOs on a national level to advocate for more accountable government-run child protection services:** There is growing evidence of Plan’s involvement on a national level in joint advocacy and policy development work in relation to the national child protection systems. More can be done to increase Plan’s voice at this level.
- **Need for improved monitoring and measuring of CBCP’s outcomes:** There is limited systematic monitoring of outcomes and results of CBCP work. A few studies have been conducted to measure changes in knowledge, attitudes and practises, but far more needs to be done in order to back up reports that CBCP work has led to a decrease in violence, higher levels of children’s participation, and increase in number of cases coming forward to the system etc.



Summary of key achievements and challenges:

- *Key achievements:* CBCPMs efforts are resulting in increased awareness and reporting on child protection; decreased violence against children in schools and homes; and increased recognition and respect for children and their participation. CBCPMs are also contributing to increased birth registration.
- Some CBCPMs have mobilised communities and the local authorities to develop village codes or ordinances to increase local child protection practices.
- Inter-sector collaborations between child protection, education, ECCD and DRM are strengthening child protection outcomes at the local level.
- Where they exist CBCPMs are linking with, and making referrals to, government child protection statutory bodies at higher levels. Plan is strengthening the capacity of government officials in district and higher level child protection structures.
- In some countries Plan staff have undertaken capacity building with the police, who are more responsive and sensitive in responding to child protection concerns.
- Inter-agency work on different levels and advocacy is contributing to improved child protection policies and practices.
- *Key challenges faced at the community level* include: Preference to solve cases through local settlement and compensation, contrary to the ‘best interest of the child’ principle; and lack of sufficient guidance or capacity among some CBCPMs to sensitively respond to child sexual abuse cases.
- Time constraints faced by CBCPM volunteers, low levels of awareness on child protection among the community, sociocultural traditions towards children and the most marginalised sector of the community which inhibit their participation in CBCPMs.
- CBCP committees lack resources to follow up on emergency cases directly; and local governments rarely prioritise child protection when allocating local budgets.
- *Key challenges faced by Plan* include: limited human resources and capacity building in child protection, and weaknesses in monitoring and measuring of CBCP outcomes.



9

Lessons learned and conclusions

This final chapter provides a broad overview of lessons learned on components and processes contributing towards effective child protection and sustainable community-based mechanisms. The lessons learned reinforce the recommendations from the UN Secretary General's Study on Violence Against Children.²⁸

1. Collaboration with the government and advocacy at different levels to contribute to a stronger child protection system:

Plan and its partners need to collaborate with governments in an effort to develop effective and sustainable CBCPMs to create safer communities and prospects of a safe childhood.²⁹ *As an overall strategy and way forward, Plan is encouraged to avoid the establishment of parallel structures, and to increase support to programming and advocacy to strengthen CBCPMs which are recognised and directly linked to the formal child protection system at district, provincial and national levels.*

The status of child protection systems is variable across countries in the region. While most State governments in the region have legislation and policies in place to support child protection system developments, the concerned Ministries of Social Welfare (or their equivalent) tend to be under-resourced; and weak legal enforcement mechanisms exist in most countries.

Increased advocacy and engagement by Plan to work in partnership with the Ministry of Social Welfare (or its equivalent) is required at the national level. A partnership approach, in collaboration with other relevant child-focused agencies (including UNICEF, Save the Children, World Vision, Child Fund International etc) can enhance efforts: to strengthen the Ministries' advocacy and negotiation skills for increased budget allocations from the central government for child protection and social welfare work; to enhance multi-sectoral coordination with other line Ministries to ensure the development and implementation of holistic child protection strategies, laws and policies. Furthermore, advocacy with the Ministry of Social Welfare (or its equivalent) is needed to ensure formal recognition of community-based CPCs/Gs as part of the formal child protection system.

²⁸ <http://www.unicef.org/violencestudy/>, accessed 24th September 2012.

²⁹ Plan International, Asia Regional Office, Safe and Sound – Growing up with Protection. Child Protection Programme Framework Programming Guidelines, 2011.

2. Community ownership – building upon traditional practices whilst ensuring the best interests principle:

Community ownership is a key component of effective and sustainable efforts towards CBCP. **Increased early investments in time and effort by Plan and their civil society partners are needed to research, analyse and build upon traditional practices, which support children's protection and participation, especially in indigenous communities.** Local understandings of childhood, child development, well-being, care and protection need to be better understood in order to build upon positive traditional practices, while change processes to transform traditional practices and beliefs which are not in the best interests of the child also need to be supported.

3. Inclusive, gender sensitive and active participation of stakeholders in the CBCP structure with a clear mandate to protect children:

The CBCP structure needs to have a clear mandate for its child protection work within the community. Each member needs to be aware of their roles and responsibilities, to work proactively to prevent and respond to different forms of child abuse, violence, neglect and exploitation. Provision of letters of support or volunteer ID cards provided to the child protection committee members from a relevant authority can help enhance their legitimacy when engaging in prevention or early intervention.


Efforts to mobilise, reach and involve community representatives from different backgrounds (gender, ethnicity, caste, religion, age, disability etc.) can further enhance the effectiveness of the CBCPM and its ability to work in non-discriminatory ways. Plan has been less effective in mobilising and engaging membership from the most marginalised families.

While the CBCPMs leaders are almost always male in the Asia region, much of the child protection field work is undertaken by women volunteers. Plan needs to pay **increased attention to apply gender analysis and gender sensitivity in all stages of its contributions to CBCPMs.** Furthermore, learning from existing good practice in the Philippines and Bangladesh, **increased efforts are needed to mainstream the engagement and role of men and fathers** to prevent and address violence against women and children, and to encourage their role as active fathers.

4. Inclusive and meaningful children's participation:

Support for meaningful and inclusive children's participation is another essential component of CBCPMs. In particular child clubs/groups are a great driving force for awareness-raising, prevention, monitoring and reporting on child protection across many countries in the region. However, considering traditional attitudes towards children, adults continue to underestimate children's capabilities and limit opportunities for children's expression and participation in governance processes. Ongoing efforts are needed by Plan and their partners to sensitise adults (parents, caregivers, teachers, religious and village elders, and government officials) on the value of listening to children (especially the most marginalised).





While including children's representatives in the CBCP structures, it is important to support children (of different ages and backgrounds) to come together in their own child groups. Training children in child rights and responsibilities, child protection and life skills, and support for child-led media and advocacy initiatives can significantly contribute to a strengthened child protection system. Networking among children's groups can also enhance capacity building and collective advocacy by children on practice and policies affecting them.

While Plan and its partners are supporting an impressive number of more than 4,000 child clubs/groups and innovations in children's participation in protection across the region, **internationally agreed basic requirements on children's participation³⁰ need to be more systematically applied by Plan staff and partners. In particular, increased efforts are needed by Plan to reach and empower the most marginalised children in CBCP work**, including efforts to reach out-of-school working children, domestic child workers, children with disabilities, children without parental care, and children affected by HIV/AIDS.

5. *Aware communities, prevention and early intervention:*

Awareness-raising on child rights and child protection is essential to prepare the ground for effective CBCPSs. Plan's CBCPM work has been enhanced and strengthened by inter-sector collaborations with the ECCD work on positive parenting, as well as by the 'Learn Without Fear' school-based campaign in many countries in the region.

In addition to community meetings, parenting groups and house to house visits, creative methods including the use of drama, songs, wall newspapers and other IEC materials have been used to raise awareness among adults and children on child protection. **However, improved IEC materials and awareness raising strategies are needed to increase prevention, reporting and response to child sexual abuse.**

In addition to their prevention role, members of CBCPMs are actively involved in early interventions. Members of CBCPMs are often effective in negotiating and guiding parents or caregivers to improve their care and protection practices. Furthermore, community involvement in developing and agreeing on village codes or local ordinances on child protection can contribute to behaviour change and the creation of safer communities for children.

While many CBCPMs are increasingly effective in preventing and changing parents', caregivers' and teachers' behaviour to reduce physical punishment and abuse of children, addressing child protection concerns involving criminal acts such as child sexual abuse, occasionally early child marriage and harmful child work, are more difficult for CBCPMs to respond to. These cases require technical input and response

³⁰ CRC/C/GC/12 (July 2009) Committee on the Rights of the Child General Comment No.12, The Right of the Child to be Heard.

from concerned duty bearers at higher levels. In addition, where child protection concerns are rooted in the financial concerns of families (e.g. sending a child to earn a living rather than to school) interventions and/or referrals to relevant social protection schemes, livelihood or income generation opportunities for family members are needed. Thus, in dealing with more serious or complex cases the role of the CBCPMs is to make referrals to statutory child protection bodies at higher levels. In some countries a key challenge for CBCPMs is that such statutory child protection bodies either do not exist, or that they are not functional. **Plan needs to consider increased investments to strengthen these statutory child protection bodies at higher levels, in order for the CBCPMs to be able to carry out their mandates effectively.**

6. Coordination and referral mechanisms involving government and civil society agencies for relevant referrals for psychosocial, legal, medical, social protection and other relevant services:


Ongoing advocacy and programming efforts are needed by Plan and other concerned child protection agencies to strengthen the linkages between the CBCPMs and the formal child protection structures at district level and higher, and referral mechanisms. In highly centralised states, increased innovative efforts are also needed by Plan to engage civil society organisations in the child protection system as potential providers of child-friendly protection services; and in most countries across the region **increased advocacy and partnership efforts are needed to strengthen child-friendly services that support their recovery and reintegration if they have faced abuse, violence, neglect or exploitation.**

7. Strengthening child protection case management, social workers, and child-friendly protection services:

Child protection case management is in its early stages of development across the region. As part of a national child protection system, social workers need to be accessible to CBCPMs, so that referrals can be made for professional support and a case management approach to ensure assessment and response in the best interests of the child. Government mandated community social workers with a child protection skill set are needed. **Plan and other child-focused agencies should consider more systemic efforts to create a critical mass of community social workers as part of efforts to strengthen national systems.**

Efforts by Plan in collaboration with the concerned government authorities to strengthen ‘multidisciplinary teams’ in Child Protection Units in the Philippines; and ‘One Stop Crisis Centres’ in Thailand have proven effective when they are guided by the CRC principles. Such promising practices should be replicated and supported in other countries as they increase child/user-friendly access to services and referrals to relevant services, including justice services. Existing efforts to strengthen child-friendly justice systems, including police training, and access to legal support are also contributing to child protection system improvements.





8. Strengthening monitoring and evaluation, and government databases on child protection:

National governments' child protection databases and M&E systems are in their early stages of development in all countries across the region. Plan, in collaboration with other child protection agencies, can **support government efforts to strengthen child protection data collection** (disaggregated by gender, ethnicity, age and other factors). Such monitoring data can inform more effective child protection planning for appropriate child protection services, laws and policies.

In addition, **Plan needs to improve its own M&E systems and processes for measuring child protection outcomes** to inform evidence-based advocacy for formal recognition and scale up of CBCPMs as part of the national child protection system. Baseline studies on child protection, KAP surveys and regular data collection on relevant child protection indicators need to be more systematically used in communities where Plan works. Improved M&E can help distinguish which CBCPM interventions most, and least, contribute to prevention and protection of children's rights to protection from all forms of abuse, violence, neglect and exploitation.

9. Capacity building for staff, partners and CBCPS stakeholders:

At country, regional and global levels, **Plan needs to consolidate and strengthen capacity building for Plan staff, partners and CBCPS stakeholders**. Building upon the findings from this comparative study, Plan International Head Office and Plan ARO could develop clearer programming guidance on the concepts, components and processes contributing towards effective child protection and sustainable community-based mechanisms. Cross-country sharing and adaptations of existing training and guidance materials to support CBCPMs are encouraged – for example building upon the training for multi-disciplinary teams in the Philippines and Thailand. Furthermore, **new or improved training modules, which build upon Plan's rights-based approach to child protection are needed on: sensitive reporting and response to child sexual abuse, child protection case management and referrals, and advocacy to strengthen child protection systems**.

Core training on child rights principles and child protection must be provided to all the CBCP committee members. Furthermore, in the early stages of CBCPM developments, mentoring of CBCPMs by more experienced child protection practitioners is required to ensure capacity developments and interventions are guided by the child's best interests. Increased efforts are needed by Plan, governments and other concerned agencies to monitor and support the quality of training.

Recognising the importance of functioning child protection systems at district level in order to respond to referrals from CBCPMs, ongoing and/or improved efforts are needed by Plan to strengthen the capacity and accountability of concerned government duty bearers at the district and/or provincial levels to be able to better fulfil their

roles and responsibilities towards children's care, protection and justice. Furthermore, Plan can support government procedures to ensure child protection training of newly appointed officials and members of child protection units (e.g. newly appointed doctors, police, social workers), or other statutory child protection bodies.

10. Stimulating research and learning on urban-based CBCPMs:

Eighty-nine percent of the CBCPMs supported by Plan in the Asia region are in rural communities. Considering the trends towards urbanisation and increased risks of exploitation and abuse to children in urban poor areas, there is a recognised **need for Plan to learn from existing CBCPM work in urban settings, and to increase research, piloting and scale up CBCPMs in urban settings in every country.** Plan's increasing engagement in youth empowerment and youth engagement in governance can also be supported by stronger CBCPM work in urban settings, especially in the most marginalised communities. Additional efforts are needed to ensure the CBCPMs that work in urban contexts reach and engage the most marginalised children including working children, domestic child workers, children living on the street, children engaged in commercial sexual exploitation etc.

11. Integrating emergency preparedness and DRR in CBCPMs:

At the time the comparative analysis was undertaken, no CBCPMs were functional in communities affected by natural disasters or armed conflicts. All the CBCPMs were being supported as part of longer-term development programming. Linkages between child protection and disaster risk reduction and emergency programmes are being established in many countries across Asia. In recognition of the scale of risks to natural disasters faced by countries in the region, there needs to be **increased planning, training and support to Plan staff, partners and to members of CBCPMs and child groups to integrate emergency preparedness as one of the CBCPM tasks,** so that community members, including children have increased knowledge and skills to prevent risks and to increase family-based care and protection of children in the event of an emergency.

Lastly, in the event of an emergency, CBCPMs should be strengthened or established to contribute to community-based care, psychosocial recovering, prevention and response to children's care and protection needs. In both emergency and development contexts, CBCPMs can play an increased role in preventing children's separation from their families, supporting the care and protection of children in their own families and monitoring and supporting non-discriminatory care and protection of children living in alternative family-based care.



Summary of key recommendations for strengthening CBCPMs by Plan in the Asia region

1. Increase support to strengthen CBCPMs which are recognised and directly linked to the formal child protection system; and avoid the establishment of parallel structures.
2. Increase advocacy and engagement with the Ministry of Social Welfare (or its equivalent) at the national level; and inter-agency efforts to strengthen the child protection system.
3. Increase research and analysis to build upon traditional practices which support children's protection and participation, especially in indigenous communities; and to transform harmful traditional practices.
4. Increase attention to gender analysis and gender sensitivity in all stages of child protection system developments; including greater efforts to mainstream the engagement and role of men and fathers.
5. Internationally agreed basic requirements on children's participation³¹ need to be more systematically applied by Plan staff and partners; including increased efforts to reach and empower the most marginalised children in CBCP work.
6. Increase advocacy and partnerships to strengthen child-friendly services that support children's recovery and reintegration if they have faced abuse, violence, neglect or exploitation.
7. Increase advocacy and/or capacity building roles to support the government and civil society agencies to further develop social work capacity for child protection case management.
8. Learn from, replicate and scale up efforts to strengthen 'multidisciplinary teams'.
9. Support government efforts to strengthen child protection data collection (disaggregated by gender, ethnicity, age and other factors).
10. Improve Plan's own M&E systems and processes for measuring child protection outcomes.
11. Strengthen capacity building for Plan staff, partners and CBCPS stakeholders that contribute to integrated efforts to strengthen the child protection system at community, district and higher levels.
12. Develop new or improved training modules on: sensitive reporting and response to child sexual abuse; child protection case management and referrals; and advocacy to strengthen child protection systems.
13. Learn from existing CBCPM work in urban settings, and to increase research, piloting and scale up of CBCPMs in urban settings across the region.
14. Increase planning, training and support to CBCPMs to integrate emergency preparedness as one of the CBCPM tasks.



31 CRC/C/GC/12 (July 2009) Committee on the Rights of the Child General Comment No.12, The Right of the Child to be Heard.

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