



# SPEAK OUT-

# BE PROTECTED!

CREATING CHILD-SENSITIVE REPORTING MECHANISMS OF  
ALLEGED CASES OF VIOLENCE AGAINST CHILDREN



DEVELOPMENT  
FRAMEWORK:  
GUIDE FOR  
PRACTITIONERS





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Speak Out – Be Protected! Creating Child-Sensitive Reporting Mechanisms of Alleged Cases of Violence Against Children, Development Framework: Guide for Practitioners

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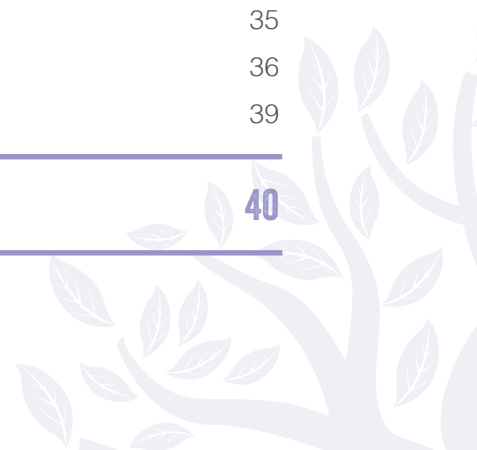




# CONTENTS

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<b>FOREWORD</b>	<b>i</b>
<hr/>	
<b>INTRODUCTION AND CONTEXT</b>	<b>1</b>
Background and purpose of the initiative	1
Linkages with other child protection initiatives	3
Methodology	5
Existing guidance on child-sensitive reporting mechanisms	6
Existing models and approaches	7
What children, families and communities say – outcomes of the consultations	8
<hr/>	
<b>PART 1: CONSIDERATIONS FOR REPORTING MECHANISMS – KEY DIMENSIONS</b>	<b>11</b>
Scope of the mechanism	12
Integration within child protection systems	13
Dimensions of child-sensitive reporting mechanisms	14
<hr/>	
<b>PART 2: THE FRAMEWORK FOR DEVELOPING CHILD-SENSITIVE REPORTING MECHANISMS – KEY DIMENSIONS ELABORATED</b>	<b>17</b>
1. Accessibility	19
2. Safety	20
3. Participatory and inclusive	21
4. Accountability	22
5. Responsiveness and flexibility	23
6. Confidentiality	24
7. Monitoring	25
<hr/>	
<b>RESOURCES</b>	<b>26</b>
<hr/>	
<b>APPENDIX: CONSULTATION TOOLS ON DEVELOPING CHILD-SENSITIVE REPORTING MECHANISMS</b>	<b>28</b>
TOOL 1 – Children aged 7-12 years	29
TOOL 2 – Children aged 13 years and over	32
TOOL 3 – Parents and community members	35
Recording template	36
Grow your own... PROTECTION TREE!	39
<hr/>	
<b>MOVING FORWARD</b>	<b>40</b>
<hr/>	





# FOREWORD

## FOREWORD BY THE UNITED NATIONS SPECIAL REPRESENTATIVE OF THE SECRETARY GENERAL ON VIOLENCE AGAINST CHILDREN

Counselling, complaint and reporting mechanisms constitute critical remedies to address breaches of children's rights, including violence in all its forms. Over the past years, the promotion of such mechanisms specifically for children has gained increasing relevance. This is due in part to the recognition of the right to accessible and effective remedies by core international human rights standards, and the significant jurisprudence of human rights treaty monitoring bodies in this area. It is also a result of the important political commitments that have been made to set in place such mechanisms as a matter of urgency – the agenda agreed upon at the Brazil World Congress against the Sexual Exploitation of Children and Adolescents illustrates this well, with its call upon States to establish, by 2013, an effective and accessible system for reporting, follow-up and support for child victims of sexual exploitation.

The need for such mechanisms for children to report incidents of violence was also an area of serious concern addressed by the UN Study on Violence against Children. The Study recommended their establishment, including through telephone helplines which children can access to report abuse, speak to a trained counsellor in confidence, and ask for support and advice. It underscored the need to make all children, including those in care and justice institutions, aware of the existence of complaint mechanisms. And it recommended that in every locality and every setting there should be well-publicized and easily accessible services to investigate reports of violence against children.

Despite the efforts made in many countries to provide such avenues for children to report incidents of violence, these initiatives remain piecemeal and are not always developed specifically for children. As a result, they are insufficient to secure children's protection from violence and fail to be envisaged as core components of a robust child protection system.

This is why I warmly welcome the initiative of the Plan International Asia Regional Office in developing resources to support the establishment of child-sensitive reporting mechanisms to help prevent and address violence against children.

Indeed, the establishment and strengthening of child-sensitive counselling, complaint and reporting mechanisms remains a key area of concern for my mandate as Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence against Children. Across regions, there is a lack of safe or trusted ways for children to report incidences of violence. Counselling, complaint and reporting services are frequently unavailable and, when they exist, they tend to lack the resources and skills to address children's concerns and promote children's healing and reintegration; moreover, children lack trust in them, fearing they will not be believed, and that they may endure further stigmatization, harassment, abandonment or reprisals. In most cases, children are unaware of the existence of such services, of where to go and whom to call to seek advice and assistance to overcome trauma and re-shape their lives. They feel deeply uncertain as to whether and how impunity can be fought.

Challenges are particularly felt in the case of sexual exploitation and abuse. These child rights violations are deeply associated with stigma, shame and secrecy. This pattern is aggravated by the fact that these offences are often committed by people children trust and know – within institutions, in schools and also in the home.

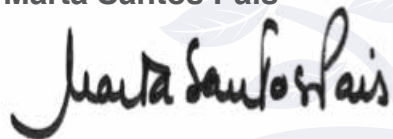
A joint report to the UN Human Rights Council on safe and child-sensitive counselling, complaint and reporting mechanisms that I prepared in collaboration with the Special Rapporteur on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography identified a number of recommendations to guide the establishment and work of such mechanisms: they should be established by law, and with a well-defined mandate; they should be guided by the best interests of the child and informed by children's experience and perspectives; and they should be well-publicized and made accessible to all children, without discrimination of any kind. Furthermore, they must guarantee children's safety, ensure confidentiality and provide prompt and speedy response and follow up.

These critical requirements are indispensable to help children feel empowered and supported, as well as reassured that they will be listened to in an ethical and safe manner; their testimonies will not be disclosed or misused, and their protection will not be put at risk. The guiding principles and the recommendations put forward by the joint report to the UN Human Rights Council also constitute an important reference for the process of ratification and implementation of the third Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on a Communications Procedure, which provides an international avenue of redress that complements the development of child-sensitive redress mechanisms at the national level.

Children who experience violence must have somewhere they can go to and someone who will listen to them if we are to dismantle the pervasive culture of silence, secrecy and social indifference that surrounds this phenomenon. That is the promise and the ambition of child-sensitive reporting mechanisms.

That ambition can be realised. As the cultural, legal and institutional frameworks within which child protection work must be carried out vary across different regions, the development of guidance and tools tailored to particular regions - such as the materials developed by the Plan International Asia Regional Office - is a crucial part of this process. I have no doubt that these materials will prove to be invaluable to those advocating for or involved with setting up child-sensitive mechanisms in the region and I wish Plan International every success with this vital work.

**Marta Santos Pais**



United Nations Special Representative of  
the Secretary General on Violence against Children





# INTRODUCTION AND CONTEXT

## BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE OF THE INITIATIVE

As highlighted in the United Nations Violence against Children study in 2006<sup>1</sup>, violence against children (VAC) occurs globally and takes place in all settings. Despite concerted efforts by many stakeholders and initiatives such as awareness raising, actions to develop community-based protection mechanisms<sup>2</sup> and strengthening national child protection systems, together with legal reforms, much of this violence remains hidden and/or is under reported.<sup>3</sup>

The reasons for this under reporting are varied and complex.<sup>4</sup> Violence and abuse is not always recognised or, even when identified, may not be perceived as requiring action. Violence can sometimes be regarded as “normal” or acceptable by communities. Children can be reluctant to disclose abuse because of a sense of shame and self-blame. These feelings may be compounded by a sense of loyalty towards the abusers, especially if the violence is perpetrated by a family member. Alternatively, children may not identify themselves in need of, or having a right to, protection.

Even when these barriers to disclosure<sup>5</sup> have been overcome, children may still not speak out because the system intended to protect them is inherently ‘unsafe’ and inadequate. Many children and their families are not able or willing to report acts of violence, either because they do not have trust in the protection or law enforcement systems or because of fears of stigma and revenge. In such cases, families may decide that a pragmatic approach is to accept some sort of compensation payment.

### ‘COMPLAINT’ OR ‘REPORT’?

*The term ‘complaint’ is frequently used in connection with the process of raising a child protection concern.*

*However, the word complaint can have connotations of disagreement and protesting, which sometimes can undermine the question of its validity.*

*For this reason, the more appropriate term ‘reporting’ is used in this guide when describing the process of identifying and sharing a child protection concern. This can be either by a direct report (i.e., from a child) or a third party report (i.e., from a child or adult concerning another child).*

<sup>1</sup> For further details, see [www.unviolencereport.org](http://www.unviolencereport.org)


<sup>2</sup> For example, see Plan ARO’s report 2014: Protection in Action: Regional evaluation of the effectiveness of community-based child protection mechanisms supported by Plan International in Asia.

<sup>3</sup> For more details and statistical information on reporting of child protection concerns see UNICEF (2014) Hidden in Plain Sight [http://www.unicef.org/publications/index\\_74865.html](http://www.unicef.org/publications/index_74865.html)

<sup>4</sup> Note these barriers to reporting are issues commonly cited – for more information on specific feedback from children consulted as part of the initiative see relevant section of this guide.

<sup>5</sup> In this report, ‘disclosure’ is the report of abuse / violence against a child – either by the child or by someone else – and irrespective of whether this is a deliberate disclosure (for example the decision to tell a trusted adult or service) or unintentional.





The increasing global emphasis on advocating for and contributing to the development of “fully functional child protection systems” recognises that appropriate child-sensitive reporting mechanisms are one of the necessary components of any child protection system. Indeed, the **UN Special Representative of the Secretary-General (SRSG) report on Safe and Child-Sensitive Reporting Mechanisms**<sup>6</sup> underscores the importance for children to have an accessible and appropriate way of raising concerns and reporting incidents. Further, it explains that responses should be child sensitive, with an emphasis on upholding the best interests of the child.

It is within this context that Plan International Asia Regional Office (Plan ARO) embarked upon the process of identifying the key factors and actions necessary to be able to develop and operationalise appropriate child-sensitive reporting mechanisms.

The overall objective of the initiative was to produce a generic framework for developing child-sensitive mechanisms for reporting alleged cases of violence against children, which can be adapted for use in different countries and tailored to the specific contexts.

## ‘CHILD FRIENDLY’ OR ‘CHILD SENSITIVE’?



*The terms ‘child friendly’ and ‘child sensitive’ are often used interchangeably.*

*A number of child friendly versions of reporting mechanisms, mainly associated with organisations’ own child safeguarding reporting procedures, have been produced.*

*The existence of a child-friendly version of a mechanism does not mean that the mechanism is child sensitive. It may merely be a translation of a highly unsuitable mechanism expressed in a way that children can understand. This means that the mechanism itself may not be specifically designed to meet children’s needs but instead just be written in language that children can understand.*

*In this guide we use the term ‘child sensitive’ when considering reporting mechanisms to underscore that the whole process from the development to the implementation and monitoring of the mechanism must be done in ways that ensure that the needs of the child and their best interests are the central consideration. This includes ensuring the mechanism is safe and appropriate for children to use.*

The aims were to:

- **Identify simple and user-friendly processes** through which children and their peers (and families) can raise child protection concerns and report to the respective mandatory child protection agencies and services, or trusted community groups/institutions/persons, including Plan International and other INGOs;
- **Serve as a resource** for those responding to concerns and reports to ensure that these responses are appropriate and safe for children;
- **Provide guidance** to those advocating for the adoption of child-sensitive reporting mechanisms as part of the development of national child protection systems in terms of what is necessary and should be considered.

<sup>6</sup> Joint report of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence against Children and the Special Rapporteur on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography, Safe and child-sensitive counselling, complaint and reporting mechanisms to address violence against children, 2012 ([http://srsg.violenceagainstchildren.org/sites/default/files/publications\\_final/web\\_safe\\_final.pdf](http://srsg.violenceagainstchildren.org/sites/default/files/publications_final/web_safe_final.pdf)).

# LINKAGES WITH OTHER CHILD PROTECTION INITIATIVES

The focus on child-sensitive reporting mechanisms is the continuation of efforts by Plan ARO over the past years in strengthening the capacity and capability of Plan International Country Offices in the region to be able to:

1. **Advocate** for appropriate child protection systems at the national level, and
2. **Support and implement** child protection programmes that sit within and contribute at the community level towards the enhancement of national child protection systems.

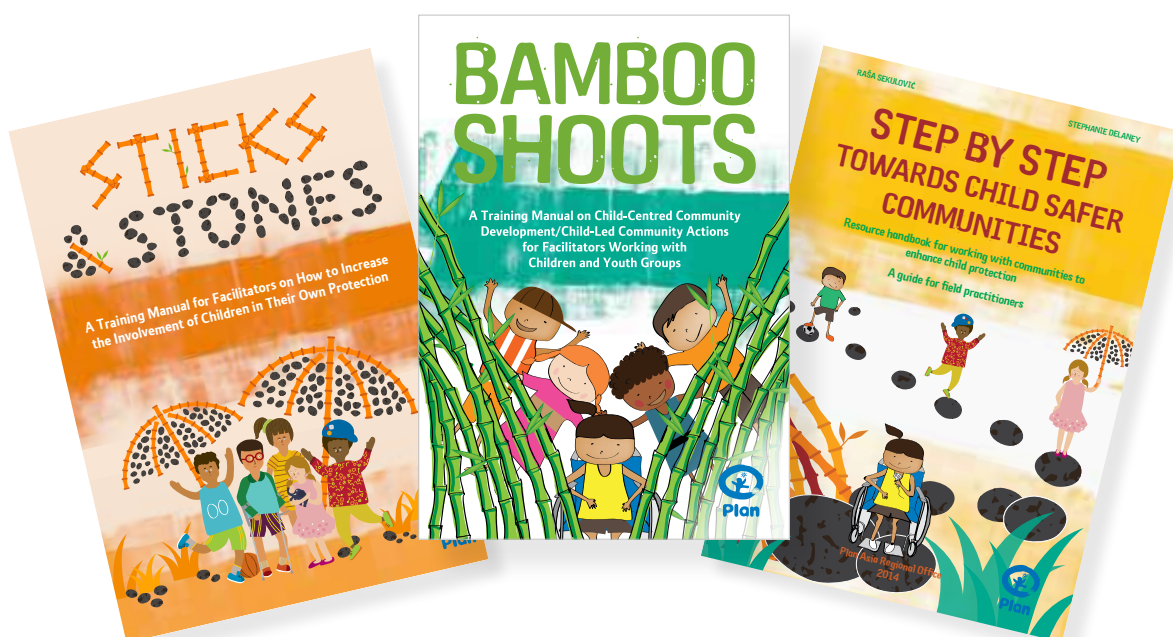
This work includes developing tools and guidelines for children and those working with them.

This is in line with Plan International's Global and Regional Child Protection Strategies and is consistent with Plan International's Child-Centred Community Development (CCCD) approach adopted across all programmes. The emphasis is placed on the participation of children, in particular through the establishment and support of Children's Clubs in programme areas.

In many ways, previous initiatives have set the foundation for work on child-sensitive reporting mechanisms by:

**Raising children's awareness of their own rights:** The *Bamboo Shoots*<sup>7</sup> manual on Child-Centred Community Development/Child-led Community Actions is a resource for staff working with children to raise children's awareness of their rights generally and identify ways in which they can be involved in the development of their communities;

**Providing information and resources to children:** Recognising the importance and right of children to have access to appropriate information and to support Plan International Country Offices in creating awareness with children, a set of child-friendly materials on child protection was developed with the involvement of children;<sup>8</sup>



<sup>7</sup> Plan International Asia Regional Office (2011) 'Bamboo Shoots' - Manual on Child Centred Community Development; Bangkok, Thailand.

<sup>8</sup> Plan International Asia Regional Office, Violence against Children Action Booklet, December 2012 and Your Personal Guide to Understanding, December 2012.



**Identifying abuse and involving children in protection:** The theme of protection was raised in **Bamboo Shoots** as one of the many rights which children are entitled to and the information provided to children are further elaborated within **Sticks and Stones**,<sup>9</sup> a training manual for facilitators on increasing the involvement of children in their own protection. This explores, in detail, how children can identify abuse and the importance of speaking out, together with steps children can take to keep themselves safer.<sup>10</sup>

**Encouraging the support and response of communities:** Recognising the critical role of communities in protecting children, the **Step by Step**<sup>11</sup> handbook resource identifies how to ensure community-based child protection mechanisms are functional, safe and contribute towards efforts to protecting children.

Other policies and programming initiatives have also raised awareness of the importance of protecting children and preventing abuse, including responding to concerns in ways that are supportive, accountable and suitable for children (for example, Plan International's own internal child protection/safeguarding policy<sup>12</sup> and the incorporation of child protection within Disaster Risk Reduction strategies). In addition, global campaigns such as Plan International's "Because I am a Girl"<sup>13</sup> have focused on the vulnerabilities of particular groups of children.



<sup>9</sup> Plan International Asia Regional Office (2013) 'Sticks and Stones' – Training Manual for Facilitators on How to Increase the Involvement of Children in their own Protection; Bangkok, Thailand.

<sup>10</sup> Of course recognising that while children can be involved in their own protection, the ultimate responsibility for the protection of children remains with adults.

<sup>11</sup> Plan International Asia Regional Office (2015) 'Step by Step' – Guide to Engaging Communities in Child Protection; Bangkok, Thailand.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>12</sup> Say 'Yes' to Keeping Children Safe.

<sup>13</sup> For more information on the campaign see <https://plan-international.org/what-we-do/because-i-am-girl>

# METHODOLOGY

Development of the Framework for child-sensitive reporting mechanisms took place over several months between October 2015 and March 2016. This process included three key stages:

## *1. Mapping and analysis of the existing models and approaches*

A desk review was undertaken to examine and compare existing models and procedures within the Asia region, together with principle documentation from other regions/globally that could inform the initiative. Information was accessed online, supplemented by local procedures submitted by Plan International Country Offices.

## *2. Consultation process*

In order to ensure that the proposed mechanism is truly child sensitive and in recognition of the right of children to participate in issues that affect them, children, families and communities were consulted through a series of focus group discussions (FGDs) held in seven selected Plan International Country Programmes. Countries included were invited to participate based on obtaining a diversity of views: both South and South East Asian countries at more and less advanced stages of the development of the national child protection systems.<sup>14</sup>

A set of tools (see the Appendix) was developed for the consultations. The consultations explored:

- **The barriers** – both actual and perceived – to children disclosing/reporting violence, from the perspectives of children and adults.
- **Suggestions** regarding what would constitute child-sensitive procedures and key factors to be considered.

## *3. Development and validation of the Framework*

Based on the outputs from the review of existing modules and practices, and the consultations, a draft Framework was developed. This was reviewed and validated during the Plan International Asia Regional Child Protection Network Meeting in February 2016.

This guide contains the Framework produced following the consultation during the Regional Child Protection Network Meeting.

Following production of this Framework, it is planned that it will be piloted in the study countries in order to identify further refinements necessary. This roll-out is planned during 2016.

It is recognised that the development of child-sensitive reporting mechanisms and responses is challenging and can take time. For example, in some countries a key necessity may be advocating with stakeholders and decision makers for the introduction of child-sensitive procedures, while in other countries harmonisation and refinement of approaches already in place will be important. It will also be essential to evaluate the different stages of development and elaboration of child protection systems. This includes the incorporation and compatibility of structures and frameworks (where these exist) established within country to respond to protection concerns.

<sup>14</sup> Discussed later in this guide.

# EXISTING GUIDANCE ON CHILD-SENSITIVE REPORTING MECHANISMS

Despite the recognition that appropriate child-sensitive reporting mechanisms are a necessary component of any child protection system, relatively little guidance is given as to what that means in practice. Nor is there any in-depth exploration of the necessary features of such mechanisms.<sup>15</sup>

The lack of such guidance is noteworthy, especially given the importance placed on the identification and reporting of child protection concerns and in developing referral mechanisms as part of systems development.<sup>16</sup> This lack of guidance needs to be taken into account alongside the requirement to consider 'the best interest of the child' (UNCRC, Article 3) to which countries in the Asia region are signatories. It is difficult to see how countries, particularly those with embryonic national child protection systems and lower capacities, can be expected to develop comprehensive child-sensitive reporting mechanisms without a detailed examination of what needs to be considered in doing so.

The most significant publication so far which explores child-sensitive reporting mechanisms in any meaningful way, highlighting the dimensions, dynamics and challenges is the UN SRSG Report "Safe and child-sensitive counselling, complaint and reporting mechanisms to address violence against children".<sup>17</sup>



While scant guidance exists regarding child-sensitive reporting mechanisms as a whole, a number of publications and resources have been developed which focus on associated elements of child-sensitive reporting, such as:

- **Awareness raising** of children's rights (for example Bamboo Shoots: Manual on Child-Centred Community Development/Child-led Community Action);<sup>18</sup>
- **Professional responses** to parts of the process such as interviewing children (for example the materials Caring for children – case management and child friendly interviewing developed in Pakistan);<sup>19</sup>
- **Information for children** in child friendly formats on how to protect themselves, including increasing recognition of violence, rights to protection<sup>20</sup> and the need to speak out;<sup>21</sup>
- **Sensitisation of communities** to change their attitudes towards violence against children and identification of their role in ensuring children are protected in appropriate ways (for example Step by Step – Guide to engaging communities in child protection).<sup>22</sup>

<sup>15</sup> Numerous publications mention the need for appropriate reporting mechanisms, either explicitly or by implication, and some note particular aspects of such mechanisms. For example, Save the Children's publication 'Why effective national child protection systems are important' includes a recommendation that 'Easy access for children and adults to protection services [exists] at the community level. In particular children must know about them and what they can offer in the way of help.'

<sup>16</sup> Anecdotal evidence from knowledge of child protection programming initiatives in the region from Plan ARO, Plan International Asia Regional CP Network and the consultant.

<sup>17</sup> Joint report of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence against Children and the Special Rapporteur on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography 2012.

<sup>18</sup> Plan International Asia Regional Office (2011) 'Bamboo Shoots' - Manual on Child Centred Community Development; Bangkok, Thailand

<sup>19</sup> Produced by UNICEF Pakistan 2008.

<sup>20</sup> Plan International Asia Regional Office have developed a suit of materials in child friendly formats – for more information see the Resources Section of this guide.

<sup>21</sup> Save the Children, 2006 – see <http://resourcecentre.savethechildren.se/library/safe-you-and-safe-me>

<sup>22</sup> Plan International Asia Regional Office 2015.

# EXISTING MODELS AND APPROACHES



Across the region, various approaches have been developed that aim to facilitate the reporting of concerns by children (and adults) and to promote responses which are appropriate and child sensitive. Not all models are comprehensive – in some only principles or elements are evident. These can be seen as emerging good practices.

Awareness raising on children's rights and the participation of children in processes are seen as an important elements in encouraging children to use reporting mechanisms. For example, the 'No, Go, Tell' approach, which is used by several countries, aims to help children to identify protection concerns, recognise their right to be safe and report any concerns<sup>23</sup>

In most countries where community-based child protection mechanisms (CBCPMs) have been established, attempts are made to ensure that these include an appropriate way for children to report. This is typically through those operating the mechanism (for example, community leaders or child protection focal points).<sup>24</sup> Similar structures have been developed in school programmes so that children can raise concerns.

In South Asia, Children and Women's Desks have been established to report the concerns of children and women. In Sri Lanka, there is a mandatory requirement to establish these desks in all police stations and for them to be staffed 24 hours. However, observations from the field are that there are gaps in procedures and processes, and more work is needed to make these desks child sensitive. This highlights the need to ensure that the development of reporting mechanisms takes into account the broader protection framework and systems which exist in a country. Child-sensitive reporting mechanisms cannot be developed in isolation.



'Accountability boxes' (also called 'happy/sad boxes') have been introduced in a number of countries, particularly in schools, as a way for children to report concerns. These allow children to submit reports. However, their use can be limited if children are not confident that their concerns will be responded to in a timely manner or if the boxes are located in areas where children can be observed.

With the exception of Myanmar and Lao PDR, all countries in the Asia region have a child helpline. While in theory these should provide an avenue for children to make reports in a manner that is sensitive to their needs, this may not be the case, as the operationalisation of the helpline will determine the extent to which it is child sensitive. For example, some helplines may run for limited periods of time while others may address only specific needs (such as trafficked children). The approach to running the helpline, in terms of the attitude and skills of the workers/volunteers, may vary and the understanding of what constitutes the child's best interests may differ.<sup>25</sup>

One example of an attempt to develop a more comprehensive model of a child-sensitive reporting mechanism is from Bangladesh. This mechanism was based on consultations with children, families and communities regarding appropriate ways for children to report their concerns. The findings from the consultation were then developed as a flow chart showing what issues children could raise, and who they could report their concerns to. The flow chart has been displayed in locations where children and young people congregate, for example at schools, playgrounds, child/youth clubs, Union Parishad, the Plan International Country Office and other visible places in the community.<sup>26</sup>

<sup>23</sup> For more information on 'No, Go, Tell' see 'Sticks and Stones'.

<sup>24</sup> Note similar methods exist in other regions – for example in SSA, mother and children's clubs act as a community reporting mechanism.

<sup>25</sup> For more information, see [www.childhelpline.org](http://www.childhelpline.org). Concerns raised by Plan International staff in Sri Lanka.

<sup>26</sup> Since this is a relatively new initiative no monitoring has taken place regarding its effectiveness, although this is planned.

# WHAT CHILDREN, FAMILIES AND COMMUNITIES SAY – OUTCOMES OF THE CONSULTATIONS

As mentioned, a number of consultations were undertaken with children and adults. These were not intended to be definitive, but rather representative of the region. Hence, they included a diverse range of populations, representing:

- Both South and South East Asia;
- Urban and rural locations;
- Contexts with more developed national child protection systems and those with developing/ embryonic systems;
- More and less economically developed countries;
- Areas where Plan International Country Offices are already engaged in programming and areas where Plan International has only recently begun working.

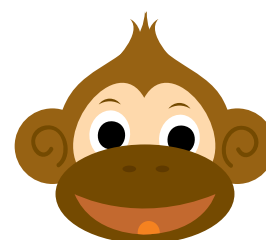
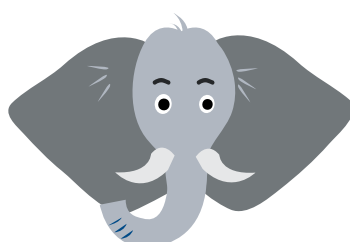
Seven countries (Bangladesh, India, Indonesia, Pakistan, the Philippines, Timor-Leste and Vietnam) were involved in the study. Over 200 children and more than 100 adults were consulted, of which approximately 60 per cent were female and 40 per cent male.

Perhaps not surprisingly, in areas where Plan International has been working for some time compared to areas where Plan International has not worked, there was a higher level of knowledge regarding child abuse and protection. What is most significant is that, not disregarding different levels of pre-existing knowledge and despite variances in contexts, the feedback and themes emerging across all sites were remarkably similar.



**Barriers** to children reporting situations of violence and abuse included expected issues such as lack of trust, fear of retribution, loyalty and not recognising abuse. Additional issues identified included:

- Considering the issue private or a family matter;
- Wanting to avoid burdening parents or creating conflict between community members;
- Being afraid of the consequences of speaking out;
- Children lacking skills to explain what is happening;
- Ideas that children would not be believed because of their age.



**Groups of children who were regarded as especially isolated** did not universally include children with disabilities or girls but, instead, younger children and those from ethnic minorities were highlighted. Children who are married were commonly regarded as an especially vulnerable and isolated group in all settings.

**Common critical actors for protection** identified included:

- Schools/teachers;
- Family members (including extended family);
- Community leaders.

In areas where CBCPMs have been established, these were also cited as an important vehicle for children to report concerns.

Children highlighted the role of other children in the reporting process, for example through being able to report initially to another child or having support through the process by another child/children. Significantly, in only one country were helplines specifically mentioned as a way of reporting or getting support.<sup>27</sup>

**Suggestions for ways to increase reporting** included:

- Raising awareness of how to report;
- Having a range of ways to report (accountability/letter boxes, children's groups, CBCPMs);
- More visible action taken against perpetrators;
- More rapid response to reports in order to build trust in the system, etc.

In almost all children's consultations, an increased role of children, for example through peer support or 'reporting points' in Children's Clubs and child focal points, was recommended as a way to encourage reporting.

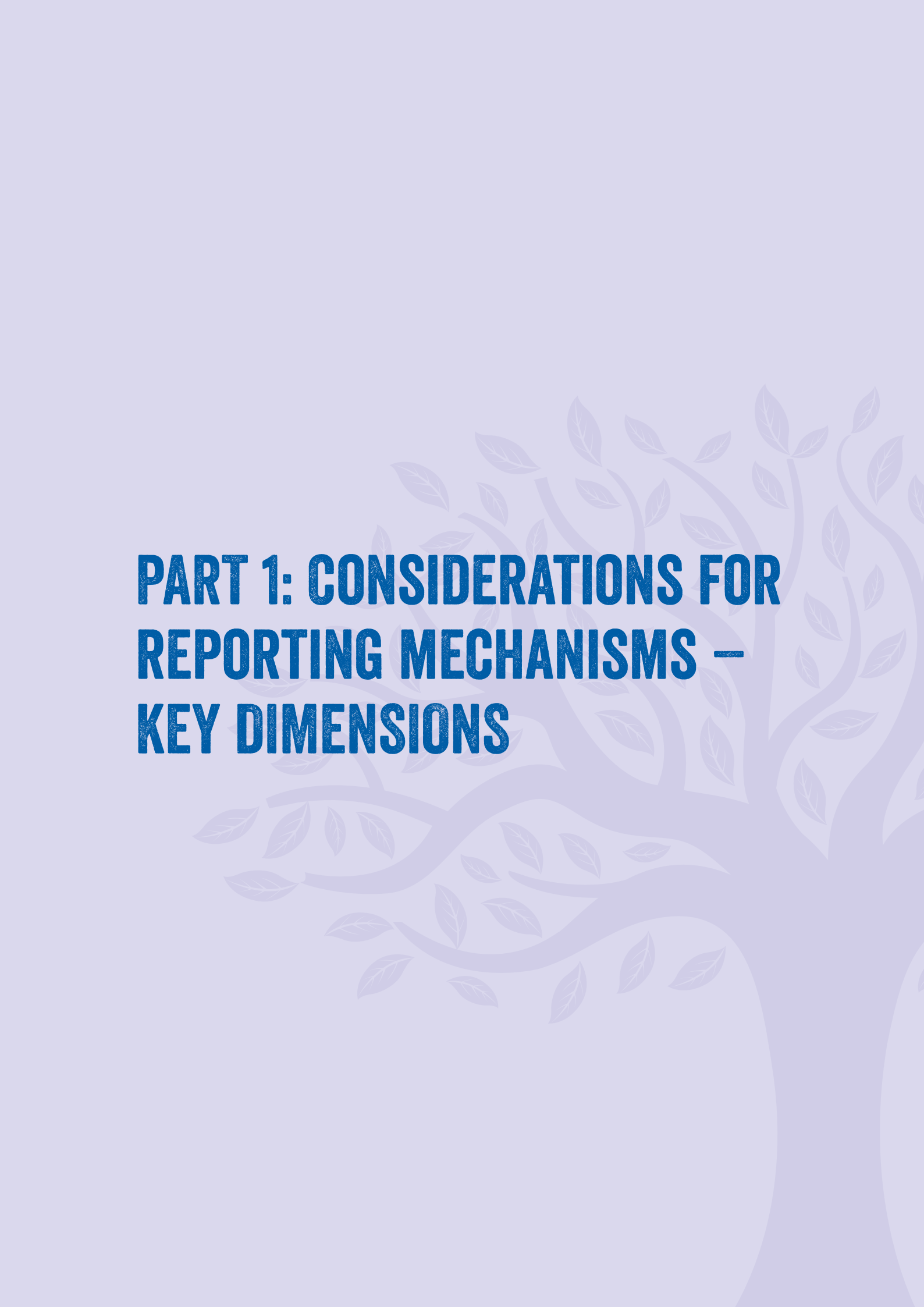


<sup>27</sup> This does not mean that helplines are not effective in the region or cannot play an important role in protecting children, as they are a key part of any child-sensitive reporting mechanism, but it does mean that they were not mentioned in the consultations when children and adults were asked how children could report concerns.





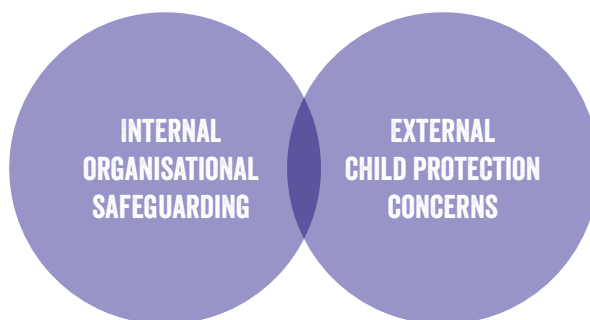




**PART 1: CONSIDERATIONS FOR  
REPORTING MECHANISMS –  
KEY DIMENSIONS**

# SCOPE OF THE MECHANISM

When considering child protection reporting mechanisms, two domains of protection need to be identified and reporting disaggregated,<sup>28</sup> although of course there are areas of overlap:



**1. Responding to internal safeguarding related concerns:** Internal implementation of organisational child protection policy and safeguarding procedures relates to protecting children from acts (and omissions) by Plan International staff and associates. These may be issues that have considerations within the child protection system of the country or can be other matters which do not require intervention by the State, but which nevertheless constitute a breach of the organisation's Code of Conduct or operating procedures.

For example, the sexual abuse of a child by a staff member would be a situation where a referral would be necessary to the appropriate child protection agency within the framework of domestic law, but a concern raised alleging that a worker discriminated against a particular child, or failed to report a child protection concern in the community, in the absence of a legal requirement, would most likely be only a matter for internal action/discipline.

**2. Responding to external child protection concerns:** External work with communities, authorities and other partners in order to protect children relates to responding to concerns about specific incidents of violence and abuse against children which originate from the community and by a range of different perpetrators.



From a practical perspective, it is easier to introduce and ensure compliance with and good practice relating to reporting mechanisms when considering safeguarding within an organisation (including appropriate referral mechanisms), as there is greater control. Although most child protection/safeguarding policies do require that referrals are made to external child welfare agencies/police where required,<sup>29</sup> relatively little work has been placed on ensuring these external agencies are able to respond in appropriate ways (in comparison to raising awareness and orientation on internal safeguarding).

In addition, the emphasis on internal safeguarding is also driven by organisational requirements, such as issues of accountability and compliance with domestic legislation in countries where INGOs are based<sup>30</sup> and/or donor requirements.

<sup>28</sup> Please note that the scope of the SRSG report is more extensive than framework for the response mechanism as it also includes communication made under the Optional Protocol to the UNCRC in relation to complaints about the violation of children's rights. This was outside the scope of the initiative.

<sup>29</sup> For further information, see [www.keepingchildrensafe.org](http://www.keepingchildrensafe.org)

<sup>30</sup> For example, in the UK where Plan International's Headquarters is located there are specific legal requirements under UK domestic law which place obligations on organisations working with children in other countries to take steps to ensure that children are appropriately safeguarded and protected.

# INTEGRATION WITHIN CHILD PROTECTION SYSTEMS

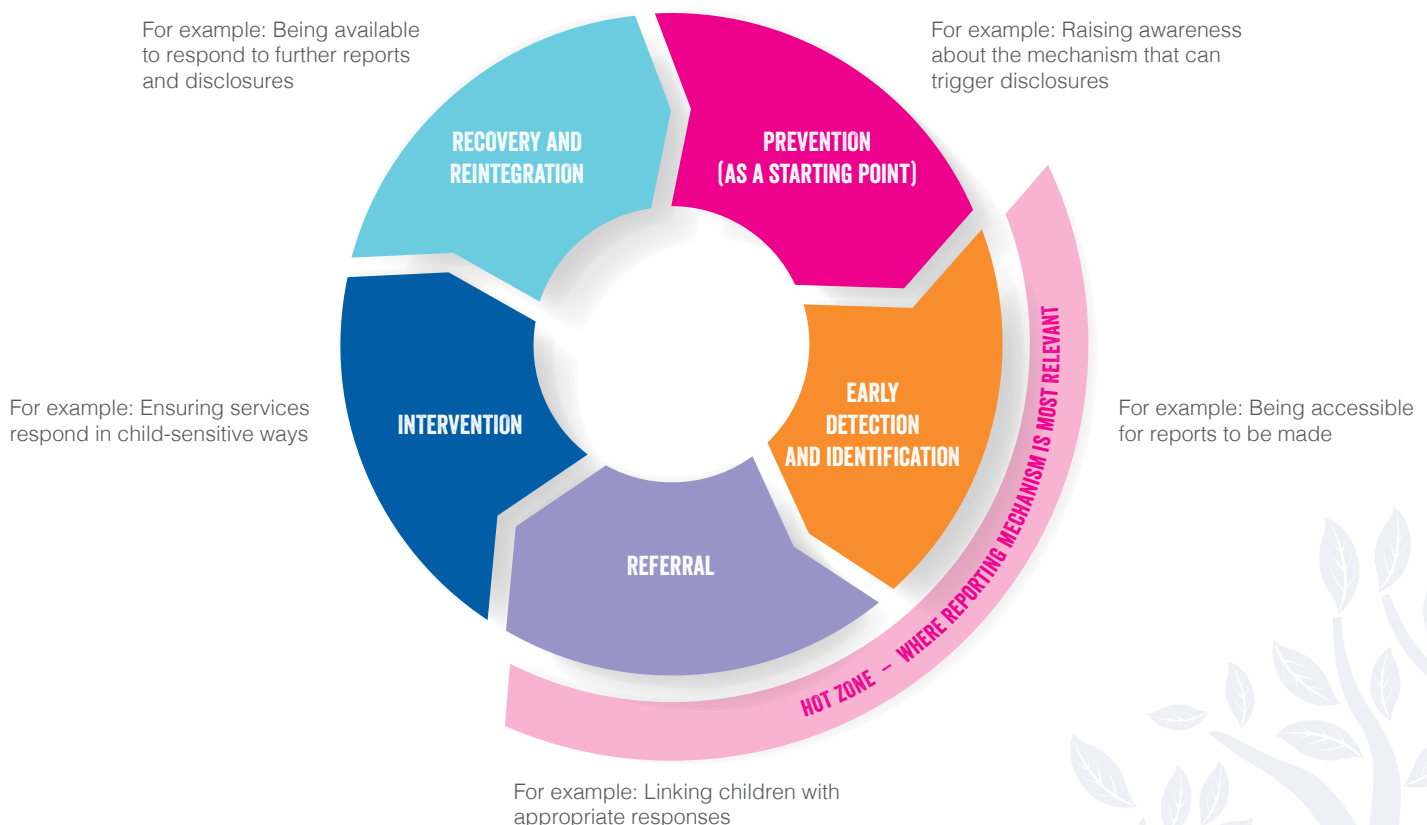
Both through the literature review and the models/approaches identified as part of the mapping, a key message that emerged was that child-sensitive reporting mechanisms should not be developed in isolation or be viewed as an outcome in itself. A child-sensitive reporting mechanism must be developed as part of the child-sensitive protection system within which the mechanism is expected to operate.

The mechanism can operate at the community, district/provincial or national level, depending on the context, but it must be situated within the national child protection system if it is to be effective and functional. In practice, this means that all parts of the reporting mechanism and responding process must be connected to wider child protection actions. For example, developing a reporting mechanism must take into account the implications of a child raising a report, including the quality of response services and the ability of such services to protect, and where necessary either advocating for or implementing changes.



## LOCATING REPORTING MECHANISMS WITHIN THE PROTECTION CYCLE

Traditionally, the connections between reporting mechanisms with the Cycle of Protection (shown below) are conceptualised as occurring during two main stages: early detection and identification, and referral. While it is true that these are the stages within the protection cycle where reporting mechanisms are most relevant, in fact reporting mechanisms are linked to all stages of the cycle. Where comprehensive and sensitive reporting mechanisms are developed they are also linked within all aspects of the cycle. In this way, the existence of a child-sensitive reporting mechanism can contribute positively to the protection cycle as shown through the examples in the figure.



# DIMENSIONS OF CHILD-SENSITIVE REPORTING MECHANISMS

To be child sensitive, any mechanism, regardless of the level at which it functions, must simultaneously address a number of interrelated factors. It must be located within the legal framework for child protection and linked to the child protection system (or procedures where a system does not exist) where the mechanism operates.



## Dimension 1: Accessibility

The mechanism must be accessible to **all** children that it targets, including girls and those with special needs or who may be especially vulnerable and/or marginalised within the environment it operates. Linked to accessibility is the issue of **visibility** and awareness raising, since even the most child-sensitive reporting mechanism will not function if children (and others) do not know it exists.

Careful thought must be given to **how** children can report and if this is in line with their preferences and capacities. For example, many countries in Asia have a child helpline but, if this is only operational during the daytime when many children should/would be at school, then it cannot be considered fully accessible to all children. Some structures that attempt to make the mechanism accessible may have the opposite effect. For example, 'accountability boxes' where children can post a note to report a concern and seek help cannot be considered accessible if they are located in places where their use might be monitored or supervised (such as in a head teacher's office) or where there are high levels of illiteracy.

## Dimension 2: Safety

To ensure both the physical and psychological wellbeing of the child, it is critical that the mechanism 'as a whole' is safe for children and others to use. This means that concerns can be safely raised and managed, **and** that the response does not cause harm to the child, such as further trauma or re-victimisation. This includes consideration of the immediate needs and longer-term care requirements, which may change over time according to circumstances (i.e., the continuum of care).

The response from those handling the report and procedures for investigation and interviewing needs to be child sensitive. This is essential if children and others are to feel confident in using the mechanism. A critical feature of safety is the ability of staff/other adults to be able to respond in appropriate ways. This might require considerable capacity building.

## Dimension 3: Participatory and inclusive

In accordance with children's rights, and more importantly to ensure that any actions taken are child centred, the participation of children must be embedded in the development and operation of the reporting mechanism. This includes both in the design and monitoring of the mechanism generally, and specifically in relation to individual children being able to participate in decisions regarding their own situation. Participation processes must be inclusive so that all children are able to take part, including those from marginalised and vulnerable groups, such as girls, younger children and children with disabilities.

## Dimension 4: Accountability

Roles and responsibilities need to be identified so that a consistent approach can be guaranteed, and to ensure that the process is transparent. Children and families need to understand who is responsible for what actions, and what actions are likely to be taken. This is important for people to feel confident in using the mechanism.

### Dimension 5: Responsiveness and flexibility

Linked to accountability, the reporting mechanism needs to identify time frames for key actions. For example, specifying the expected time between a report being made and action being taken. Undue delay may place children at increased risk, but, moreover, when a child reports a concern and no action is taken this can have two main effects. Firstly, the child can perceive that they do not deserve protection and/or that what is happening is normal. Secondly children can lose confidence in the idea that they can be protected and as a result not report any concerns in the future.

While responsibilities and procedures need to be established, the mechanism needs to have scope so that the operationalisation of these can be based upon individual circumstances and changing conditions. A list of rules to be 'checked off' is not sufficient. The underlying principle of protecting children in a child-centred way must be the primary consideration at all times. For example, lists of actions for specific categories of children or abuses must be able to be adjusted according to the individual needs of the child and their preferences.

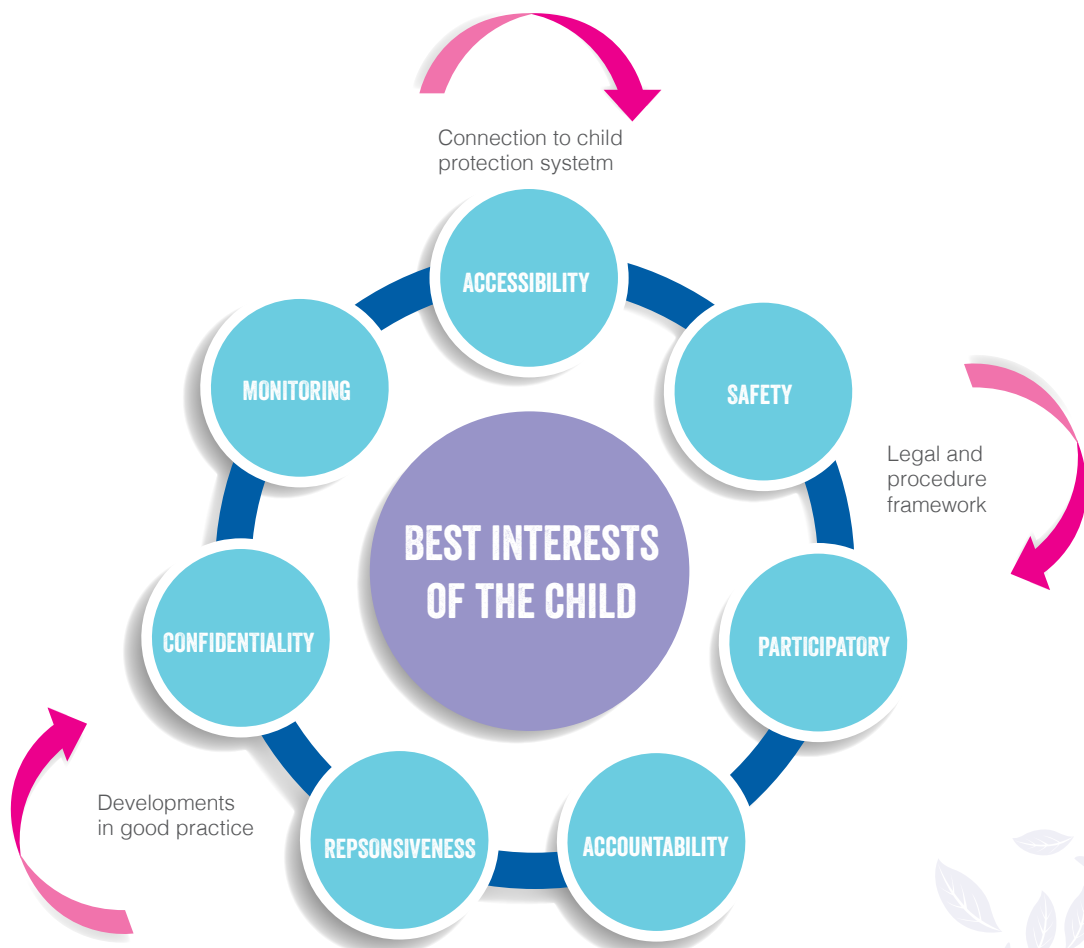
### Dimension 6: Confidentiality

Confidentiality is closely linked to safety, but also to other issues, such as privacy, in order to ensure that factors such as stigma and discrimination do not blight children's lives. In practice, this means having clear protocols for sharing information with other agencies. A distinction needs to be made between keeping information private and secrecy – and any exceptions to these rules need to be clearly defined.

### Dimension 7: Monitoring

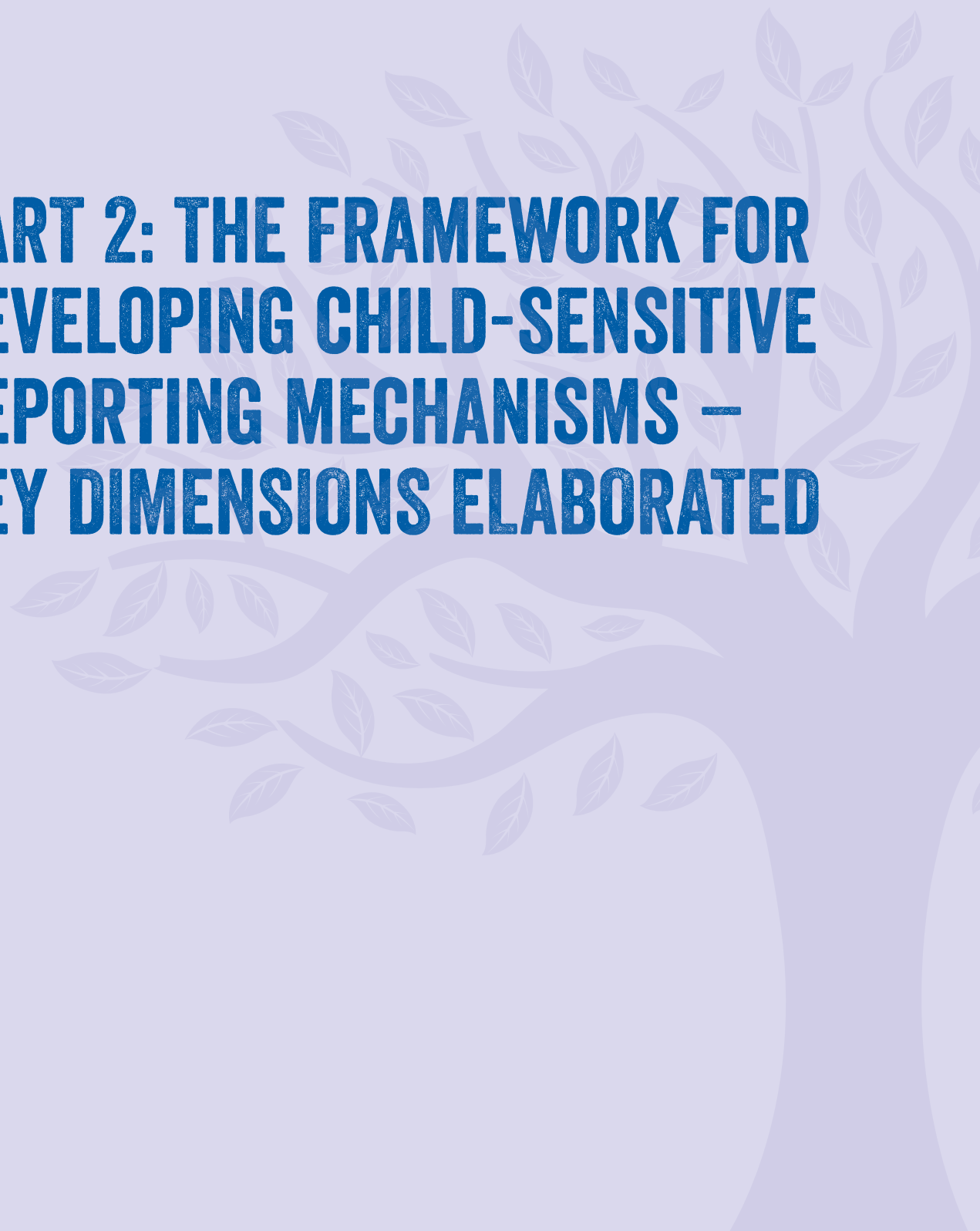
Monitoring of the mechanism and its refinement based on feedback must be considered. This includes ensuring that actions take place. Processes for monitoring should ensure that the views of children who have had personal experience using the mechanism are taken into account.

Central to all decisions and a consistent thread that runs through all dimensions is that the mechanism must be guided at all times by the principle of the 'best interests of the child'.









**PART 2: THE FRAMEWORK FOR  
DEVELOPING CHILD-SENSITIVE  
REPORTING MECHANISMS –  
KEY DIMENSIONS ELABORATED**



Plan ARO has created a Framework for developing child-sensitive reporting mechanisms based on the key dimensions that must be present and addressed for a mechanism to be considered child sensitive:

- Dimension 1: Accessibility
- Dimension 2: Safety
- Dimension 3: Participatory and inclusive
- Dimension 4: Accountability
- Dimension 5: Responsiveness and flexibility
- Dimension 6: Confidentiality
- Dimension 7: Monitoring

The original idea had been to propose a prototype template for a reporting mechanism that could be adapted to suit a variety of different operating contexts. However, it quickly became apparent that this would not be feasible given the range of options and the diverse situations within countries. Indeed, developing a prototype could be seen to work against the need for the mechanism to be flexible.

Therefore, we worked on defining what it is that the Framework needed to do. The Framework seeks, in a practical and concrete way, to:

- Identify important considerations and key questions for each dimension;
- Highlight important actions, especially those that may be necessary with the wider range of child protection systems;
- Suggest indicators to demonstrate that each dimension is met.

**It is important to emphasise that the Framework is a guide for action, not a list of requirements or procedures that must be followed.** Given that the dimensions are interconnected, some factors appear in more than one dimension.

For the purpose of the Framework, the term 'actors' is used to describe those involved in the operationalisation of the mechanism. Depending on the specifics of the mechanism, this can be staff and frontline workers (with particular roles), members of the community, volunteers or children.

**Before starting**, and especially before involving children in any activities, including consultations, it is essential that a **risk assessment** is carried out and strategies put in place to minimise/remove those risks identified. This might include, for example, awareness raising and advocacy with key partners.<sup>31</sup> This risk assessment should be reviewed and updated on an ongoing basis.



<sup>31</sup> Note this is both in accordance with Plan International's own internal safeguarding procedures and consistent with good practice.

## 1. ACCESSIBILITY – ALL CHILDREN CAN USE THE MECHANISM

*The reporting mechanism is made known to all children and can be used by all children, including those from marginalised groups. It enables children to make a report and seek help in ways that are appropriate to their age, individual circumstances and living environment.*

Key questions / considerations	Important actions	Suggested indicators
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Which children are marginalised or vulnerable, including those in remote areas?</li> <li>• What are the capacities of actors to respond appropriately and in a timely manner according to the child's age and development?</li> <li>• How can it be ensured that children are consulted about their preferred ways of communication and best means of access? (for example, by mobile phone, in person, etc.)</li> <li>• Where to locate access/referral points and how to ensure its availability?</li> <li>• What is the availability of training and capacity building for actors?</li> <li>• What is the best way to raise awareness of the mechanism with children, adults and stakeholders?</li> <li>• Are there any language barriers to overcome?</li> <li>• Are there any differences in terms of social norms/cultural issues that need to be addressed?</li> <li>• Do any cross-border issues (trafficking) need to be taken into account? If so, how?</li> <li>• Are the necessary resources in place for promoting and developing the system?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Awareness raising with adults and children regarding the mechanism and its purpose/function – this includes the development of appropriate materials</li> <li>• Advocating for additional resources to make/keep the mechanism operational</li> <li>• Identifying key/possible actors and create links between them</li> <li>• Capacity building for actors on appropriate responses and actions</li> <li>• Liaising with mobile phone/technology providers (if relevant) and child helplines</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Children are aware of the mechanism and how to access it</li> <li>• There are a range of ways for children to make reports – in ways that 'make sense' for them</li> <li>• Children can make reports confidentially – i.e., without others knowing they are making a report</li> <li>• Children can seek help at appropriate times, according to their circumstances</li> <li>• The response to children is appropriate and child centred</li> <li>• All children are able to access regardless of geographical and other limitations (age, sex, disability, etc.)</li> </ul>

## 2. SAFETY – ENSURING PHYSICAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL WELLBEING

*The reporting mechanism does not put children or their families at increased risk as a result of making a report AND the child is not placed at additional risk through the ways that response are organised and services are provided to children.*

Key questions / considerations	Important actions	Suggested indicators
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Are there any specific risks that children/adults may face as a result of making a report? (e.g., revenge/stigma)</li> <li>• Do actors understand the risks that children can face as a result of making a report? If not, how can awareness be raised?</li> <li>• Do actors have the capacity to respond appropriately and in a timely manner according to the child's age and development? If not, what steps need to be taken to ensure this capacity?</li> <li>• Can services that are referred to respond in ways that are appropriate and child sensitive? If not, what alternatives exist/ actions are necessary to develop this capacity?</li> <li>• Are there protocols/procedures regarding confidentiality and the sharing of information?</li> <li>• Has a Code of Conduct/protocol been developed so actors have a shared understanding of appropriate behaviour and response?</li> <li>• What supervision and support of those working in the mechanism and receiving reports can be provided?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Advocating for policy and practice change, and development of appropriate response services</li> <li>• Training and capacity building for actors</li> <li>• Development of safe referral mechanisms and pathways</li> <li>• Developing shared guidelines/ protocols – and capacity building/ orientating on these</li> <li>• Identifying/developing options to ensure children receive protection and support in a timely way</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Procedures are in place to secure immediate protection of child (and family) where necessary</li> <li>• The response to children is appropriate and child centred and does not further traumatise or distress the child</li> <li>• Children are able to participate in making decisions about the best way to be protected and actions to be taken</li> <li>• Information is kept confidential and shared on need-to-know basis only – exceptions to this are clearly understood</li> <li>• Periodic safety reviews involving children are conducted</li> </ul>

### 3. PARTICIPATORY AND INCLUSIVE – ALL CHILDREN ARE ACTIVELY INVOLVED

*The reporting mechanism is made known to all children and can be used by all children, including those from marginalised groups. It enables children to make a report and seek help in ways that are appropriate to their age, individual circumstances and living environment.*

Key questions / considerations	Important actions	Suggested indicators
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Which children are marginalised or vulnerable, including those in remote areas?</li> <li>• What are the capacities of actors to respond appropriately and in a timely manner according to the child's age and development?</li> <li>• How can it be ensured that children are consulted about their preferred ways of communication and best means of access? (for example, by mobile phone, in person, etc.)</li> <li>• Where to locate access/referral points and how to ensure its availability?</li> <li>• What is the availability of training and capacity building for actors?</li> <li>• What is the best way to raise awareness of the mechanism with children, adults and stakeholders?</li> <li>• Are there any language barriers to overcome?</li> <li>• Are there any differences in terms of social norms/cultural issues that need to be addressed?</li> <li>• Do any cross-border issues (trafficking) need to be taken into account? If so, how?</li> <li>• Are the necessary resources in place for promoting and developing the system?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Awareness raising with adults and children regarding the mechanism and its purpose/function – this includes the development of appropriate materials</li> <li>• Advocating for additional resources to make/keep the mechanism operational</li> <li>• Identifying key/possible actors and create links between them</li> <li>• Capacity building for actors on appropriate responses and actions</li> <li>• Liaising with mobile phone/technology providers (if relevant) and child helplines</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Children are aware of the mechanism and how to access it</li> <li>• There are a range of ways for children to make reports – in ways that 'make sense' for them</li> <li>• Children can make reports confidentially – i.e., without others knowing they are making a report</li> <li>• Children can seek help at appropriate times, according to their circumstances</li> <li>• The response to children is appropriate and child centred</li> <li>• All children are able to access regardless of geographical and other limitations (age, sex, disability, etc.)</li> </ul>



## 4. ACCOUNTABILITY – EVERYONE IS CLEAR ABOUT RESPONSIBILITIES AND ACTIONS

*The reporting mechanism operates in a transparent way with clearly identified processes in order to ensure quality and consistency of response.*

Key questions / considerations	Important actions	Suggested indicators
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What laws and procedures currently exist and which need to be considered?</li> <li>• Does the mechanism link with national child protection systems? If so, how does it link?</li> <li>• How can it be ensured that all cases will be responded to given the context?</li> <li>• How can the process for managing information and action be as simple as possible, involving as few people as possible (even if adopting a multi-disciplinary approach)?</li> <li>• Will there be clear lines for communication, action and information sharing?</li> <li>• How will simple operating protocols be developed to identify responsibilities and timeframes for action?</li> <li>• What supervision will be provided for actors?</li> <li>• How will people be able to make a complaint if they believe their report has not been handled in the way set out by the mechanism (for example, information being shared improperly)?</li> <li>• How will regular monitoring of the mechanism – including its functioning – be carried out?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Communicating the strategy developed to raise awareness about the processes and procedures of the mechanism</li> <li>• Mapping of the existing resources and services</li> <li>• Developing a strategy for operational guidelines/protocols to be established with partners and stakeholders</li> <li>• Identifying an external body (if possible) to handle complaints where people feel the mechanism has not been properly applied</li> <li>• Advocating for legal and policy reform to make procedures more child sensitive</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Roles and responsibilities are defined</li> <li>• Timeframes identified and agreed</li> <li>• The mechanism is transparent – children and families know what they can expect and how the mechanism functions</li> <li>• There is a complaints process, which is monitored (i.e. number of complaints received), for children and families to use if the mechanism does not function as set out</li> <li>• Clear budget allocation</li> </ul>

## 5. RESPONSIVENESS AND FLEXIBILITY – RESPONDING QUICKLY AND EFFECTIVELY

*The reporting mechanism responds to reports without undue delay. The reporting mechanism is adaptable and can be used in all situations where a child makes a report, or wishes to make a report. At all times the focus is on ensuring 'the best interests of the child'.*

Key questions / considerations	Important actions	Suggested indicators
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What are reasonable timeframes for action, given the context and resources available?</li> <li>• How can referrals to other agencies be made without undue delay?</li> <li>• What supervision is necessary to ensure that decisions are “safe” and in the best interests of children?</li> <li>• What is the capacity of actors to be able to adapt to different situations?</li> <li>• What resources exist that children can be referred to (for example, specialist helpline)?</li> <li>• What follow up procedure will be put in place to ensure that cases do not ‘drift’? (i.e., so that actions are taken in a timely way and follow up occurs)</li> <li>• How will the mechanism be monitored and reviewed to ensure its appropriateness for changing situations and adjustments made?</li> <li>• Is it accessible to children with disabilities, different genders, etc. in all geographical locations?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mapping and identifying appropriate resources and partners/actors for operationalising the mechanism</li> <li>• Research/situation analysis on child abuse for children in their local context</li> <li>• Ongoing liaising with stakeholders about developments in services and child protection systems</li> <li>• Advocating for development of specialised services, as necessary</li> <li>• Developing shared protocols/ guidelines, including timeframes and referral pathways</li> <li>• Establishing processes for regular review of channels of reporting and interagency coordination</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Agreement of referral protocols to include timeframes and roles/ responsibilities</li> <li>• Mechanism is transparent in terms of situations it can handle and those outside its area of responsibility</li> <li>• Staff/adults are able to ‘step outside’ procedures in order to ensure best interests of children when necessary – for example regarding the safety of children, progressing legal redress, etc.</li> <li>• Regular monitoring of the mechanism – including its functioning – is carried out</li> <li>• Mechanism can respond to emerging concerns/needs of children</li> </ul>





## 6. CONFIDENTIALITY – KEEPING INFORMATION PRIVATE

*The reporting mechanism observes confidentiality, and information is shared on a need-to-know basis only and with consent (except in life threatening or high-risk situations).*

Key questions / considerations	Important actions	Suggested indicators
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How will decisions be made when dealing with situations where confidentiality must be broken – e.g. life threatening situations? How will these be communicated?</li> <li>• How can a shared understanding of confidentiality be achieved? For example, through Code of Conduct/protocol</li> <li>• Who needs information, when and why?</li> <li>• What is the most appropriate way of recording and keeping information secure (for example in locked files, on database, etc.), considering literacy, resources, etc.?</li> <li>• Are there any legal requirements regarding the sharing, recording or retaining of information?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Developing information protocol and sharing with other services</li> <li>• Sharing and agreeing working methods of the mechanism – including confidentiality – with stakeholders</li> <li>• Awareness raising to highlight confidentiality as part of the reporting procedure</li> <li>• Identifying focal points for sharing of information</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Children are confident in making a report knowing that their information will be kept confidential</li> <li>• Information is shared on a need-to-know basis and with consent of the child/family</li> <li>• Information is only shared without consent in prescribed and agreed circumstances</li> <li>• Records are securely kept in accordance with guidelines</li> <li>• Zero-tolerance policy in place for breaches – i.e., action taken if workers break confidentiality</li> </ul>



## 7. MONITORING – MAKING SURE IT WORKS

*The reporting mechanism is regularly reviewed and carefully managed to ensure that it operates in the expected way, and that feedback from children is incorporated so that procedures and processes can be improved.*

Key questions / considerations	Important actions	Suggested indicators
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What supervision and support is available for the implementation of the mechanism?</li> <li>• What indicators need to be developed to monitor?</li> <li>• What is a reasonable timeframe and process for monitoring given the resources (including how often and who will undertake the monitoring)?</li> <li>• How can children be involved in monitoring the mechanism?</li> <li>• How can feedback be incorporated to improve the mechanism?</li> <li>• How can feedback be given to children, communities, actors and stakeholders?</li> <li>• Is there a need for periodic outside oversight/evaluation? If so, why and when?</li> <li>• Is a separate complaints procedure needed (for example, if mechanism does not function as set out)?</li> <li>• Have ethical considerations of monitoring and evaluation been considered? What action is necessary?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Establishing agreement among actors and stakeholders regarding monitoring processes and indicators</li> <li>• Developing a strategy to disseminate findings from the reviews – including child-friendly formats</li> <li>• Identifying resources for outside oversight, if necessary</li> <li>• Capacity building for children/actors involved in monitoring process</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Monitoring process in place</li> <li>• Children are involved in monitoring</li> <li>• Complaints procedure exists</li> <li>• Regular review of mechanism established (a requirement embedded within the mechanism itself)</li> <li>• Clear indicators exist – for example:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ number of reports received</li> <li>◦ number of reports attended to</li> <li>◦ number of reports followed-up</li> <li>◦ number of girls/boys reporting directly</li> <li>◦ number or reports with legal proceedings and without legal proceedings</li> </ul> </li> </ul>



# RESOURCES

Joint report of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence against Children and the Special Rapporteur on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography 2012.

Plan International Asia Regional Office (2011) *'Bamboo Shoots' – Manual on Child Centred Community Development*; Bangkok, Thailand

Plan International Asia Regional Office (2013) *'Sticks and Stones' – Training Manual for Facilitators on How to Increase the Involvement of Children in their own Protection*; Bangkok, Thailand

Plan International Asia Regional Office (2014): *Protection in Action: Regional evaluation of the effectiveness of community-based child protection mechanisms supported by Plan International in Asia*; Bangkok, Thailand

Plan International Asia Regional Office (2015) *'Step by Step' – Guide to Engaging Communities in Child Protection*; Bangkok, Thailand



## Specific tools for children and young people:

Plan International Asia Regional Office, *Violence against Children Action Booklet*, December 2012.

Plan International Asia Regional Office, *Your Personal Guide to Understanding*, December 2012.



## Useful websites:

Keeping Children Safe Coalition - [www.keepingchildrensafe.org](http://www.keepingchildrensafe.org)

Humanitarian Accountability Partnership International (HAP International) – [www.hapinternational.org](http://www.hapinternational.org)



## Other useful sources of information:

Feinstein C & O'Kane C (2008) *Ethical Guidelines for ethical, meaningful and inclusive children's participation in participation practice*; Save the Children Norway

Ministry of Women and Child Development, Government of India (2014) *The Integrated Child Protection Scheme: A Centrally Sponsored Scheme of Government*; Civil Society Partnership.

Plan International Child Safeguarding Policy *Say 'Yes' to Keeping Children Safe*.

Plan Nepal and Institute for Legal Research and Consultancy (2013) *Child Protection Training Manual for Community Based Child Protection Structures*.

Wessells M (2009) *What are we learning about protecting children in the community – An interagency review of evidence on community based child protection mechanisms*  
[http://www.unicef.org/protection/files/What\\_Are\\_We\\_Learning\\_About\\_Protecting\\_Children\\_in\\_the\\_Community\\_Summary.pdf](http://www.unicef.org/protection/files/What_Are_We_Learning_About_Protecting_Children_in_the_Community_Summary.pdf)



A large, stylized tree graphic in a light blue color, positioned on the left side of the page. The tree has a thick trunk and several branches with small, simple leaves. The background is a solid light blue color.

# **APPENDIX: CONSULTATION TOOLS ON DEVELOPING CHILD-SENSITIVE REPORTING MECHANISMS**

# TOOL 1 – CHILDREN AGED 7-12 YEARS



## *Notes for facilitators*

### **Prior to the consultation session**

- Make sure that the venue is suitable – pleasant/comfortable and with sufficient light and that it is private and not noisy.
- Check that the time is suitable for children and that children will be able to travel to the venue in safety.
- Make sure all children have been given permission to attend and that there are signed parental consent forms and that parents/carers are properly informed and sensitised.
- Make sure that you are aware of how to make a referral/get additional support and assistance for any child who becomes upset or makes a disclosure during the consultation.
- Check whether children have previous orientation/awareness raising experiences related to child protection and rights. This will be verified during the preparations for the consultation – but if necessary ensure that children are given appropriate orientation.
- Be clear about arrangements to ensure safety and supervision of any children who decide they want to leave the consultation before the end.
- Be prepared to run energisers and warm ups appropriate to the group and context before and during the session as necessary.
- Ensure that there are sufficient supplies and all resources needed for the running the consultation.
- Consider support by and involvement of youth facilitators who are former members of children's groups and knowledgeable about child protection.

REMEMBER TO USE CHILD-FRIENDLY RESOURCES, PARTICULARLY THE BOOKLET *YOUR PERSONAL GUIDE TO UNDERSTANDING VIOLENCE AGAINST CHILDREN*.



### **During the session**

- Facilitate the consultation in accordance with the appropriate tool.
- Encourage all children to participate and share their ideas but do not press any children who are reluctant to speak.
- Be alert to any child who might display signs of distress and be prepared to support as necessary.
- Ensure that any child who decides to leave the session early is safe and supervised.
- Remember that while it may be necessary to prompt answers during the consultation, it is important not to direct children or give them answers.
- It is important to stay focussed on the topics but remember it is not necessary to be serious all the time.





## After the session

- Ensure that the process and content of the consultation is recorded on the template and that photographs of any work produced are attached (with the due consent for taking pictures obtained prior to the session).
- Follow up regarding any incidents or concerns, including any disclosures, that occurred during the consultation.



## INSTRUCTIONS FOR THE SESSION

**Remember questions are to guide discussions. Facilitators should feel free to reword or probe further provided that the meaning is not lost.**

- Welcome participants and explain the reason for the meeting (this should have already been explained but is included again for certainty).



### Suggested wording to explain the purpose:

*We know that it can be difficult for children to get help if they are not being properly looked after or are being hurt, and we also know that it is difficult for children to speak out and let someone know what is happening.*

*We would like to understand more about what makes it so hard and how we can improve things. To do this we are speaking with children in different countries to get an idea of how things should be changed.*

*Thank you for agreeing to talk with us and tell us your ideas. We are going to be writing notes, but only because we want to make sure we remember everything that is said. We will not tell anyone what you say to us without agreeing to this with you beforehand.*



### **Is everybody happy to still take part?**

- If necessary, run a warm-up or energiser exercise.
- Invite children to sit with you in a circle. Explain that you are going to ask some questions and do some activities but that nobody has to take part or speak if they do not feel comfortable.
- Tell children that the session is now going to begin.
- **QUESTION 1:** Ask the children in what sort of situations might children have been harmed or feel unhappy and what they understand by child abuse and child protection?

*Note this question is included to check the level of understanding about child protection and child abuse. In theory all children should be able to answer this question, but facilitators should be prepared to explore with children the meaning of child abuse and child protection (in general terms) if necessary, so that the following questions can be answered.*

Give each child a sheet of paper and ask them to draw a face with eyes, lips and ears, and two hands. If children would like, they can work in pairs.



*Note while the children are drawing, facilitators should circulate around the groups and discuss with children what they are doing.*

- **QUESTION 2:** Explain to the children that we know that sometimes it is very difficult for children to let someone know if they are unhappy or being harmed. Why would children have problems telling someone? What would make it easier?

Children should draw/write their answers around and/or on the lips.

*Note you may need to discuss briefly/ask for suggestions to 'kick start' the process.*

- **QUESTION 3:** Explain to children that sometimes it is difficult for adults to be able to hear (or believe) that a child is being harmed. Why might that be the case? What would make it easier to be listened too/believed?

Children should draw/write ideas around the ears.

- **QUESTION 4:** Ask children, what might someone, such as an adult, see to realise that a child was being harmed?

Children should note this around the eyes.

- **QUESTION 5:** Explain to children that hands are there for many reasons, including to help and support. Ask children, who could children go to if they were worried or being harmed? Children should write these names on one of the hands.

Is there anyone they would not be able to go to? Why?

- **QUESTION 6:** Ask children, how could adults make it easier for children to speak to them if they were worried or being harmed? What could adults do to help children feel less worried about telling someone what is happening to them?

Children should draw/write these ideas on the other hand.

Ask children to come back to the group and invite volunteers to present their work.

- **QUESTION 7:** Ask children if there is anything else they would like to say?

Thank children for their participation and, if necessary/desirable close the session with a short energiser/closing activity.



# TOOL 2 – CHILDREN AGED 13 YEARS AND OVER

## Notes for facilitators

### Prior to the consultation

- Make sure that the venue is pleasant/comfortable and with sufficient light and that it is private and not noisy.
- Check that the time is suitable for children and that children will be able to travel to the venue in safety.
- Make sure all children have been given permission to attend and that there are signed parental consent forms.
- Make sure that you are aware of how to make a referral/get additional support and assistance for any child who becomes upset or makes a disclosure during the consultation.
- Check whether children have previous orientation or awareness raising experience in child protection and rights. This will be verified during the beginning of the consultation – but if necessary ensure that children are given appropriate orientation.
- Be clear about arrangements to ensure safety and supervision of any children who decide they want to leave the consultation before the end.
- Be prepared to run energisers and warm ups appropriate to the group and context before and during the session as necessary.
- Ensure that there are sufficient supplies and resources needed for the running the consultation.
- Consider support by and involvement of youth facilitators who are former members of children's groups and knowledgeable about child protection.



### During the session

- Facilitate the consultation in accordance with the appropriate tool.
- Encourage all children to participate and share their ideas but do not press any children who are reluctant to speak.
- Be alert to any child who might display signs of distress and be prepared to support as necessary.
- Ensure that any child who decides to leave the session early is safe and supervised.

***Remember that while it may be necessary to prompt answers during the consultation, it is important not to direct children or give them answers.***

- It is important to stay focussed on the topics but at the same time it is not necessary to be serious all the time.

### After the session

- Ensure that the process and content of the consultation is recorded on the template and that photographs of any work produced are attached.
- Follow up regarding any incidents or concerns, including any disclosures, that occurred during the consultation.



### INSTRUCTIONS FOR SESSION

*Unlike the consultation for younger children, this one for older children is only based upon discussion. However, depending on the age and cognitive development of the children in this consultation, you may decide to carry out the activity in this session as well as with younger children.*

**Remember that questions are to guide discussions. Facilitators can reword or probe further provided that the meaning is not lost.**

- Welcome participants to the consultation and explain the reason for the meeting (this should have already been explained but is included again for certainty).



### Suggested wording to explain the purpose:

*We know that it can be difficult for children to get help if they are not being properly looked after or are being hurt, and we also know that it is difficult for children to speak out and let someone know what is happening.*

*We would like to understand more about what makes it so hard and how we can improve things. To do this we are speaking with children in different countries to get an idea of how things should be changed.*

*Thank you for agreeing to talk with us and tell us your ideas. We are going to be writing notes, but only because we want to make sure we remember everything that is said. We will not tell anyone what you say to us agreeing this with you beforehand.*



### **Is everybody happy to still take part?**

- If necessary, run a warm-up or energiser exercise.
- Invite children to sit with you in a circle. Explain that you are going to ask some questions but that nobody has to take part or speak if they do not feel comfortable – although you hope everyone will be able to share their ideas.
- **QUESTION 1:** Within their community, in what sort of situations might children have been harmed or feel unhappy? What do they understand by 'child abuse' and 'child protection'?

*Note this question is included to check the level of understanding about child protection and child abuse. In theory all children should be able to answer this question, but facilitators should be prepared to explore with children the meaning of child abuse and child protection (in general terms) if necessary so that the following questions can be answered.*

**REMEMBER TO USE CHILD-FRIENDLY RESOURCES, PARTICULARLY THE BOOKLET YOUR PERSONAL GUIDE TO UNDERSTANDING VIOLENCE AGAINST CHILDREN.**

- **QUESTION 2:** Why would children have problems telling someone or speaking out if there was a problem? Is there any way they could easily let someone know about their concerns?

*Note for this question it would be useful to probe further if there are some people that people could talk to, and if there are differences – for example if children could speak to an NGO worker but not a teacher.*

- **QUESTION 3:** Why do they think that sometimes even when a child speaks out they are not believed or don't seem to be listened to? What would help others take what a child says seriously?
- **QUESTION 4:** Apart from a child speaking out, is there any other way that adults could realise that a child was being harmed?
- **QUESTION 5:** If they or a child they knew was being harmed, what could they do? How and where could they get assistance? Is there anyone that they would not be able to go to?

QUESTION 6: What would make it easier for a child to feel able to speak out? (This does not only have to be about the person, it could be something to do with the way services are delivered or any other factors such as children having greater awareness of their right to protection and how to seek help).

- **QUESTION 7:** Ask children, is there anything else they would like to say or any suggestions they have for how services can be made easier for children to access?

Thank children for their participation.

If necessary/desirable close the session with a short energiser/closing activity.



# TOOL 3 – PARENTS AND COMMUNITY MEMBERS

Thank participants for attendance and explain the meeting will take about 45 minutes to one hour.

- Check the levels of understanding of violence against children and child protection before you start. Explain that Plan International is working in a number of countries and consulting with children, parents and community members about how services can be more responsive to children who have been abused and harmed. As part of that process we want to get views from those who might be able to give some insight into the problems that children face.
- Explain that notes will be taken, but this is to record what is said, not to attribute what is said to any person in particular. In the unlikely event that it is necessary to pass on information (for example, if through the discussions, it seems as though it would be helpful to provide additional support), this will only be done following discussion with the person concerned.



***Remember questions are included to guide discussions. Facilitator can change wording or probe further provided that the meaning is not lost.***

- **QUESTION 1:** What do you understand by violence against children and child protection? Within your community what might be some of the situations where children are harmed or abused or feel unhappy? Why would children have problems telling someone or speaking out if there was a problem?
- **QUESTION 2:** If a child was being harmed, how/who do you think they would go to for help and support? Is there anyone they could not go to?
- **QUESTION 3:** What might stop a child seeking help and support?
- **QUESTION 4:** Sometimes even if a child does tell someone that something bad is happening to them nothing happens. Why do you think that is so? What would have to happen or to change so that children were given support when necessary?
- **QUESTION 5:** Apart from a child speaking out, is there any other way that adults could realise (notice) that a child was being harmed?
- **QUESTION 6:** What advice would they give to a child who they knew was being harmed?
- **QUESTION 7:** What ideas do they have as to how it could be made easier of a child to access help and for that to be given in an appropriate way?
- **QUESTION 8:** Are there any other suggestions for how services can be made easier for children to access or more appropriate for children to use?

Thank people for their participation.



# RECORDING TEMPLATE

**LOCATION:**

**DATE:**

**NAMES OF FACILITATORS (AND GENDER)**

**NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS, AND PARTICIPANTS' AGES AND GENDER**

**FEEDBACK FROM CONSULTATION**

**QUESTION 1:**



**QUESTION 2:**

# RECORDING TEMPLATE (CONTINUED)

**QUESTION 3:**



**QUESTION 4:**

**QUESTION 5:**

**QUESTION 6:**



# RECORDING TEMPLATE (CONTINUED)

**QUESTION 7:**



**QUESTION 8:**



## COMMENTS ON PROCESS / OBSERVATIONS

**Please use this area to comment on the process or any observations – for example if a particular participant was dominant, if someone was reluctant to speak, if there were interruptions, any additional awareness raising or capacity building needs identified, any specific follow-up actions proposed etc.**

# GROW YOUR OWN... PROTECTION TREE!

## Protection Tree Model:

To help children understand what a child-sensitive reporting mechanism is and how to make it work, an interactive model has been designed. Using a tree as a representation of something that can be protective, this model is based on the ideas and explanations provided in the child-friendly booklet "SPEAK OUT – BE PROTECTED!".

This model grows from the roots upwards, and, as each section is explained, it builds the Protection Tree. The roots indicate different forms of violence against children, while the tree-trunk depicts the No-Go-Tell approach and its different features. At the top of the tree are the branches with leaves that children can use to note who they can contact if they need to make a report. Branches and leaves can also accommodate suggestions and ideas on how to prevent violence or respond to it through timely reporting.



# MOVING FORWARD

The Framework outlined has been provided to support the development and implementation of child-sensitive reporting mechanisms. Plan International Country Offices and other interested actors are encouraged to use the Framework in two ways:

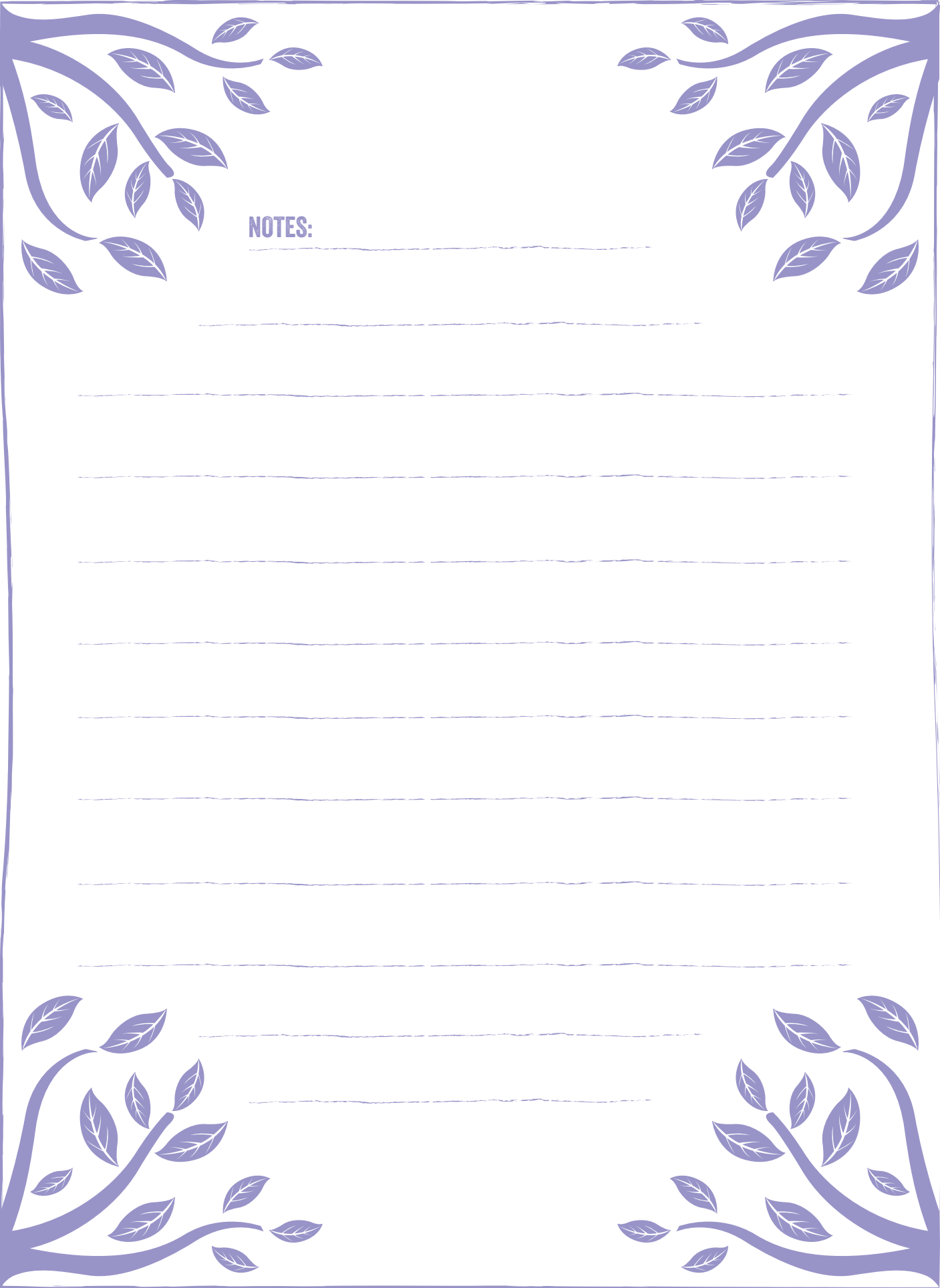
1. To review existing procedures and processes, in order to identify gaps and necessary actions to develop child-sensitive and comprehensive reporting mechanisms – including strategies to ensure action is taken and indicators for monitoring performance of the mechanism are developed.
2. To use the guiding questions and suggested actions as a framework for developing child-sensitive reporting mechanisms, in conjunction with key stakeholders including governments, communities and children.

It is important to remember that any child protection reporting mechanism must be developed taking into account the specific circumstances of each context and linking this to broader efforts to develop national child protection systems.

## GOOD LUCK!







**NOTES:**

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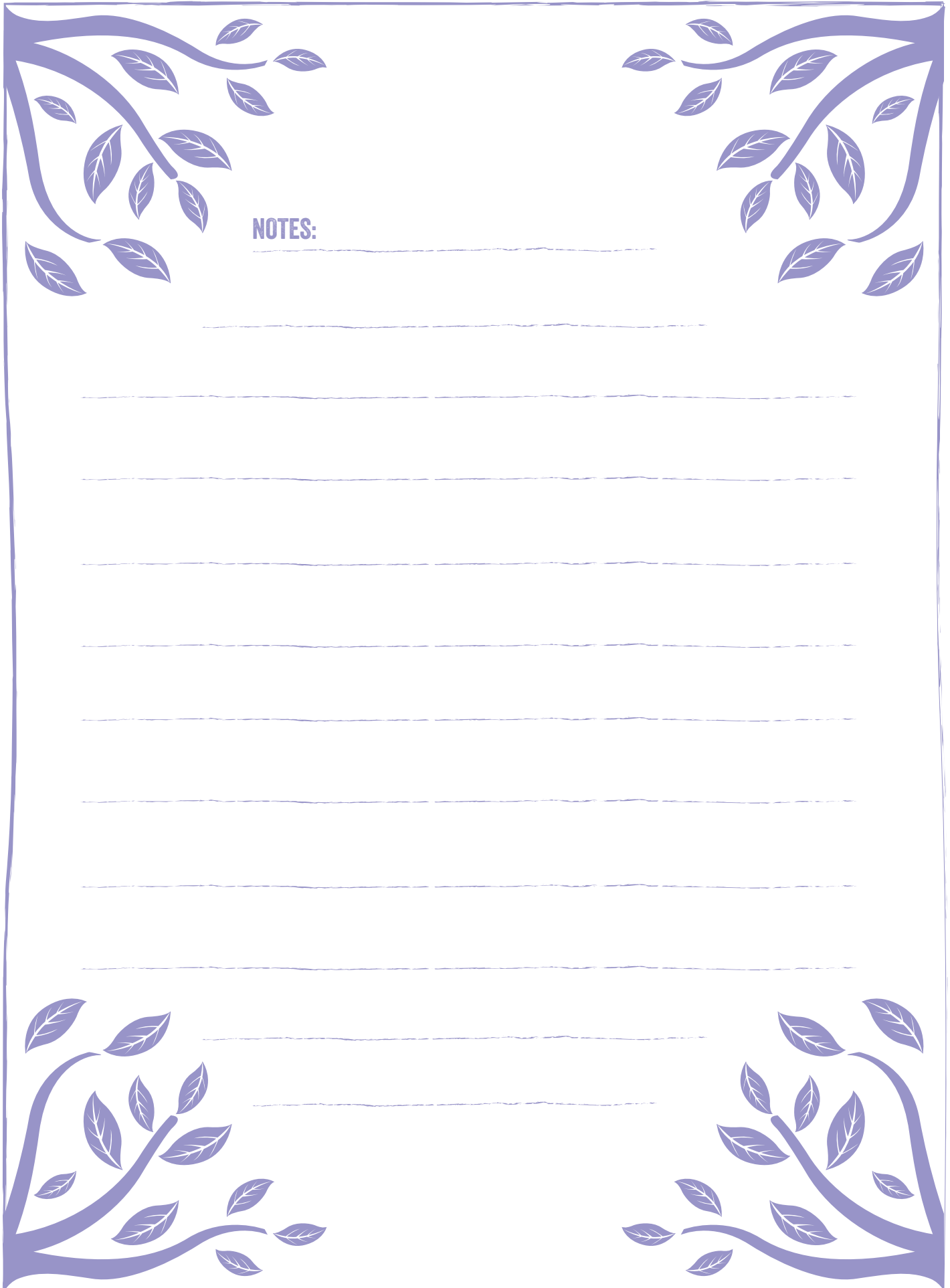
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**NOTES:**



## ABOUT THE FRAMEWORK FOR DEVELOPMENT

Violence against children occurs globally and throughout the Asia region and takes place in all settings. Despite concerted efforts by many stakeholders including initiatives such as awareness raising, actions to develop community based protection mechanisms and strengthening national child protection systems, together with legal reform, much of this violence remains hidden and under-reported. The reasons for this under-reporting are varied and complex. Violence and abuse is not always recognised or, even when identified, may not be perceived as requiring action. Children can be reluctant to disclose abuse because of a sense of shame and self-blame. Even when these barriers to reporting have been overcome, children may still not speak out because the system intended to protect them is inherently inadequate or non-functional.

The increasing global emphasis on advocating for and contributing to the development of “fully functional child protection systems” recognises that appropriate child sensitive reporting mechanisms are one of the necessary components of any child protection system. It is of utmost importance that children have an accessible and appropriate way of raising concerns and reporting incidents of violence and furthermore that responses should be child sensitive, with an emphasis on upholding the best interests of the child. It is within this context that Plan International Asia Regional Office intensified efforts to identify the key factors and actions necessary to be able to develop and operationalise appropriate child sensitive reporting mechanisms. This initiative introduces a generic framework for developing child sensitive mechanisms for reporting alleged cases of violence against children, which can be adapted for use in countries, tailored to the specific contexts while remaining relevant for all settings.

The Child Sensitive Reporting Mechanisms package “Speak Out - Be Protected!” identifies simple and user-friendly processes through which children and their peers (and families) can raise child protection concerns and report to the respective mandatory child protective agencies and services, or trusted community group/institution/persons, including Plan International and other INGOs. It is meant to serve as a resource for those responding to concerns and reports to ensure that these responses are appropriate and safe for children. Finally, it provides guidance to all those advocating for the adoption of child sensitive reporting mechanisms as part of the development of national child protection systems in terms of what is necessary and should be considered.

## ABOUT PLAN INTERNATIONAL

Plan International is an independent child rights organisation committed to enabling vulnerable and marginalised children to be free of poverty. By actively connecting committed people with powerful ideas, we work together to make positive, deep-rooted and lasting changes in children’s and young people’s lives. For over 75 years, we have supported girls and boys and their communities around the world to gain the skills, knowledge and confidence they need to claim their rights, free themselves from poverty and live positive fulfilling lives.



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