

**ANNUAL**

**PARTNERSHIP**

**SURVEY FY19 –**

**Summary Report**



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Photo © Plan International. Students taking part in a two-day writing course, on Timor Island, Indonesia held by Plan International in partnership with the Tempo Institute.



# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

To achieve our goals of realising children's rights and girls' equality, we need the right type of partnership with the right type of partner. Plan International already works with civil society organisations (CSOs) including children's and youth groups, community groups, with government institutions, the corporate sector, multilateral and bilateral bodies, private and public foundations, and academic institutions. We work in development and humanitarian settings, at local, national, regional and international levels.

Our Annual Partnership Survey helps us to gauge how well we are working with such partners. Responses to the survey are anonymous, so it offers valuable insights about whether we are meeting partners' expectations and how we can improve our working relationships. This is the third year of the survey, and the first that it has been part of compulsory reporting for our Country Offices.

## MAIN SURVEY FINDINGS

### RATE:

There has been a steady increase in partners' responses compared to last year – 765 compared to 526. Yet the response rate is still low – just 38 per cent. (An estimated 1,900 to 2,000 partners were invited to respond.)

### REGION AND RANKING:

Most responses came from the Asia region, as with previous years. This region improved in terms of how partners rank Plan International compared to other NGOs they work with. But the three other regions dropped in their ranking given by partners.

### PARTNER TYPE:

Most responses came from civil society-based sectors – national CSOs and networks (44 per cent), and community-based organisations, (22 per cent). Private sector responses increased but remained very low at 5 per cent. Academic organisations replied for the first time, albeit very few. Only 11 per cent of responses were from new partners – those working with us for less than a year.

### EXPERIENCES:

Most responses were positive about the experience of working in partnership with us. Respondents particularly mentioned our staff treating partners with respect and acknowledging the work they do. These two aspects also scored most highly last year.

### IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED:

The two things that partners most wanted to see us improve were: “invest more in the capacity of our staff to better carry out their work” and “involve us earlier in strategic decisions”.

### MOST PRAISED:

The two things that partners thought we did best were: “builds the capacity of our staff to better carry out their work” and “makes meetings productive”. Coming a very close third was “involves us in strategic decisions”.

### MAIN PURPOSE:

Strengthening civil society was the main stated purpose of partnerships with us, closely followed by influencing policy makers and/or the general public.

## ACTION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

We will conduct a survey and targeted interviews to identify reasons for low or high numbers of responses, and will improve guidance to reflect learning.

Staff should make partners aware of the survey and the importance of completing it while highlighting its confidential nature.

We should introduce “youth-led organisations and groups” and possibly “civil society networks” as categories to track whether partnerships with these groups are increasing.

Country Offices and Regional Hubs should look at their partner portfolios and consider whether these include the full range of organisations needed to help them achieve their goals, bearing in mind their own core competencies that they bring to a partnership.

Country Offices could use the question on partnership experiences to explore more deeply how individual partners see them.

We will develop a guidance paper on strengthening civil society with stakeholders across Plan International.

Staff should check that they and partners have a common understanding of the purpose of the partnership and that this is clear in partnership agreements.

We will hold further discussions with regions to understand changes in performance and/or learn from approaches to maintain and improve performance.

## PARTNERSHIP UPSKILLING

Upskilling workshops are training sessions held over four days in different locations for Plan International staff who act as “Partnership Champions” for their Country Office or region. Participants are trained on our *Building Better Partnerships* (BBP) guidance – a publication which is the backbone of our approach to working in partnerships.

In FY19, three workshops took place in Indonesia, Peru and Kenya. We ran enhanced training on managing partnerships with a wide range of entities, with a focus on partnership mapping to identify partners appropriate for purpose and context. A total of 55 staff (31 women and 24 men) took part, representing 20 Country Offices, two Regional Hubs and one National Organisation.

One of the main outputs was participants’ input into developing guidance documents for each of the BBP seven steps of partnership. These were translated into French and Spanish; Upskilling session plans were also translated into Spanish.

# INTRODUCTION: OUR GLOBAL REACH THROUGH PARTNERSHIP WORKING

Plan International is active in more than 75 countries around the world to advance children's rights and equality for girls. To fulfil these goals, we work in partnership with different organisations and networks. Partnership working is at the heart of sustainable development and our global approach to all our work.

## SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOAL 17

A successful sustainable development agenda requires partnerships between governments, the private sector and civil society. These inclusive partnerships built upon principles and values, a shared vision, and shared goals that place people and the planet at the centre, are needed at the global, regional, national and local level.

To achieve sustainable changes for girls and boys, we need the right type of partnership with the right type of partner.

We work with children's groups, community groups, civil society organisations, government institutions, the corporate sector, multilateral and bilateral donors and institutions, private and public foundations, and academic institutions. We work in various settings – development and humanitarian – and at local, national, regional and international levels.

Our Global Strategy *100 Million Reasons* confirms our commitment to working with others to achieve our goals. Our Annual Partnership Survey helps us to gauge how well we are working with others, both

at global and regional levels. As responses to the survey are anonymous, it offers valuable insights about whether we are living up to partners' expectations and how we can improve the way we work together.

This short report presents the headline results of the 2019 Annual Partnership Survey, along with analysis of the main findings, actions and recommendations. It offers a brief update on recent partnership training achievements and feedback from participants. These training efforts are part of a longer-term journey of becoming better partners.

# BUILDING BETTER PARTNERSHIPS

## WHAT DOES PLAN INTERNATIONAL MEAN BY “PARTNERSHIP”?

Not every relationship we have with individuals, organisations and entities is a partnership. Some are contractual relationships undertaken to get a piece of work done, like building a clinic; others are simply informal ways to exchange information.

When we create a partnership, we use a formal, written agreement to set out how we will work together on an equal basis towards shared goals, with shared responsibilities. Our partnerships are generally long term; they go beyond a single project and entail activity from both sides. Each partner learns from the other.

### PARTNERSHIP DEFINED

“Partnership means working together on equal terms in a formal, mutually agreed collaboration with shared goals and responsibilities.”

### Building Better Partnerships

Partnerships are central to getting the best from our Programme and Influencing work. They enable us to reach more people, in more places. By working together, we benefit from the skills, knowledge and resources of others, and they benefit from ours. Together, we can ensure that the voices of children and young people are heard more loudly.

## WHAT IS PLAN INTERNATIONAL’S APPROACH TO PARTNERSHIP WORKING?

Our Global Approach to Programme and Influence describes the pivotal role that civil society plays in bringing change for children and young people – helping them to realise their rights, and achieving equality for girls. Our partnerships with civil society organisations (CSOs) are a key part of this.

Yet we realised that, in practice, some of our interactions with CSOs have been more like sub-contractual arrangements and less about mutual learning on an equal footing.

Since 2013, when we participated in the global Keystone Survey,<sup>1</sup> we have been collectively investing to improve our approach to partnership working. Through a process of piloting and consultation, we developed and implemented guiding principles and useful steps for partnership working. We encapsulated these in our *Building Better Partnerships* publications, which are circulated among all Plan International staff involved in partnerships.

<sup>1</sup> From May to June 2019, Plan International conducted a global survey with all offices to assess Full-Time-Equivalent dedicated to the provision of technical expertise in its programmes and projects. The survey also studied in which fields of work there was strong reliance on external partners for the provision of technical support. The report of that survey is available to internal audiences upon request from Stefanie Conrad.



All our staff are expected to respect these principles when engaging with partners on behalf of Plan International:

- Mutual respect and listening
- Knowing yourself and your partner
- Having clearly defined objectives for your relationship and non-negotiables
- Sharing responsibility and risk
- Learning from each other and striving for mutual growth
- Good judgment

## GENDER TRANSFORMATIVE

A core part of our approach is to require our partnerships to be gender transformative. By working on gender and inclusion in our partnerships, we are working towards our goal of gender equality. We commit to understanding our own and our partners' barriers and enablers to gender equality, to learning from them and to working with them to improve gender equality within and beyond our organisations.

## WHAT DOES THIS APPROACH MEAN IN PRACTICE?

These principles only work if they are applied effectively and consistently in real situations. To do this, we needed to build our capacity among Plan International staff to forge better partnerships and to know how to improve them on a continual basis.

In *Building Better Partnerships*, we suggest processes for choosing the right partner – including a comprehensive digest of potential partner types, ranging from local networks to multilateral institutions, and a checklist of things to consider with each of them.

To keep a partnership functioning optimally, we devised seven key steps for managing partnerships:

1. Identifying and developing partners
2. Mutual appraisals
3. Assessing risks
4. Signing agreements
5. Mutual oversight
6. Regular feedback and annual reviews
7. Exit strategy and sustainability.

Finally, we want to strengthen our capacity for continuous improvement in our partnerships and nurture a partnership-friendly culture wherever we work. These guidelines for building stronger partnerships help us to do that:

- spreading the word about our partnership principles and guidance;
- making partnerships a focus of programme and influencing work;
- using the seven key steps;
- seeking out and removing unnecessary bureaucracy that undermines partnerships;
- bringing staff together to discuss good partnership;
- building and investing in staff capacity on partnership working;
- making time to share and learn good practices on partnerships.

Another way we continually build our own capacity to forge better partnerships is through our Upskilling training workshops for Partnership Champions, held in each region. (See p. 17.)

# ANNUAL PARTNERSHIP SURVEY 2019

## BACKGROUND

This is the third year that Plan International has conducted the Partnership Survey. We have various channels through which our partners can feed back, but the survey has two distinct advantages: responses are anonymous, so partners can share what they really think about us; and it is the only feedback mechanism that gives a global view of how the whole organisation is doing.

For the first time, it was mandatory for Country Offices to complete the survey as part of their usual annual report of work completed. For the purposes of the survey, “partner” is a group or organisation with which Plan International has a written (not necessarily a legal) agreement.

Our Country Offices send the surveys to all of their partners, usually via email. Partners’ answers are collated with help of the online survey tool and consolidated at our UK-based International Headquarters (also referred to as Global Hub (GH)). This year’s survey (FY19) took place between April and July 2019.

### Our four Regional Hubs (and their codes):

<b>ASIA (ARO)</b>	<b>AMERICA (ROA)</b>	<b>EASTERN AND SOUTHERN AFRICA (RESA)</b>	<b>WESTERN AND CENTRAL AFRICA (WACA)</b>
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**Each Hub has 12–14 Country Offices.**

**Each Country Office runs several Programme Units,  
our closest point of contact to local communities.**

We had more partner responses overall this year compared to last year – 765 responses compared to 526 in FY18.

While this increase is good news, the overall response rate is still low – just 38 per cent. (We estimate that around 1,900 to 2,000 partners were invited to respond.) How to boost this response rate is something we plan to explore with Country Offices in FY20.

## RESPONSES BY REGIONAL BREAKDOWN

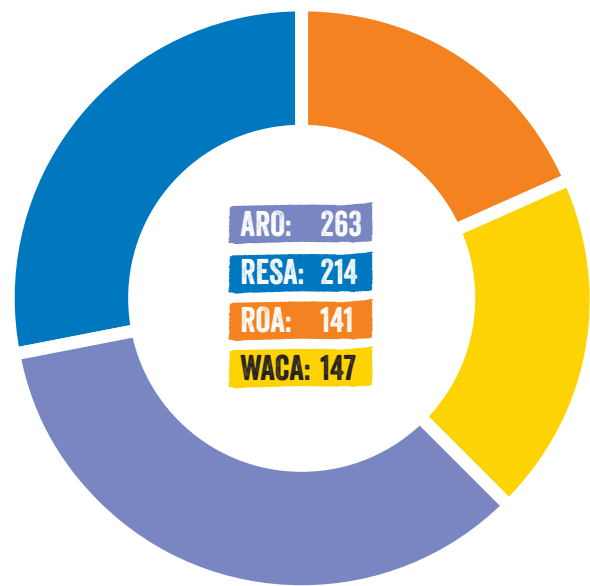
Most responses came from our Asia region. Our Country Offices in Bangladesh, Nepal, Egypt and Kenya had the highest number of partners responding.

Our RESA hub had the biggest rise in responses, from 93 in FY18 to 214 this year. Across all three years of the survey, the ARO hub has had the most responses.

Countries with very low levels of responses were: Jordan, Lebanon, Sri Lanka, Colombia, Honduras, Sierra Leone and Peru. For various reasons, a small handful of Country Offices have never participated: Cameroon, Nigeria, Paraguay, Sudan and South Sudan. Technical issues prevented Central African Republic from responding.

The low response level from some countries is a concern we will explore.

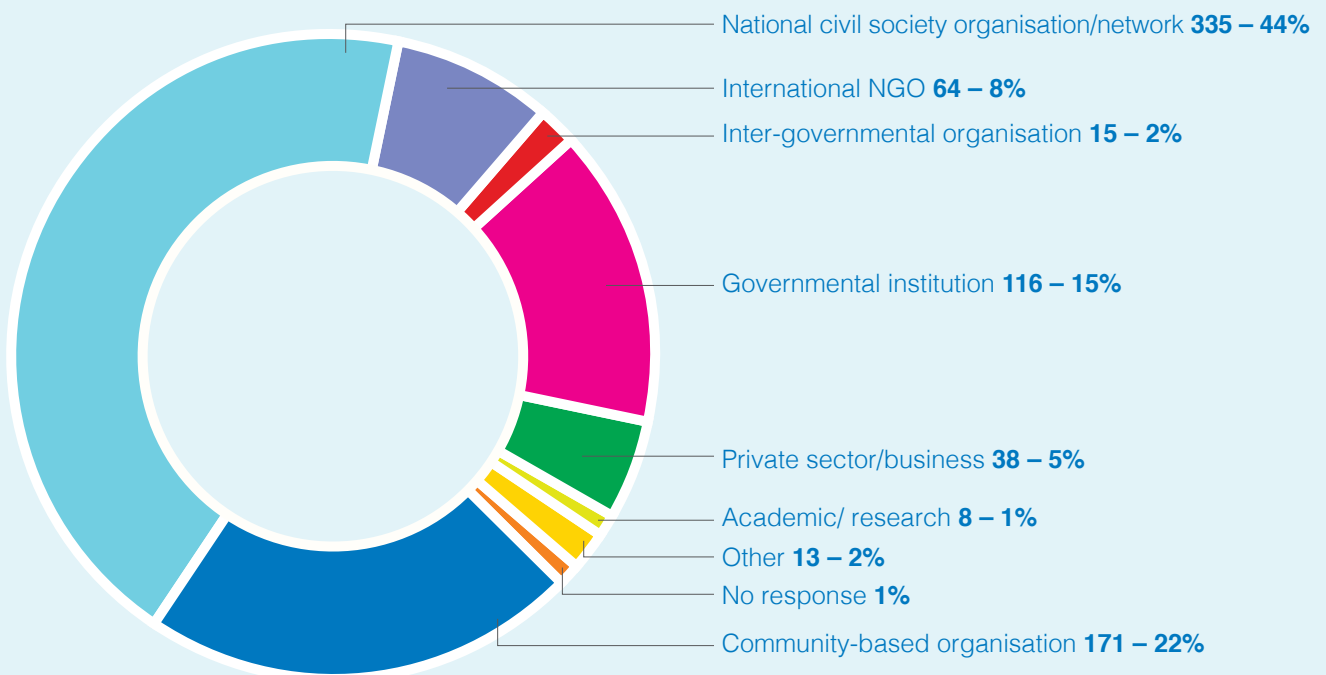
### RESPONSE BY REGIONAL HUBS



## ORGANISATION TYPE AND LENGTH OF PARTNERSHIP

As in the two previous annual surveys, most responses came from the two civil society-based sectors – national CSOs and networks (44 per cent), and community-based organisations, or CBOs, (22 per cent).

### TYPE OF ORGANISATION



Compared to last year, there were slight increases in responses from the private sector (around 2 per cent) and from INGOs (3 per cent) but rates of change are slow. For the first time we had responses from academic/research organisations, albeit in very small number.

In terms of partnership longevity, most responses came from those who have been in partnership with us for more than five years (48 per cent) or more than two years (75 per cent). Partners of five years or more were mostly found among national CSOs, governmental institutions, CBOs and INGOs.

Only 11 per cent of responses were from new partners – those who have been working with us for less than a year. The same category accounted for 9 per cent of responses in FY18, and 16 per cent in FY17.

Nor were there significant increases among partnerships of one to two years and beyond. This was thought to point to an increase in short-term partnerships.

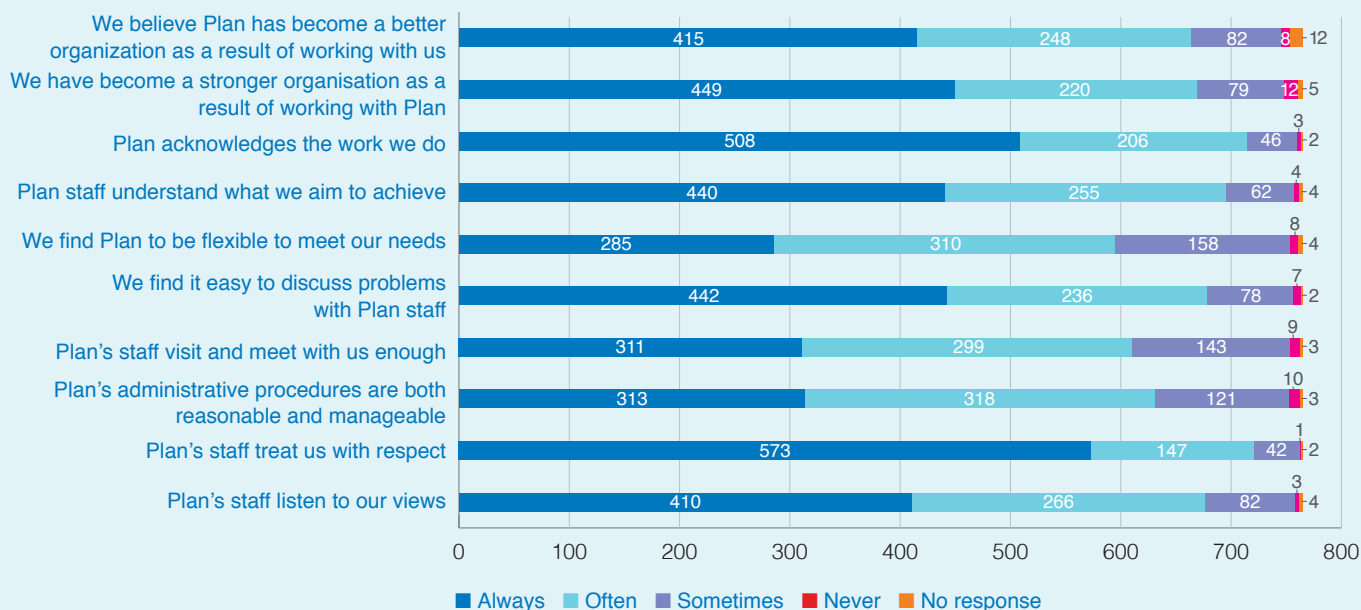
## EXPERIENCES OF PARTNERSHIPS WITH PLAN INTERNATIONAL

Partners were asked to grade ten general statements describing the experience of working in partnership, in terms of whether this was something that “always”, “often”, “sometimes” or “never” occurred when working with Plan International.

Respondents were particularly positive about being treated with respect by Plan International staff and about Plan International’s acknowledgement of the work they do. These two aspects also scored most highly in FY18.

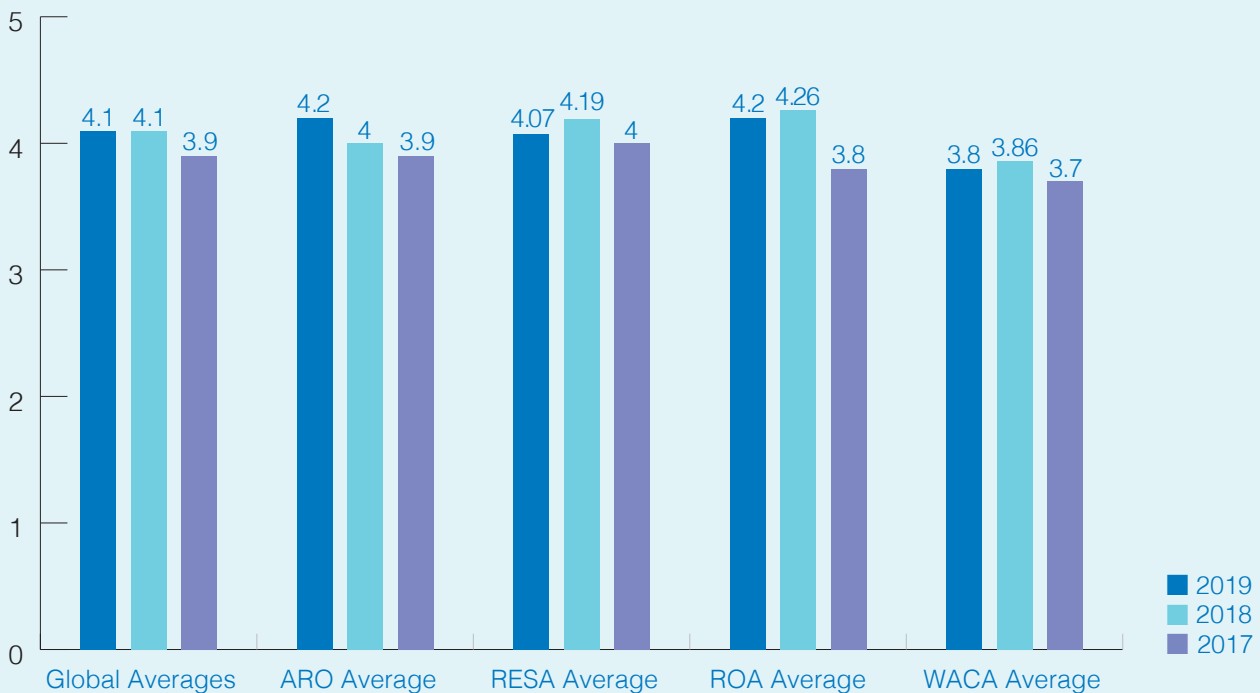
Across the ten statements, most responses were positive about the experience of working in partnership with Plan International. There is the possibility that respondents did not feel able to respond negatively, and/or may not have believed the survey was confidential. However, Country Offices were able to add their own further questions to the survey and partners’ views were sought in direct feedback. (See selection of comments, p. 15-16.)

### EXPERIENCE OF WORKING WITH PLAN INTERNATIONAL



Partners were also asked to rank Plan International compared to other NGOs and donors they work with, on a scale of one to five. The global average was 4.1, the same as in FY18. There was an increase from 4 to 4.2 in the Asia region from FY18 to FY19. All the other regions posted incremental decreases from FY18 to FY19.

## HOW WE RANK WITH OTHER NGOS AND DONORS THAT PARTNERS WORK WITH, GLOBAL AVERAGE COMPARISON FROM 2017 TO 2019



## HOW PLAN INTERNATIONAL SHOULD IMPROVE AND WHAT IT DOES BEST

Based on their own experiences of working with us, partners were asked to select from lists of nine qualities the two most important things that we should improve in partnership working, and the two things that we do best in partnership.

The two lists mirror each other, with each quality either being something we should get better at – e.g. ‘reduce administrative burden’ – or something we already do well – e.g. ‘keeps administrative work manageable’.

The two things that partners most wanted to see improvement on were:

- “invest more in the capacity of our staff to better carry out their work” and
- “involve us earlier in strategic decisions”.

The two things that partners thought we did best were:

- “builds the capacity of our staff to better carry out their work” and
- “makes meetings productive”.

Coming a very close third was “involves us in strategic decisions”. Very similar responses were seen in FY18.

Both sets of consolidated results fairly closely reflect each other across the nine dimensions.

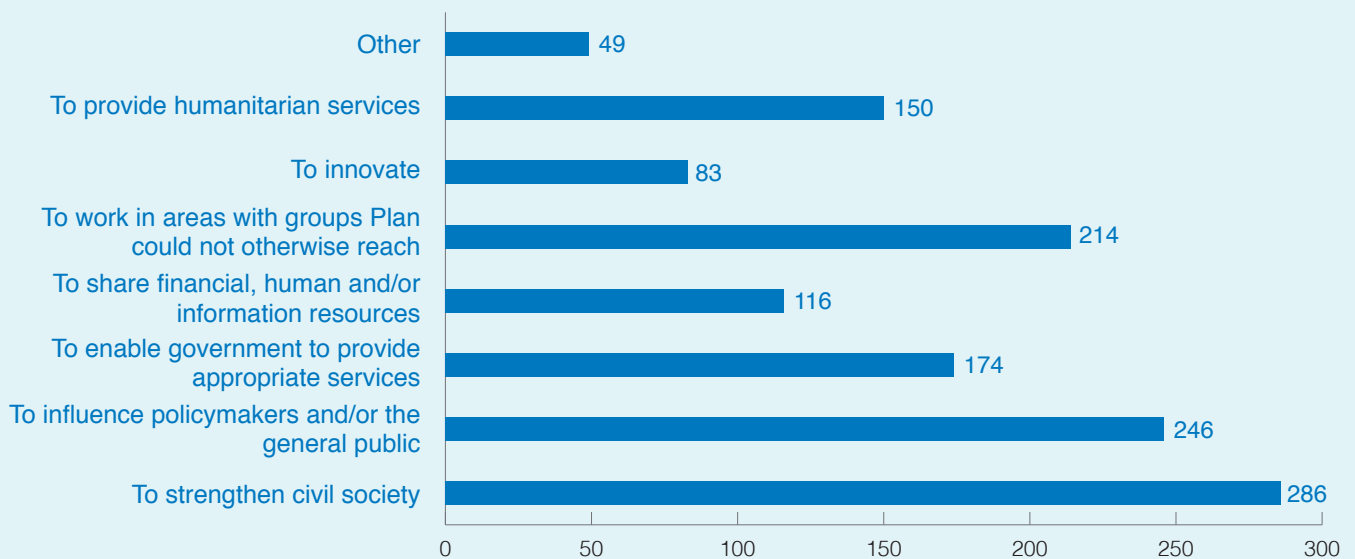
## MAIN PURPOSE OF PARTNERSHIP WITH PLAN INTERNATIONAL

This is the first year that partners have been asked to identify what they feel is the main purpose of their partnership with Plan International. No comparisons are therefore available for previous years.

For most respondents, strengthening civil society was the main stated purpose of their partnership with Plan International – a result that perhaps is understandable given the predominance of organisations working within civil society among the survey respondents.

The second highest-scoring purpose of partnerships was to influence policy makers and/or the general public. This was an encouraging result, seen as related to Plan International's broader efforts towards working more with partners through influencing. The third highest scorer was to work in areas or with groups that Plan International cannot reach.

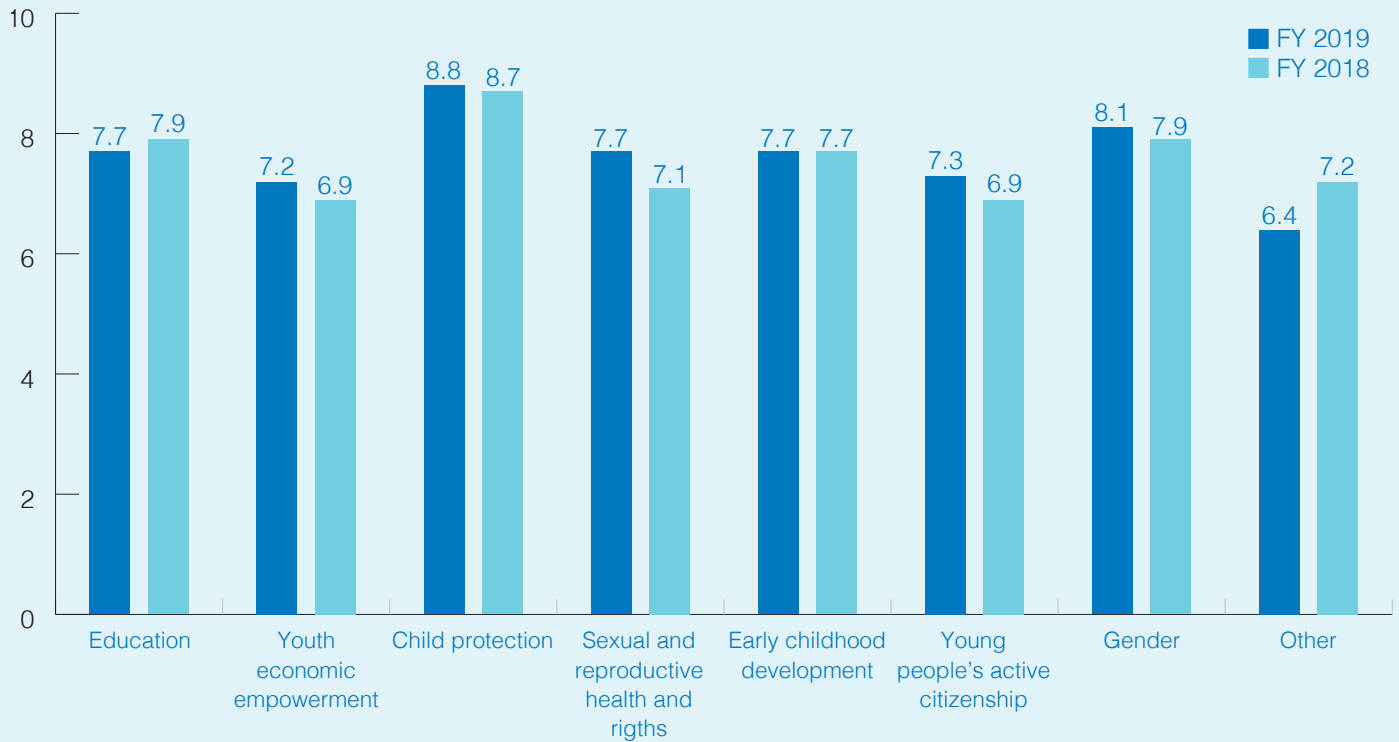
### MAIN PURPOSE OF PARTNERSHIP WITH PLAN INTERNATIONAL



## AREAS OF EXPERTISE FOR WHICH PLAN INTERNATIONAL IS MOST RECOMMENDED

Partners were asked how likely they were to recommend us as a potential partner in which areas of expertise. Options covered our main areas of work – gender, education, early child development, sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) among others. Respondents were asked to score Plan International as a potential partner for each area on a scale of 0 to 10, with 10 being the most likely.

## GLOBAL SCORE AVERAGE ON SCALE 0–10 MOST LIKELY TO RECOMMEND PLAN AS POTENTIAL PARTNER, FY19 AND 18



Child protection scores the most highly as the area for which we would be recommended as a partner, both this year and last year. Gender also scores strongly across both years. We were more likely to be recommended this year for our potential as a partner in SRHR than last year. We were marginally less likely to be rated for our potential on education than last year.

# ANALYSIS OF FINDINGS

## RESPONSE LEVELS

Numbers of responses to the Annual Survey are steadily increasing year on year. Response levels increased in all regions barring Asia, where fewer responses from the Nepal Country Office caused a drop in their total numbers. Notwithstanding this dip, Asia has submitted the highest number of survey responses in each of the three years. There is a suggestion that this is because of better internet access in larger parts of that region, compared to other regions.

The global response rate to the survey is still low at 38 per cent. More Country Offices are participating in the survey, but this does not seem to be translating into higher numbers of responses from partners. Some Country Offices are returning extremely low numbers of responses, and some are still not returning any responses. This may be for technical reasons as some Country Offices may be handling the survey and responses manually and missing deadlines. Central African Republic was unable to submit responses for technical reasons. Some Country Offices may also work with networks of organisations, rather than with separate partners.

## ACTION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

We will conduct a survey and targeted interviews to identify reasons for low or high responses, and we will improve guidance to reflect learning.

At the beginning of the partnership and during annual reviews Plan International staff should make partners aware of the survey and the importance of completing it, while highlighting its confidential nature.

## ORGANISATION TYPE AND PARTNERSHIP LONGEVITY

Plan International's "natural home" for partnerships seems strongly to be within civil society – whether this is with national CSOs or networks, or with local CBOs. With such a large proportion from one sector, we need more differentiation within the survey of the types of organisations we are partnering with. This pre-dominance suggests that Plan International has a clear role to play in strengthening civil society and a responsibility to expand civic space for organisations working on children's rights and girls' equality.

Markedly fewer responses were seen from the private sector and from INGOs, although the numbers are rising slowly. This year was the first year that any academic/research partners responded; however, their number is extremely low. The suggestion is that Plan International tends to contract research work from academic bodies rather than work with them in partnership.



The relatively low rise this year in responses from partners of less than one year prompted surprise, given recent attempts to increase partnership working underpinned by the Global Strategy. Just 11 per cent of newer partners responded, compared to 9 per cent in FY18. Possibly this is because newer partners are less likely to complete the survey as trust has not yet been built up within the partnership.

## ACTION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

We should introduce “youth-led organisations and groups” as a category and possibly “civil society networks”.

Country Offices and Regional Hubs should look at their partner portfolios and consider whether these include the full range of organisations needed to help them achieve their goals, bearing in mind their own core competencies that they bring to a partnership.

## PARTNERSHIP EXPERIENCES AND PLAN INTERNATIONAL'S RANKING

- The ten statements used to describe the experience of working with Plan International as a partner aim to capture the mutual benefits of partnership working. The ranking score meanwhile focuses specifically on how well Plan International compares as a partner to other NGOs and donors.
- A globally positive picture of working with Plan International emerged from both these measures. However, the results from the ten statements should be treated with caution given the suggestion that respondents may not have felt able to reply negatively.
- Plan International's global average ranking stayed at 4.1, although three out of four regions posted a drop in scores on last year, suggesting uneven progress in improving our partnership practices across the organisation.

## ACTION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Country Offices could use the question on partnership experiences to explore more deeply how individual partners see them.

We will hold further discussions with regions to understand changes in performance and/or learn from approaches to maintain and improve performance.

## WHAT PLAN INTERNATIONAL DOES BEST AND WHAT TO IMPROVE

With both sets of consolidated results fairly closely mirroring each other, it is suggested that Regional Hubs and Country Offices analyse their own particular sets of findings to identify areas for improvements, and to use them as a basis for discussions with partners.

As part of the survey we also asked partners' staff to share any comments or feedback directly to Plan International. In total, 362 comments were shared, with the following regional breakdown: ARO 133 comments; RESA 113; ROA 55; and WACA 61. The range of comments suggests that it would be most fruitful to pursue areas for improvements at a more regional or local level.

## MAIN PURPOSE OF PARTNERSHIP AND AREA OF EXPERTISE

Strengthening civil society emerged clearly as the primary purpose for partnerships with Plan International. At the other end of the spectrum were "sharing financial, human and/or information resources" and "innovation", which attracted the fewest responses (not including "other").

In the areas of expertise for which partners would most likely recommend us, there was overall very little change in the ratings between FY18 and FY19. Child Protection scored the most, which was in line with findings from an organisational technical capability survey<sup>2</sup> that indicated the field of child protection as having the highest levels of dedicated Full-Time-Equivalent among fields of work within Plan International. This was interpreted as perhaps also being related to our organisation's strong emphasis on safeguarding policies and practices.

## ACTION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Given that many partners believe that we are strengthening civil society, it is interesting that we don't have an up-to-date position on what this entails and how we do this effectively. We will develop a guidance paper on strengthening civil society with stakeholders across the organisation.

It would be good to know whether the purposes selected by partners are stated in their formal, written agreements. It is useful if both partners have a common understanding of the purpose of the partnership and that it is named in partnership agreements.

<sup>2</sup> From May to June 2019, Plan International conducted a global survey with all offices to assess Full-Time-Equivalent dedicated to the provision of technical expertise in its programmes and projects. The survey also studied in which fields of work there was strong reliance on external partners for the provision of technical support. The report of that survey is available to internal audiences upon request from Stefanie Conrad (Stefanie.Conrad@plan-international.org).

# IN THEIR WORDS...

As part of the survey, partners were asked to give direct feedback about their experiences of working with Plan International. This is a snapshot of comments from all four regions.

## ARO

*"I want to thank Plan International for taking this kind of initiative. The quality of the survey is good. Plan should do this kind of initiative to build the bonding more strongly with their partners."*

*"Plan International should engage local partners in implementing projects on the ground. It helps partners' capacity and creates good acceptance among the stakeholders."*

*"Plan International should internally discuss among their colleagues to avoid overlapping schedules when working with partners."*

*"In last 2 years, Plan has changed the way of working with partners which more listen and involve partners in the proposal development process. This has enabled partners to raise and integrate our concerns and proposal concerns for Plan's considerations."*

## RESA

*"Listening to our opinion matters to make work atmospheres more comfortable and easy/productive."*

*"I see Plan as one of the strongest INGO development partners; ...it should continue strong focus on capacitating local CSOs to be vibrant and develop capacities to scale and sustain programmes."*

*"It should strive to make sure that partnerships are strengthened to ensure that partners that are struggling to fundraise for the survival of their organisation are assured to get resources. At the moment most local NGOs are struggling to survive just because they lack capacity in resource mobilisation."*

*"We have become a stronger organisation by working with Plan. Moreover, members have increased experience in community engagements and it has empowered them economically."*

## ROA

*“The work with Plan strengthened the work with young people, especially on masculinity.”*

*“Plan is a partner that works with a lot of respect, ethics and commitment. This has made it easier to develop more efficient and effective processes in improving the living conditions of children, adolescents and young people in school.”*

*“Plan International is a strategic partner, and [this is] important to impact the lives of many children and adolescents; and their presence in the country strengthens the government’s capacities for protection.”*

## WACA

*“Plan has for some time been improving the way it works with civil society organisations. In the meantime, resource transfers are not done on time and this often impacts the planning of activities. But, to date, there is more improvement.”*

*“For the past ten years, we have [worked] with Plan International as a Partner Organisation in the area of WASH and have carried out WASH activities in over 50 communities ... We have enjoyed our partnership: prompt payment, regular capacity building, regular information sharing etc.”*

*“Plan should do more of project/programme sustainability by improving integration of interventions both at institutional level and partner level.”*

*“Plan must remain very attentive to the partners in the context of making certain decisions and especially the strengthening of collaboration with national NGOs, particularly institutional strengthening.”*

# SPOTLIGHT ON PARTNERSHIP UPSKILLING

Upskilling workshops are training sessions over four days for Plan International staff who act as “Partnership Champions” in their Country Office or region. Partnership Champions come from different parts of the organisation and are trained on our *Building Better Partnerships* (BBP) guidance. They receive extra training on other partnership-building skills at our Upskilling workshops, which take place at different locations in each region.

In FY19, we have run three workshops, in Indonesia, Peru and Kenya. As well as enhanced training on managing partnerships with a wide range of entities, we focused on partnership mapping to help staff to identify partners appropriate for purpose and context.

A total of 55 staff (31 women and 24 men) took part, representing 20 Country Offices, two Regional Hubs and one National Organisation. The facilitators used were also specially trained as part of the Upskilling, and spoke one of the three Plan International languages (English, French, Spanish).

One of the main outputs from the workshops was the participants’ input into developing guidance documents for each of the BBP seven steps of partnership. These documents were translated into French and Spanish; Upskilling session plans were also translated into Spanish.

Partnership Champions, once trained, use their skills to update their own partnership guidance and where possible, include partnership in their Country Strategy. They are supported remotely through webinars, email exchanges and Skype.

Participants are encouraged to feed back views on how to improve the sessions. Broadly, FY19 feedback centred on how to improve effective use of partnering skills. It was felt that effectiveness was hindered by a lack of clarity in why Plan International works in partnerships and what it offers partners. A lack of support from Country Office leadership on partnerships was also cited, as was a desire for more sharing of experiences among countries.

*“I’m very much impressed with the training methods – very dynamic and empowering.” Participant, Indonesia.*

*“Facilitation and time management is good. Enabling environment has been created to make participants open. Excellent session management support.” Participant, Indonesia.*

*“The training was very heavy on time. It would be good to release people early, say 1600hrs. Some outdoor sessions can help as well.” Participant, Kenya.*

*“Very good selection of participants who were active and willing to share experiences.” Participant, Kenya.*

## PARTNERSHIP SKILLS IN ACTION – ZIMBABWE

Staff from Plan International Zimbabwe (PIZ) took part in our Partnership Upskilling workshop in Kenya in 2018. Back at base, they shared their learning on feedback and action plans with their Country Leadership Team and the Programme Leadership team. To get all staff thinking, they posted weekly “teasers” from the BBP guidance – “Can we partner with youth-led organisations?” was one; “How can we partner with unregistered CSOs?” was another.

In the months since the workshop, BBP has become a feature of learning circles, staff meetings and project review meetings with partners at PIZ. Staff have ensured partners complete the Partnership Survey. They revised the existing partnership strategy and tools and aligned them with BBP and Country Strategy ambitions, and worked on partnership mapping. PIZ is now recruiting a partnership specialist who will be dedicated to partnership management and civil society strengthening.

Partnerships do present challenges and problems can occur. The Upskilling helped the PIZ team analyse underlying causes and produce a workable solution. For instance, funds were not being transferred early enough in one case, leading to delays in projects. After analysis, the team decided to share more information with partners about internal PIZ systems so all sides had better context understanding. In another case, a partner network for joint influencing activities was not actively taking part in these. A lack of clarity about roles was found to be at the root of this misunderstanding.





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