



## A PRACTITIONER'S TOOLKIT

Making water, sanitation and hygiene safer through improved programming and services

## Toolset 3-G

Codes of conduct, peer mentoring

# TS3-G-4 – Gender equality policies: Plan International and the International Save the Children Alliance

<p><b>Context</b></p>	<p>Acknowledging an organisation's commitment to gender equality, and what is expected to ensure that this commitment is mainstreamed into all activities, is a key step towards acknowledging the impacts of violence including GBV and committing organisationally to working to reduce its occurrence.</p> <p>This case study provides an overview of two policies on gender equality from international organisations – the International Save the Children Alliance and Plan International. It includes some definitions used for gender equality, gender equity and gender discrimination.</p> <p>The International Save the Children Alliance is the world's leading independent children's rights organisation, with members in 28 countries and operational programmes in more than 100.</p> <p>Plan International was founded more than 75 years ago, and is one of the oldest and largest children's development organisations in the world. They work in 50 developing countries across Africa, Asia and the Americas to promote child rights and lift millions of children out of poverty.</p>
<p><b>Implementing organisations</b></p>	<p>The International Save the Children Alliance (SC) and Plan International.</p>
<p><b>Description of good practices</b></p>	<p><b>A – Plan's Policy on Gender Equality; Building an Equal World for all Children</b></p> <p>Plan International believes that girls and boys have the same rights, but they are not able to realise them to the same degree. Achieving gender equality is therefore a core objective of Plan International's work as an organisation dedicated to child rights.</p> <p><b>The objectives of the policy are:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. To provide a clear vision, consistent messages and a co-ordinated approach to the promotion of gender equality by Plan International offices at all levels;</li> <li>2. To set standards of gender equality against which Plan International will hold itself accountable;</li> <li>3. To guide Plan International staff in adopting principles and practice of gender equality in their personal and professional lives;</li> <li>4. To reaffirm and strengthen Plan International's efforts to advocate equal rights for girls and boys;</li> <li>5. To foster an organisational culture that exemplifies Plan International's commitment to gender equality;</li> <li>6. To communicate Plan International's position on gender equality to international, national and local stakeholders, including children; and</li> </ol>

7. To engage partners in joint approaches to promote gender equality and children's rights.

**It's commitments are made on the basis of six principles:**

1. Children are at the centre of Plan International's programmes;
2. Plan International's programmes are guided by human rights standards and principles;
3. Plan International's programmes promote an environment of social inclusion and non-discrimination;
4. Gender equality is an integral objective of all Plan International's programmes;
5. Plan International's programmes maximise the free and meaningful participation of children; and
6. Plan International is accountable for its actions in support of children's rights.

The policy then identifies gender equality standards in five areas: Plan International's structures, systems and policies; its programmes; its partnerships; its advocacy and campaigns; and its public engagement and communications.

**B – Save the Children's Policy on Gender Equality**

For Save the Children, gender equality means ensuring that all human beings – women, girls and boys – are considered equal and treated equally in terms of their rights, obligations and opportunities.

**The policy:**

- Objectives are to provide a clear vision of what the organisation is aiming to achieve in terms of gender equality, to develop a common understanding throughout the organisation, to inspire and empower employees and partner organisations to promote gender equality in societies at all levels, to influence institutional culture and to inform external actors (partner organisations, donors, governments, the media, the private sector) of SC's perspective on gender equality so as to provide an 'entry point' for discussion of gender with them.
- Identifies global commitments to gender equality and which of these the policy supports.
- Includes a discussion on GBV and children, and how gender norms and values are important root causes and determine how violence affects boys and girls differently. Example of differences:
  - **Girls** – Girls suffer an enormous amount of psychological abuse to force them to conform to traditional gender stereotypes; sexual exploitation occurs disproportionately against girls; dowry-related abuse, acid throwing, early marriage and FGM affects girls and women.
  - **Boys** – Physical punishment is more often inflicted on boys; recruitment into armed groups and drugs gangs involve more boys, as both the victims and perpetrators; the murder of street children by police of death squads affects mainly boys.

**Principles:**

1. Achieving gender equality is fundamental for the realisation of children's rights;
2. Gender equality is about the relationship between women and men, girls and boys;
3. Gender inequality arises because of poverty and unequal power structures in society;

4. Gender intersects with other aspects of children's identity such as religion, caste, disability and ethnicity;
5. Both men and women must be supported in taking responsibility for childcare and children's development;
6. Discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation is a facet of gender inequality; and
7. Save the Children must foster an organisational culture that promotes gender equality.

**Definitions:**

- **GENDER** = Social and/or cultural interpretations of biological sex; definitions of what is considered to be feminine and masculine in particular cultural and social settings, and expectations of women and men, girls and boys with respect to these definitions; social, economic and political relationships between females and males in specific societies. Gender identity, roles and relations can and do vary and change as a result of ideological, political, economic and/or cultural influences. Some forms of cultural identity and expression – for example, specific ideological creeds, as well as religious beliefs and interpretation – in interaction with restriction of resources may play a major part in patterns of extreme gender inequality.
- **SEX** = Biological and physiological features and characteristics of females and males, and the differences between them based on differences in female and male reproductive systems. These are universal and normally fixed and unchangeable.
- **GENDER EQUALITY** = When one sex is not routinely privileged or prioritised over the other; that is, when women and men, girls and boys have equal rights, obligations and opportunities to security and good health, to a viable livelihood and to remunerative work, to participate in the care of home and dependent family members, to take active part in public and political life, and are recognised, respected and valued for their capacities and potential as individuals and as members of society. Gender equality refers to the absence of discrimination on the basis of sex.
- **GENDER EQUITY** = Aspects of parity between females and males in terms of fairness and justice in the distribution of resources, benefits and responsibilities. This concept recognises that girls and boys may have different needs and negotiating power, and that these differences should be identified and addressed so as to rectify imbalances between the sexes.
- **GENDER DISCRIMINATION** = Any distinction, exclusion or restriction made on the basis of socially constructed gender roles and norms which prevents a person from enjoying their full human rights.
- **CULTURE** = Is composed of values, attitudes, norms, ideas, internalised habits and perceptions, as well as of the concrete forms or expressions they take in – for example, social roles, structures and relationships, codes of behaviour and explanations for behaviour that are to a significant extent shared among a group of people. Children learn culture and also contribute to its continuity, as well as to its transformation. Social identities are manifestations of culture and are also gendered. They are forged through a number of social relationships in which girls and boys take part. They are also a result of the cultural meanings attached to children's status relative to various adults and to other girls and boys. Socialisation ideas and practices are a key part of a people's culture, and adults use 'culture' to explain or justify child-rearing and socialisation practices, and even practices involving unequal treatment, abuse etc.

**References/Links**

- Plan International (2011) *Plan's Policy on Gender Equality; Building an Equal World for all Children*. Woking, UK: Plan International. ([on USB stick](#))
- International Save the Children Alliance (2009) *Save the Children's Policy on Gender Equality*. London, UK: International Save the Children Alliance. ([on USB stick](#))

**VIOLENCE  
GENDER  
& WASH**

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