

**SIDA CIVSAM
FRAMEWORK
EVALUATION**

A BRIEF

EVALUATION OF PLAN INTERNATIONAL SWEDEN FRAMEWORK PROGRAMME (2015-18) WITH SIDA CIVSAM

Introduction

Plan International Sweden has a long-lasting framework programme with Sida CIVSAM (the Civil Society Unit of the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency) for the period January 2015 to June 2018. This has recently been extended for one year. Plan International Sweden commissioned Tana Copenhagen to conduct an evaluation of the 2015-18 framework programme of which the findings are expected to feed into the development of a new framework application for the period July 2019 to June 2024. The aim of the evaluation is to assess how the implementation of the framework agreement has contributed to its overarching

goal in line with the criteria of relevance, effectiveness, sustainability and efficiency. Plan International Sweden's framework programme consists of approximately 40 country level projects in 19 countries as well as 5 regional initiatives in Asia, Latin America/Caribbean and Africa. In addition to the country level projects and regional initiatives, the framework includes two complementary programmes on strengthening civil society (CSS), and advocacy and innovation (PAI). The framework is implemented in partnership with approximately 120 sub-granted partners.

The overarching goal of the 2015-18 framework programme is:

“Together with civil society organisations, children and youth claim their rights from duty bearers, who actively commit to respect, protect and fulfil these rights”.



Key findings*

- Plan International Sweden's approach to partnership and strengthening civil society continues to be relevant.
- Plan International Sweden is rated the most constructive partner by Plan country offices, and implementing partners value the mutual respect of their partnership with Plan.
- Projects contribute to building capacity of CSOs and youth-led or youth-focused networks in project cycle management and thematic expertise in child rights.
- Focus on youth-led networks to advocate for children's rights is particularly relevant in light of changing context for civil society.
- Evidence of change in strengthening civil society and earlier stages of policy cycle (e.g. engaging in dialogue with decision makers on sexual and reproductive health rights, and policy formulation).
- Plan International Sweden should monitor and address identified areas for improvement in the partnership approach (e.g. jointly developed capacity development plans and knowledge sharing).
- Projects should aspire to more systemic change (e.g. incorporating budget lines for child rights in public budgets).
- Need for a better evidence base for project achievements.

Evaluation methods and data collection

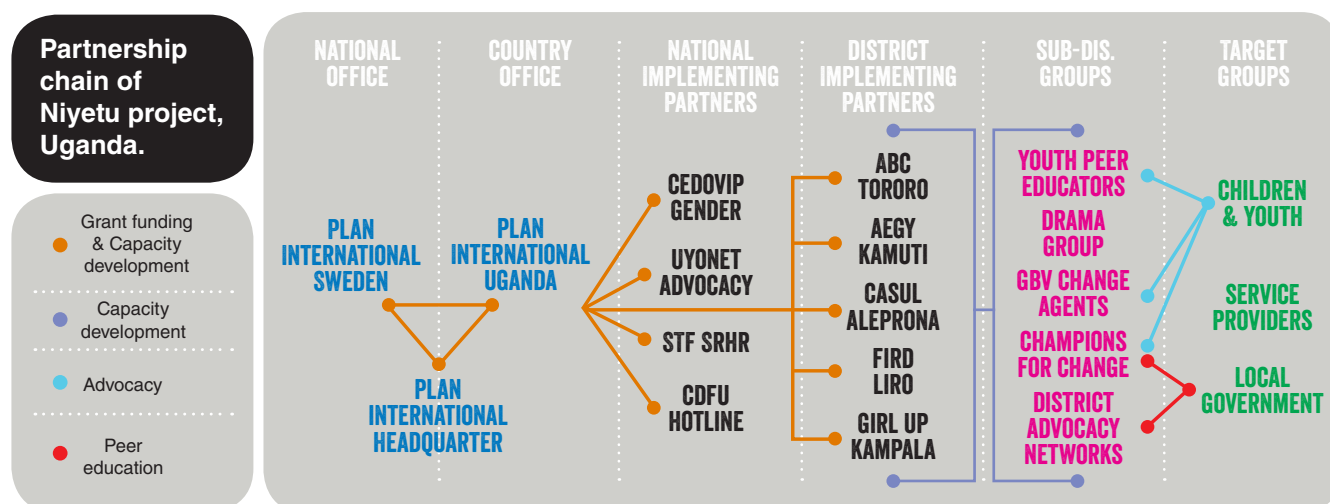
- Review of key Plan documents and documents from 6 country projects; 3 regional projects; and the CSS and PAI programmes.
- 25 at distance interviews with different stakeholder groups in addition to face-to-face interviews in Sweden, Uganda and Bangladesh.
- On-line survey of all Plan country offices and regional offices (50% response rate) and of all Plan International Sweden's implementing partners (38% response rate).
- Country visits to Uganda and Bangladesh to learn from the perspectives of key stakeholders including children and young people.

*The findings, conclusions and recommendations presented in this brief are those of the independent consultant Tana Copenhagen.

RELEVANCE OF THE PARTNERSHIP APPROACH

Partnership approach

The partnership approach can be a complex chain involving a number of links and civic actors between Plan International and the work with target groups, as illustrated by the diagram below.



Perspectives of Plan country and regional offices

According to an internal survey, Plan International Sweden is rated the most constructive national organisation to work with within Plan. Plan International Sweden is described as a helpful, flexible and supportive partner, and the support provided is particularly evident in the proposal design stage and reporting. The support is considered to help strengthening Plan country offices' approach to partnership and to strengthening civil society.

Plan country and regional offices want:

- More support on advocacy, strengthening civil society and knowledge sharing.

Comparison of Plan/Sida approaches

Plan International and Sida share a similar approach to partnership in their work with civil society recognised by a rights-based approach, equitable partnerships, transparency and accountability, and gender equality and equity. A potential point of difference is regarding the status of Plan International country offices in southern civil society. An identified challenge is to monitor how policy statements translate into practice (e.g. re-disbursements and capacity development plans).

Perspectives of implementing partners

The implementing partners describe the partnership with Plan as horizontal and mutually respectful, contributing to increased credibility of civil society organisations. Partners value the capacity development support received from Plan country and regional offices, particularly in project cycle management (PCM) and in building thematic expertise.

Implementing partners want:

- More inclusive, regular dialogues with Plan.
- Formally agreed capacity development plans.
- More timely disbursement of funds.
- More knowledge sharing.
- Support for developing capacity in the areas of advocacy monitoring and evaluation, and resource mobilisation.

“Plan International Sweden staff are always helpful and supportive. They treat country offices staff like colleagues, not like grantees, which is the style of other national offices.”

“Always available to guide us and listen to our efforts. This helps to keep us confident of what we are doing.”

Source: Evaluation survey of country and regional offices.

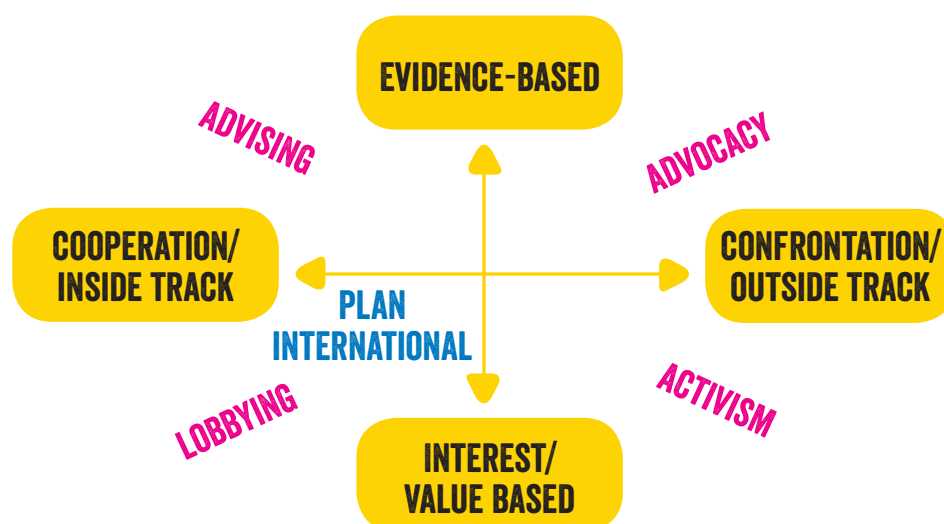
RELEVANCE OF STRENGTHENING CIVIL SOCIETY

Added value of Plan International Sweden for strengthening civil society

Partners see Plan International Sweden's approach to strengthening civil society as relevant to context, in particular supporting the rights of children and young people. Support to youth-led networks at the grass-roots level to raise awareness of the peers and to advocate on issues such as sexual and reproductive health rights (SRHR) and gender based violence (GBV), is particularly relevant. This support strengthens the horizontal bonds and collaboration between emergent social actors to engage with duty bearers on issues relevant to children's rights.

Advocacy and influencing

Plan's history of collaboration with local government makes it well suited to a form of 'insider advocacy', which is illustrated in the diagram below. The evaluation provides evidence for Plan serving as a facilitator for children and youth by raising their voice in meetings with decision makers but also enabling access for networks of children and youth to interacting directly with decision-makers. This is a relevant way in which civil society groups can seek to influence decision-makers when the government has restricted the space for oppositional campaigning. Such an approach offers good access to and influence with duty-bearers but the risk of civic groups being co-opted into government processes without making an impact must be closely monitored.



Responding to a changing context

In many places the operating context for civil society is deteriorating exemplified by restrictions on freedom of speech and activism, regulatory constraints on CSOs, political instability and insecurity, and intolerance and polarisation on social issues. Plan has, in some cases,

been able to adapt project activities to respond to changing circumstances, though there is scope to more pro-actively identify and anticipate emerging trends (e.g. the impact of social media). Plan and partners should continuously reflect on how to best respond to these changing circumstances.

Responsive adaptive programming in the Niyetu project, Uganda.

"Linked to the controversies around sexuality education in schools we learnt that the same sexual and reproductive health rights/gender based violence messages can be delivered using non-structured means involving music, dance, drama, and games that fit within the school curricula. Unlike using structured Peer Education approach, the use of such creative approaches had stronger buy-in from the children, school administrators and even the Government."

Source: Niyetu project Annual Report 2016/17.

STRENGTHENING CIVIL SOCIETY AND ACHIEVEMENTS OF CHILDREN'S RIGHTS

Strengthening civil society

Plan International Sweden's approach strengthens civil society in order to achieve children's rights. Evidence of project outcomes in three areas:

- Knowledge, attitude and behaviour change in children such as the Champions for Change initiative.
- Increased capacity of CSOs to monitor child-friendly budget allocations.
- Strengthened youth-led or youth-focused networks such as District Advocacy Networks.

Guidance on appropriate methodologies to strengthen the evidence base of changes in civil society is important since this area is central to the Sida CIVSAM framework programme.

Advancing children's rights

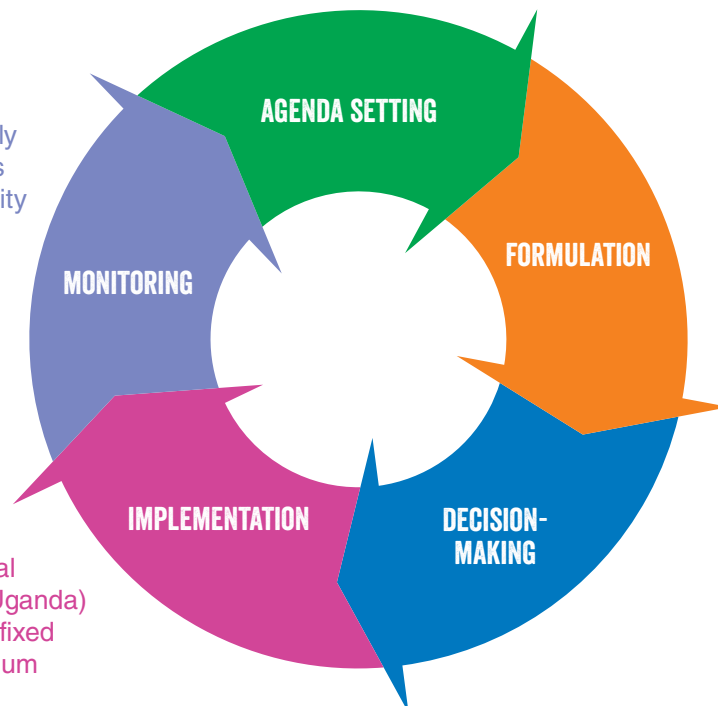
Stronger youth-focused CSOs and/or youth-led networks help achieve policy and practice change at different stages of the policy cycle:

- Agenda setting: Strengthening civil society to raise awareness of and have priority given to an issue or problem.
- Formulation: Civil society developing policies or strategies to influence policy or practice.
- Decision-making: Duty bearers decide to adopt policies or new practices.
- Implementation: Policies/practices implemented by duty bearers.
- Monitoring: Civil society monitoring and holding duty bearers to account for the implementation of policy or practice commitments.



- Child rights parliament raising awareness to child rights issues with presence of ministers and media coverage (Bangladesh)
- Regional Children's meeting in Asia
- Awareness raising on SRH and GBV in community and schools in Uganda

- Youth in slum regularly monitor commitments made by ward authority (Bangladesh)



- Increasing age of legal marriage (Malawi & Uganda)
- Local Ward Authority fixed roads and drains in slum (Bangladesh)
- Birth registration and coordination improved (Rwanda)
- Establishment of child helpline (Rwanda)

- Alternative reports to the committee of the UNCRC (Guatemala)
- Alternative reports based on child rights monitoring in Bangladesh
- Alternative reports to East African Community
- Alternative reports to UN Universal Periodic Review
- Recommendations to government on child rights (Rwanda)

- Child budget lines in municipal budgets (Rwanda)
- National Gender Based Violence Policy passed and National Youth Policy revised (Uganda)
- Child-friendly police manual recognised by Police Academy (Cambodia)
- Including Comprehensive Sexuality Education (CSE) in National Adolescent Health Strategy (Bangladesh)

CIVIL SOCIETY STRENGTHENING (CSS) AND ADVOCACY AND INNOVATION (PAI) PROGRAMMES

The evaluation reveals that the CSS and PAI programmes:

- Play an important role in strengthening Plan International's methodological and programme development in key areas such as strengthening civil society.
- Operate in similar way by:
 - > Commissioning research (e.g. on sexual and reproductive health rights).
 - > Fostering and replicating innovation (e.g. Champions of Change, youth citizen scorecards, direct support to youth organisations).
- > Sharing learning (e.g. on children affected by disasters).
- > Developing capacity in key areas of Plan (e.g. gender equality).
- Should have a more strategic focus drawn from the priorities of partners in order to facilitate greater synergy and learning.



New ways of working directly with youth-led organisations: a pilot project

During 2017/18 Plan International Sweden supported a pilot initiative in Latin America to find new ways of supporting youth-led organisations directly, avoiding intermediaries. The pilot project built the capacity of youth organisations to manage and report of grants up to USD 10,000 to use flexibly in line with their own priorities. Youth organisations reported that the project strengthened their project management skills, enabled them to expand their activities and to raise their profile. The project has been extended for one year and Plan International Sweden plans to share learnings from the experience.

SUSTAINABILITY AND EFFICIENCY

The evaluation looked at two forms of sustainability:

Organisational sustainability

- Plan's support to partners in strengthening capacity in project cycle management contributes to CSOs organisational sustainability and can lead to funding from other sources.
- Support to local youth-led networks is likely to be sustainable model of working with children/young people if:
 - > they are existing networks.
 - > linked to government structures.
 - > their activities are embedded in other institutions.
- Support in resource mobilisation is a priority for the implementing partners.

Lasting change in favour of children's rights

The examples of lasting change most frequently cited by partners were process changes in civil society strengthening:

- Increased awareness and understanding of young people on social issues such as sexual and reproductive health rights (SRHR) and gender based violence (GBV).
- The creation of a critical mass of youth activists.
- The increase in strengthened youth networks advocating for change.

There was less evidence of more systemic change. A good example is the incorporation of child rights issues in public budgets. The evaluation recommends that projects with an advocacy component should place greater emphasis on outcome reporting.

Earmarking child protection in municipal budgets in Togo

The Child Rights Monitoring and State Accountability project in Togo is a 36-months project aiming to increase state accountability on child rights through two outcomes, one of which is the adoption of a child-sensitive approach to budgeting. This project has played a role in a regional learning initiative to share experiences with CSOs from neighbouring Benin and Burkina Faso in child rights monitoring.

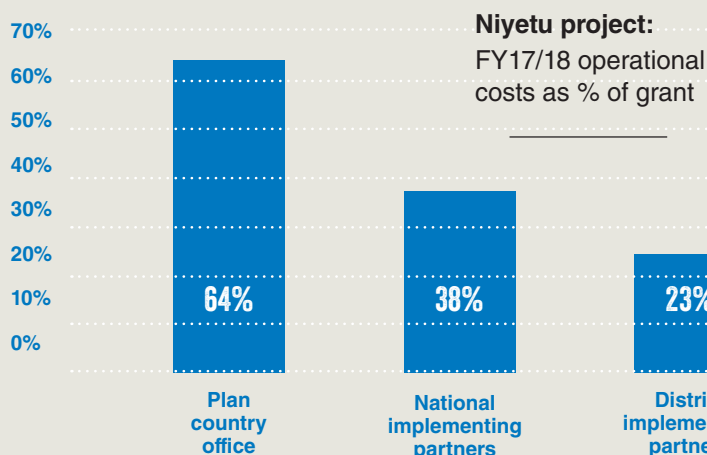
A key result of the project is that four municipalities have introduced a "child protection" line in their budgets and others have requested support for the project to move towards child-sensitive budgeting.

Efficiency

A financial analysis of the partnership chain in Uganda offers some insight into the cost-efficiency of the partnership approach. It reveals that the operational costs of Plan country offices and national level partners are higher because of the value-adding activities. Support to district level partners may be the most cost-efficient way of maximising scope and quality of project activities with target groups.

"Implementing health programmes through district based CSOs directly is much more cost efficient compared to using the national level partners."

Plan International Uganda
Annual Report 2017,
Lessons Learnt, page 33.



CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Building Better Partnerships

Plan country offices and implementing partners value the mutual respect of the partnership with Plan International Sweden but the evaluation identifies a need to monitor how policy translates to practice. Plan International/Plan International Sweden to:

- Adopt partnership chain analysis to deliver support to target groups cost-effectively.
 - Monitor the cost-efficiency of partnership approach by identifying 'dashboard data' to monitor costs in the partnership chain.
 - Monitor and report with Plan on Building Better Partnerships performance indicators.
 - Incorporate discussions and planning for phase-out as part of the new framework programme.
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Strengthening Civil Society

Plan International Sweden plays a lead role in promoting understanding and application of strengthening civil society approach in Plan. Plan International/Plan International Sweden to:

- Re-affirm focus and knowledge sharing on child and youth-led organisations and networks.
 - Establish a 'community of practice' on advocacy as a focus for cross-project learning.
 - Use quarterly and annual review meetings with partners to anticipate and respond to emerging trends.
 - Review project budgets to ensure adequate flexibility to adapt to unanticipated changes.
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Achieving Children's Rights

Most achievements relate to strengthening civil society. Examples of change at different stages of policy cycle but there is need to improve reporting of systemic change. Plan International/Plan International Sweden to:

- Ensure that any cross-cutting issue has an "owner" responsible for operationalising and reporting on the issue.
 - Collate and analyse examples of systemic, long-term change in favour of children's rights.
 - Merge the CSS and PAI programmes to one programme that promotes synergies and adds value to the Sida CIVSAM framework.
 - Offer guidance on regional programmes to ensure synergy with country level projects.
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Demonstrating Change

Quality of monitoring and reporting currently limits the evidence base for project achievements. Plan International/Plan International Sweden to:

- Offer guidance on:
 - > Aligning project outcomes to thematic results areas.
 - > Defining outcomes, indicators and data gathering methods.
 - > Monitoring value added activities of the Plan country offices and implementing partners.
 - > Facilitating learning and knowledge exchanges.
- Monitor and report systematically on its influence on Plan International global policy and practice.