



Norwegian Ministry  
of Foreign Affairs



## INTERNATIONAL EXPERT CONSULTATION

# STRENGTHENING COMMUNITIES TO SECURE CHILDREN'S RIGHT TO FREEDOM FROM VIOLENCE

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Organized by the Office of the Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General on Violence against Children (SRSG) and Plan International, sponsored by the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and in close cooperation with the Government of Indonesia and the Government of Zambia

### Background

The scale of violence against children is immeasurable, not least because abuse and exploitation often remains invisible, and is not reported or documented. The groundbreaking United Nations Study on Violence against Children in 2006 (UN Study) estimated shocking levels of physical and sexual violence and exploitation across all regions of the world. In spite of various international, regional and national efforts since the study, the recent Global Survey on Violence against Children, undertaken by the SRSG on Violence against Children, reports that every year over 500 million to 1.5 billion children around the world are affected by some form of violence. Violence often has a lifelong impact on children. It affects their physical, emotional and social development and destroys families and communities. Beyond the harm caused to children, violence undermines the economic development of a society due to the long term negative consequences on physical and mental health, education and employment, and social harmony.

The UN study's recommendation that "all States develop a multi-faceted and systematic framework to respond to violence against children"<sup>1</sup> provided the impetus for a number of agencies to adopt a more comprehensive "systems approach" in their programme strategies for child protection.<sup>2</sup>

A systems approach recognizes the inter-connectedness of children's rights and the complex causes and consequences of violence. It seeks to contribute to comprehensive, lasting social change, led by governments that fulfill their primary responsibilities as duty bearers for all children in their country.

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<sup>1</sup> UN Secretary General, 2006. Report of the independent expert for the United Nations Study on Violence against Children. UN General Assembly.

<sup>2</sup> UNICEF, 2008-2013. Global Child Protection Strategy; Save the Children, 2009. Building Rights-Based National Child Protection Systems: A concept paper to support Save the Children's work; World Vision, 2011. A Systems Approach to Child Protection: Discussion paper.

The SRSG and Plan works with governments, civil society organizations, communities and children to promote the development and implementation of strong and sustainable national and community-based child protection systems.

There is as yet no internationally recognized definition of a systems approach. However, based on the emerging consensus in the sector, Plan defines a child protection system as:

***A comprehensive, interactive and sustainable series of functions and structures including laws, policies, and services (at all levels) within a country with the purpose of preventing and responding to all forms of violence against all children in that country.***

Community actors play a critical role in implementing child protection through identifying and monitoring at-risk children, mediating family and community disputes, and providing direct support for children in need of protection. They can also refer children and their families to more specialized services. Community structures may not only help prevent and respond to child protection issues, but also act as pressure groups on the state for political and budgetary actions. Community-based mechanisms can either function in isolation, or are linked with formal government and NGO services. They can be child protection specific, or inter-sectoral. Many community protection mechanisms rely on external contributions, while others depend entirely on internal resources.<sup>3</sup>

According to Plan's definition, a community-based child protection mechanism (CBCPM) ***is a network or group of individuals at community level who work in a coordinated manner towards protection of children from all forms of violence, in all settings. Such mechanisms can be endogenous or externally initiated and supported. They may be more formal or informal in their structure and functioning. CBCPMs are linked and contribute to national child protection systems.***

Regardless of whether the mechanisms are run by state or non-state actors, they're all required to respect and protect children's human rights standards.

## **Purpose**

In order to enhance learning and provide further guidance on how to strengthen community-based child protection mechanisms and ensure a link to the national child protection system, the SRSG and Plan will organize an international expert consultation that brings together experts from different regions for cross-regional learning and partnerships. It will benefit from previous developments, good practices within a variety of communities in different countries and regions.

## **Objectives**

Identify good models and practice of CBCPMs supported by various international and local NGOs in communities across different regions.

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<sup>3</sup> [http://www.unicef.org/wcaro/overview\\_6417.html](http://www.unicef.org/wcaro/overview_6417.html)

Provide an overview of legal frameworks for CBCPMs across different countries and regions

Formulate clear guidance on what communities and children can effectively do in sustainable CBCPMs.

Devise a plan to work towards regional, national and local implementation strategies for scaling up of relevant CBCPMs

The consultation will include discussion on (among others);

Explorations of national legislations versus CBCPMs and legal pluralism

Extent of linkages between CBCPMs and national child protection systems, including oversight mechanisms

How to support effective participation of all children in CBCPMs

Positive practices of CBCPMs supported by various organisations

cultural sensitivities CBCPMs

Ensuring sustainability for CBCPMs

Specific roles and responsibilities of Governments, INGOs, local NGOs, community leaders etc. in CBCPMs

### **Expected Outcomes**

1. A thematic report with concrete recommendations on how to strengthen CBCPM through law reform, policy development and scaling up of promising practices
2. Strategy for follow-up in different regions and at international level, which includes awareness raising and advocacy efforts, and continuing to build and leverage this international network
3. Guidelines for CBCPMs

### **Suggested participants**

1. Community leaders, including traditional and religious leaders
2. Civil society, including grass-roots organizations
3. Child protection professionals
4. Children's rights justice providers, paralegals
5. Government reps from national and local level

6. National human rights institutions on children's rights
7. INGOs
8. Regional child rights mechanisms and organizations
9. UNICEF, CRC Committee
10. Academia

Participants will have

- Experience from relevant law and policy processes, development and strengthening of a systems approach at national level;
- Experience from child sensitive counseling, reporting and complaints mechanisms at community level; and from oversight and monitoring mechanisms
- Hands-on experience from implementing CBCPM programs at the local (community) level

### **Time and Venue**

September 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> 2015. An optional field visit is scheduled on September 02<sup>nd</sup>. The consultation will be organized in **Klækken outside Oslo, Norway.**

### **Partnerships**

As of now Plan and the Office of the SRSG are committing to provide the necessary human resources in planning, organization and follow-up of the expert consultation, but we invite like-minded agencies/organizations to join hands in this consultation. Please let us know of your interests and in which way you would wish to partner in this initiative. The contact persons are [nidhi.pundhir@plan-international.org](mailto:nidhi.pundhir@plan-international.org) and [canicama@unicef.org](mailto:canicama@unicef.org).

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