# PLAN INTERNATIONAL

**Bringing hearts and minds together for children**

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# INGO

# ACCOUNTABLILTY

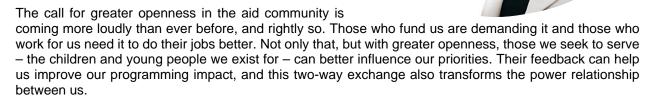# CHARTER REPORT

## Reporting Period 1 July 2014-30 June 2015 (FY 2015)

## CEO Statement

When I started as CEO of Plan International in September 2015, one of the first decisions I made was to open my calendar so all my colleagues could see my activities and book time with me directly, without going through a gate-keeper. I encouraged all senior executives across Plan International to do the same. It was a small step on a journey to transform Plan International into one of the most transparent and trusted players in the international development community.

The call for greater openness in the aid community is coming more loudly than ever before, and rightly so. Those who fund us are demanding it and those who work for us need it to do their jobs better. Not only that, but with greater openness, those we seek to serve – the children and young people we exist for – can better influence our priorities. Their feedback can help us improve our programming impact, and this two-way exchange also transforms the power relationship between us.

Transparency makes us more accountable, more efficient and effective in the long-term, and we recognise the gold standard for data openness is set by the International Aid Transparency Initiative (IATI).

Like other international civil society organisations, only part of Plan International is currently publishing to IATI, and this has to change. The future of our organisation and the change we want to see depends on it.

A pilot by Plan International Netherlands, building on the work of our member organisations in the UK, USA and Finland, is exploring how publishing to IATI can save time and money, reducing the length of our information and system chain. While it is not an easy task, the benefits far outweigh the challenges: With greater transparency, we can drive change, improve coordination and learning, and enhance accountability to the communities we serve.

Organisations that resist scrutiny of their fundraising and administration costs simply won't stay in business. And when donors and beneficiaries see us being honest and open about where we succeed and where we fail – an integral part of the risk-filled business of delivering development and humanitarian aid – important lessons can be learnt together.

Our transformation to becoming more transparent is happening in different corners of our global organisation, but it's by no means going to be easy. Legacy management information systems make the task expensive and daunting.

This transformation to become more transparent is also happening in our programme countries. Plan International India, for example, raises its own funds, has its own strategic objectives and has direct relationships with donors. This means Plan International India is heavily invested transparency, accountability and building trust, meaning global organisations such as Coca Cola want to work with them.

These are the kinds of benefits that greater accountability can bring, and we intend to continue driving this agenda forward. INGOs advocating for more transparency from governments and other large donors should also be leading by example.

**The Panel would be interested to know what systematic assurance Plan has in place to ensure that their National Offices are aware of the requirements of the Charter and fulfil the accountability commitments. Plan's general basis for reporting beyond financial data should be clarified in the next report. (3.8)**

## Actions Taken

Although Plan International, Inc. does not actively currently monitor compliance of its national fundraising members with the Charter Commitments, we note that there is significant overlap between the Charter requirements and Plan International's 'Global Standards'. 'Global Standards'; are standards approved the Members' Assembly which, under the terms of the Members' Agreement, all National Organisations are required to comply with.

These global standards include an Anti Fraud and Anti Bribery and Corruption Policy, a Gifts in Kind Policy, a Gifts in Kind Valuation and Accounting Policy, a Child Protection Policy, a Global Risk Management Policy, a Corporate Partnerships Ethical Engagement Policy, a Gender Equality Policy and an Environmental Strategy for Operations (2015-2017). To the extent that National Organisations are generally organised as charitable entities in their home jurisdictions they are also required to comply with the relevant governance, financial accounting and reporting requirements under the laws of the countries of their incorporation

Furthermore, as mentioned in the CEO's statement, a number of Plan International's National Organisations are currently reporting to IATI standards, demonstrating their commitment to accountability and transparency.

**The Panel would be interested in the next report how the information from the NGC+ effectiveness review of the Members' Assembly is used; how they are used by the Assembly to inform their practice; if or how they communicated to a wider audience; and how they have shaped organisational development. (4.10)**

As part of the NGC+ effectiveness review, delegates from National Organisation boards reflected on the frequency, format and size of the Members' Assembly. This discussion resulted in a proposal to hold a meeting for National Organisation Board Chairs and National Directors to enhance mutual understanding across all parts of Plan International at a management and governance level. The first such meeting was scheduled for November 2015 to discuss the impact of the Sustainable Development Goals, reflect on previous organisational change programmes and to discuss the next phase of the global Because I Am A Girl campaign.

It is hoped that such meetings will create a much needed space for management and governance bodies across the Plan federation to come together and discuss issues of strategic importance.

**Keystone conducted an external survey which emphasised that Plan has to improve ensuring that they are operating most effectively as a partner. What concrete steps / lessons learnt evolve from the Keystone partnership survey? The Panel looks forward to the development of a set of Partnership Standards. (4.17/NGO1)**

The results of the Keystone Survey were analysed in depth by Plan International management and consequently the Partnership Standards which were developed address many of the issues raised by the survey. In particular, they create robust requirements to listen and respond to partners, as well as to manage risks appropriately. The Partnership Standards were piloted across the organisation with a final version approved in June 2015. They are supported by associated documents such as Guidance on Implementing the Standards; Templates for Partnership Agreements (a full version and a light version) and other tools.

The Guidance on Implementing the Standards has been rolled out and includes:

• a clear definition for partnership;

• six principles for working in partnership;

• the crucial competences staff need to work better with other organizations;

• tables differentiating types and levels of partnership; and

• a set of key actions which offices can take to improve the way they work in partnership. This includes addressing administrative barriers and strengthening team work.

The six principles for working in partnership are: mutual respect and listening, knowing your partner, clearly defined objectives and non-negotiable 'red lines' (e.g. adherence to child protection principles), sharing responsibility, learning from each other and common sense. Furthermore, a Plan Academy Module on working with partners was developed and is available to all Plan staff.

**The Plan Academy provides an opportunity for continuous learning on Plan's Child Centred Community Development approach. However, 1,015 learners participated which is only 10% of the overall workforce of 10,092 employees in FY2014 (if all learners were employees but it seems that they can even be from Plan's partners). (LA10).**

In FY15, 3,704 learners completed a Plan Academy course which on average are three months in length. A large majority (about 81%) of these learners took the Plan Academy flagship course 'Introduction to Child Centred Community Development' ('CCCD') which was set as a KPI for Regional Learning and Development Plans.

**Workforce training is essential to develop staff in a fast changing world to be able to deliver the quality of work Plan have set themselves to deliver. How are training needs identified? (LA10).**

Organisational learning and development needs are identified as part of the annual planning and budget process and individual personal development needs, i.e. short and long term development goals are identified as part of the Plan International performance appraisal process. As part of the Country Strategic Planning process at Country Office level, the Plan International Human Resources and Organisational Development team works with senior management teams to develop a workforce plan. Part of the workforce planning process involves identifying future capability needs to deliver the strategy and what future training is required at all levels within the country office to meet strategic goals. Workforce plans are reviewed and updated annually as part of the annual planning process.

The initial Plan Academy courses were developed around the CCCD standards which form the framework for Plan's programming. A suite of courses has been developed around the 5 key pillars of Plan's CCCD approach - i) Working with children & communities ii) Tackling exclusion and gender inequality iii) Engaging with civil society iv) Influencing government and v) Strengthening Plan's accountability. These courses have been developed further over time based on the needs identified by Plan International Country Offices and National Organisations.

**How much does Plan invest (as % of the overall administrative budget) into training their workforce? (LA10).**
Budgeting instructions provide for staff training and development costs which may include external and internal training, workshops, network meetings and seminars. All training plans should be in line with Country Strategic Plans.

Plan invests an average (based on actuals from FY13 to FY15 inclusive) of 4.5% of the overall administrative budget into training their workforce.

**Finally, the Panel supports Plan's rollout of the Learning and Development module of their new Human Resources Information System in 2016 and looks forward to being informed on progress in future reports. (LA10).**
Due to issues with connecting the Human Resources Information Systems and the learning hosting system (Moodle) there has been a delay on rolling this out but a soft launch is planned for FY16.

**Handling and analysis of internal feedback and complaints (NGO9).Links to mentioned policies (Grievance Resolution Policy, a Global Complaints Policy and a Whistleblower Policy) should be provided in the next report. Moreover, Plan is encouraged to provide evidence that these policies are used in practice, how many complaints were received and if they could be resolved satisfactorily. An Employee Engagement Survey is undertaken externally every three years and results are analysed on different levels. Plan is encouraged to share the results with regard to employee satisfaction at the workplace and to further describe the action plans resulting from feedback provided by staff. (NGO 9).**
There were 34 reports made under the Whistleblowing Policy in FY15 using Safecall, the independent external whistle-blower reporting service. Information relating to the numbers of grievances and complaints made under each of the Grievance Resolution Policy and the Global Complaints Policy respectively is held at individual Plan International, Inc. offices and is not consolidated globally. An Employee Engagement Survey is scheduled for FY16, the results of which will be analysed in detail and an action plan developed to address findings.

**Other significant changes**
In FY15 Plan International carried out a detailed and consultative piece of work to agree an organisational definition of 'accountability to communities'. Plan defines accountability to communities as: "The ways in which Plan enables children, community members and partners to influence what we do, and hold us responsible for our actions." Feedback systems are seen as a key driver for this accountability commitment and are defined within Plan as: "A systematic approach to capturing and reporting the viewpoint of children, community members and partners about Plan´s work to improve it".  Tools and guidance on the development of community feedback systems have been developed and will be piloted in FY16 as part of the new Programme Quality Procedures which support the implementation of Plan International's new Programme Quality Policy.

**Plan International**
International Headquarters
Block A Dukes Court
Duke Street
Woking GU21 5BH
UK

plan-international.org

**About Plan International**

Plan International is an independent global child rights organisation committed to supporting vulnerable and marginalised children and their communities to be free from poverty. By actively connecting committed people with powerful ideas, we work together to make positive, deep-rooted and lasting changes in children 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.