

TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR RESEARCH ON: CIVIC SPACE IMPLICATIONS FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

1. Background

The overall aim of this research is to identify civic space related implications for children and young people. Based on that, the research shall propose proactive measures and strategy's to minimize risks and incidents while continuing to effectively support children and young people as civil society actors.

We know that the democratic space for civil society is shrinking in many parts of the world. Children and young people are disproportionately affected by this. A non-enabling environment hinders youth-led organizations and their initiatives for social change, as they are exposed to risks such as normative resistance, threats and violence. Girls and young women are particularly affected. In order to fully support young people, in all their diversity, and for them to claim their space, global civil society needs to be more inclusive and adaptive. As part of the framework program, recommendations have been developed to guide Plan International to be a more responsible partner to youth organizations. Amongst others, the recommendations outline a need for enhanced understanding of barriers and risks related to shrinking civic space while effectively supporting children and young people's activism.

Plan International with more than 100 CSO partners in Africa, Latin America and Asia have just ended the Framework Programme (January 2015 - June 2019) supported by Sida Civsam via Plan International Sweden. The next implementation period of the Framework Programme, called the Generation Change! Programme, is 1 July 2019 – 30 of June 2024 (see Annex 1). A central dimension of the Framework Programme is the aspiration to contribute to a more diverse, legitimate and effective civil society working for the rights of children and young people (see Annex 2). This involves supporting child- and youth-led organizations, movements and networks, including groups of girls, young women and excluded groups. In order to stay relevant, it also aims to continuously monitor and adapt to the changing conditions and dynamics in civil society. Not least, the framework program recognize the need to proactively prevent risks and incidents related to civic space, while at the same time support local CSOs, children and young people as autonomous civil society actors.

2. Overall aim and objectives

The overall aim of this research is: **a) to identify civic space related implications for children and young people, particularly girls and young women, and b) propose proactive measures and strategy's to minimize risks and incidents while continuing to effectively support children and young people as civil society actors.**

The objectives of this research are threefold:

1. Carry out a mapping of common current scenarios, as well as likely scenarios for the programs
2. Develop recommendations on how the programs may take safeguarding measures and adapt strategies to take the situation into account, including developing a referral route protocol
3. Propose guidelines for the Civic Space flex fund – a complementary basket fund dedicated to respond to, support to programme countries and partners for *prevention, responses and protection* in situations of shrinking or closed democratic space for civil society

The research must apply and consider the following:

- Link and relate to existing relevant Plan policies and procedures, as well as programme specific tools and guidelines related to civic space and enabling environment. At the same time the recommendations must consider partners may have their own policies and procedures which must be respected.
- Look at both children and young people as activists and/or their organisations; their commonalities but also the differences. Consider also how partnerships with other sectors of civil society may have an impact on the civic space for children and young people.
- Apply strong gender and inclusion lenses, in line with the expected programmer approach.
- Include a focus on both physical and digital spaces.

- Extract and, in analysis and recommendations, be specific to fragile, conflict-affected and disaster prone settings.
- Consider, learn and link to (as relevant) other successful (and not successful) initiatives by other organisations.
- The research should be context sensitive and specific, even if some findings will be generic for all regions. It should be applicable and specific also to fragile and conflict-affected settings.

3. Scope of the Research

The research will be conducted within the framework of the Generation Change! Programme. The programme formally started 1st of July 2019 and ends 31 of June 2024, whereas this research is timely in order to inform the implementation of country/regional programs as well as complementary measures at an overall framework level. The research should focus on and be useful for the continuous development of the Generation Change programs (country/regional offices and CSO partners) involved, but be also link to and generate knowledge for Plan International at large.

The Generation Change! Programme includes programmes with direct implementation in 15¹ countries across Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Middle East. Additional countries are reached via the regional programmes through the national civil society partners we work with. In total, 21 programmes are included in the Generation Change! Programme of which five² are regional programmes and three³ are multi-country or cross border. We are also preparing to phase in a number of new countries in the Generation Change! Programme; Haiti, Mali, Lebanon, and Myanmar. This research should be relevant and be able to inform the work in all countries, but approximately 5 countries will be identified as case studies, covering a variety of contexts and types of programs.

External existing research relevant for the scope may be used. Relevant research undertaken by Plan International and partners should be used for this research. These can contribute to context analysis, while most do not have an explicit focus on strategies or measures to respond to risks. For example:

- In collaboration with Reality of Aid, research on Enabling Environment for Youth and Children organizations, has been conducted in the following countries: Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, Rwanda, Zimbabwe, Swaziland, Malawi and Zambia, while Plan International Egypt and Uganda have conducted similar studies.
- A study on Civil Society Strengthening, including enabling environment, in Burkina Faso, Benin and Togo, 2017.
- A study on Civil Society Strengthening in Fragile, Conflict affected and disaster prone settings, with Haiti and Mali as case studies 2018 (within the previous framework program).
- In Latin America, two regional workshops and analysis by Plan and CSO partners.
- As part of the program design phase almost all programs/countries have carried out (mostly internally) a civil society context analysis focusing on the enabling environment for children and young people, which can equally be used as a starting point for this research.
- A tool is currently being developed that will be used to conduct contextualized and participatory analysis on the enabling environment e.g. for a specific organization or program.
- Analysis of particular contexts in Latin America has been developed by Plan and CSO partners as part of the piloting of the tool.
- Plan International Global Hub, has also carried out a study on shrinking space and youth driven influencing, but outside the scope of this framework program, 2018.

4. Main research questions

The following research questions should guide the research but may be revised as part of the inception report.

¹ Uganda, Cambodia, Bolivia, Timor Leste, Bangladesh, Guatemala, Togo, Colombia, Egypt, Malawi, Benin, Rwanda, Zambia, Thailand and Myanmar.

² 1) The Child Rights Governance programme in Asia, 2) the Multi-hazard Resilience School programme, 3) the Pan-African State Accountability programme, 4) the Regional programme in Latin America and 5) the CSO Effectiveness Programme in Eastern and Southern Africa.

³ 1) The SEAS of Change programme in Cambodia and Thailand, 2) the ASRHR programme in Thailand and Myanmar working with Burmese adolescents and youth, and 3) the Regional Youth Initiative programme.

1. *What are the main **risks and current implications caused by (shrinking) civic space** for a) Plan, formal and informal CSO partners b) children as activists and their organizations, c) young people as activists and their organizations, in particular girls and young women, in the Generation change! programmes?*
2. *What are the current strengths and weaknesses of the Generation change! Programs with regard to **safeguarding and risk management measures in relation to civic space**, while still supporting children and young people's as civil society actors in their own rights? How can the programs adopt more relevant safeguarding measures and adapt strategies to take the situation into account, including but not limited to relevant referral route protocols?*
3. *Informed by the above two research questions, **how can the "Civic Space flex fund initiative" best be used** (e.g. decision-making criteria) as complementary support to country and regional programmes, including CSO partners, for prevention, responses and protection in situations of shrinking or closed democratic space for civil society?*

5. Methodology

The research will be learning-oriented and partly evolve by the process itself. The research should start with a thorough desk study, including e.g. existing research and evaluations specified above. 5 countries will be identified, using pre-defined e.g. criteria, as case studies of which approximately 2-3 may be visited to conduct e.g. focus groups discussions and interviews with Plan key staff, CSO partner staff and children and young people engaged in the programs. The other case study countries may participate through e.g. online interviews and complementary in-depth online surveys. All countries in the Generation Change! Countries should be consulted via e.g. online surveys or similar. Overall a mix of both quantitative and qualitative methodology is recommended for conducting the research. The research partner will as part of the proposal submit suggested appropriate methodology, research framework, tools and work plan for evaluation, but which may be revised in as part of the inception report.

It is expected that the research partner will use gender-sensitive and (child/youth) participatory approaches. Inclusive techniques will be expected, to seek active participation in the research by respondents and other stakeholders.

The research will mainly be conducted in English, but depending on which case study countries that are identified some interviews will be conducted in e.g. French and Spanish (possibly with interpreter). Survey questionnaires will need to be translated to both Spanish and French, and potentially Arabic. Also the draft research report may need to be translated to Spanish and French for relevant feedback, but the use of appropriate online translation tools can be explored. The final research report will be delivered in English, but be translated into French and Spanish (specify in proposal if by the consultant or by Plan after).

The research partner will work closely with Plan International Sweden's Civil Society Strengthening and Partnership advisor, as well as the team of Civil Society Strengthening and Partnership advisors in place in each of the region of which the Generation Change! Program is implemented in. A regular dialogue, in order to agree on the way forward for key steps of the research and jointly solve challenges, is desired.

6. Deliverables of the research

The following deliverables are expected:

- **Inception report 1:** The inception report should be shared with Plan for input and include the following (as a minimum): Background; Purpose; Methodology and tools; Risk management; Research questions: It should also include a Detailed work plan, which specifies where team members plan to visit and when, and the days proposed for the visits. It should also indicate which team member will be responsible for which task. Respondents: This provides a preliminary list of the people that the team intends to interview or at least the types of people to be interviewed. Outstanding questions and issues: This is an opportunity for the research partner to highlight ambiguities, areas of concern, or contradictions that they would like the commissioning agency to address and clarify before the next stage of the evaluation.

- **Final inception report 2:** After having conducted the desk study the inception report may be updated in order to adjust e.g. methodology and detailed work plan, based on the findings.
- **Draft research report:** The draft report should be shared with Plan Sweden, the advisors team and relevant stakeholders for input.
- **Final research report:** The final report should include the following (as a minimum):
 - Standard cover sheet. Please add the following disclaimer: *"The material is financed by Sweden through Sida, the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency Sida does not necessarily share the opinions expressed herein. The sole responsibility of content belongs to author."*
 - Executive summary and key recommendations
 - Description of objectives, methods and limitations
 - Desk study results
 - Summary of collected data
 - Findings and analysis
 - Recommendations
 - Proposed guidelines (as defined in objective 3 and research questions)
 - Annexes e.g. terms of reference, interview questionnaire templates, and bibliography.
 - All materials produced by the study including soft copy of the report and raw data.
- **Sharing of findings and dissemination:** The research partner will present most significant findings to Plan and key stakeholders, to get their feedback on critical areas as agreed in the detailed work plan. The research partner will also be responsible for sharing key findings of the report in dissemination events (online, and potentially physically depending on the location of the research partner).

7. Risk management

Considering the focus of the research, ensuring confidentiality and anonymity of respondents will be essential when required due to the nature of the questions or the type of respondent. A section on risk management will therefore be part of the inception report. As the programs involves children and young people, whom themselves may be exposed to risks due to their activism, their safeguarding in the process of this research is particularly important. The research partner is also required to sign Plan International's "Safeguarding children and young people policy".

8. Budget and timeframe

The financial proposal and its budget will be assessed with a cost effective analysis ("value for money") e.g. considering the relevant qualifications related to the research topic, methodological approach and daily fee. The submitted proposed budget is subject for discussion and adjustment depending on the agreed work plan (including methodology) to be used.

Proposed terms of payment are: 50% of the agreed budget/fee is paid on approval of the inception report, and 50% on submission of approved final report. Professional fees, administrative costs related to transport, accommodation and stationary will be handled by the consultant.

The evaluation timeframe should allow for the following (tentative dates):

- Circulation of the draft inception report by 31st of January.
- Final inception report by 10 February.
- First draft of research report by 31 March.
- Final research report should be shared by 30 April.

9. Ethical and child protection Considerations

The researcher(s) must follow Ethical Principles for involving human subjects in a research and obtain written/ verbal consent from the human subjects. Permission from elder must be sought if children under 18 years are involved as respondents. The researcher(s) must ensure signed informed consent of each child and his/ her parents after explaining purpose of the study and its usage. Individual responses should not be shared to observe confidentiality of data. Plan has to ensure that no risk or harm is involved in this study. Study findings has to provide evidence to implementers and planners in that it will benefit the population overall. The researcher(s) should understand and sign child protection policy of Plan International at time of signing agreement with Plan. In case, the report contains photos;

the consultant has to take written consent from the photographed person, on a form that will be shared by Plan and should be submitted in original form separately along with final report. Moreover, to protect the children, do not use their real names when providing a quote in the report. The preferred style for giving reference to an individual child is to provide the false name instead of its real name, age and where he/she is from. The researcher(s) avoid plagiarism of any kind and abide by the principle of intellectual property and joint data ownership in the case of study carried out in collaboration with others.

10. Tenders and bid assessment

Requirements of the research partner

Potential partner for the research and collaboration could be academic research institute, non-governmental organisation or a consultancy team that would like to enter a partnership on this research. The research partner must have;

- A thorough understanding of different types of civil society actors- from international to community level - and contexts in all regions.
- Experience and skills related to *responding, protecting and promoting* civic space, including in contexts of shrinking and/or closed civic space.
- Sound experience and understanding of a rights based approach in programs, preferably child and/ or young people's rights.
- Has a learning oriented approach and ability to engage in a constructive dialogue
- Experience of gender transformative approaches in programs, as well as inclusion and intersectionality.
- Fluency in English, oral and written.

It is preferred that research partner:

- Has documented experience and child and youth-friendly methods and approaches
- Can communicate, orally and in written, in French and/or Spanish
- Being an institution or organization with particular focus on either civil society and civic space, or child and youth participation and governance. If so, long term partnership beyond this ToR may be explored if both parties found this particular research partnership successful.

Technical and Financial Proposal

Based on the above terms of reference, interested consultant(s) or organizations are required to submit a Technical and Financial proposal, latest [10th of December, 2019 to lena.kjellberg@plan-international.org](mailto:lana.kjellberg@plan-international.org).

The technical proposal should contain:

- Presentation of the understanding of the research assignment and focus.
- A proposed methodology for the quantitative and qualitative aspects of the assignment. As the methodology is somewhat flexible (is meant to evolve in dialogue with the research partner), new suggestions are possible to include.
- Possible risks and considerations identified by the consultant / team.
- A proposed work plan including dates for submission of the draft and final report.
- Evidence of availability of appropriate qualifications, experiences and key staff that will constitute the team.
- CVs of the assigned team member(s) detailing relevant experience.

The financial proposal must be submitted in *EURO or SEK* with a break up of all key activities and costs. The financial proposal may be revised before signing of contract, if Plan and the research partner agree on a revised technical proposal / work plan.

11. Annexes

Annex 1: Generation Change! Program proposal executive summary

Annex 2: Approach to Civil Society Strengthening (Generation Change programme!)

ANNEX 1: Executive summary Generation Change programme!

On behalf of Plan International and over one hundred civil society partners across the world, we hereby present the **Generation Change! Programme**, for the period 1 July 2019 – 30 June 2024. This Framework Programme will *contribute to a vibrant, dynamic and inclusive civil society, contributing to the fulfilment of children's and young people's rights and equality for girls in all contexts.* It will be achieved through gender transformative and rights based programmes, applying civil society strengthening as a programme approach and implemented at community, national and regional levels. The approach to, and the diversity of civil society partnerships - ranging from community based organisations and groups, to national coalitions and regional networks, whereof many youth-led - will be of fundamental importance for achieving our ambitions during the Framework period.

The world is facing a period of unprecedented change, both in terms of scope and speed. There are a number of inter-related trends that are creating opportunities through greater connections, increased access to digital and communications technology, and progress towards eradicating extreme poverty. However, there is also a number of challenges such as the shrinking democratic space for civil society, environmental degradation and climate change, push-backs against human rights and progressive values, and increased cross border migration caused by climate change, conflict, inequality and poverty. Violations of children's rights occur and children's voices, especially those of girls, are not sufficiently heard. As actors working for children's and young peoples' rights, Plan International and civil society partners need to be well prepared and agile enough to contribute to sustainable development in this complex reality.

Our Framework proposal to Sida has been designed in an effort to reflect the rights violations that children and young people are facing and at the same time recognise the contextual conditions and barriers for civil society to develop. It has been developed through a participatory process starting with a context analysis and the incorporation of learnings from the previous framework programmes and adherence to Plan International's new strategies and ways of working. The proposed Framework Programme is comprised of 21 distinct programmes that jointly contribute to the overall impact, but with contextualised priorities and strategies. Geographically, the Programme includes initiatives in countries where some of the worst violations of human and children's and particularly girls' rights are taking place. Through long-term support we aim to work in full spectrum and partner with civil society actors in fragile, conflict-affected and disaster-prone areas with new programmes in Haiti, Mali, Jordan and Lebanon.

Three impact areas have been prioritised; **1) sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR); 2) child protection;** and **3) participation and governance.** Civil society strengthening is recognised and applied as a key programme approach, including pre-defined components of: Space and Influence, Collaboration and Legitimacy and Diversity. All programmes integrate crosscutting perspectives on Gender and Inclusion, Conflict sensitivity and Environment and Climate Change. We focus on strengthening girls' agency and rights and apply a gender transformative approach to all our work. Across our Generation Change! Programme there is an increased focus on children and youth, especially girls, as active drivers of change, including partnering with their own organisations, and thereby enabling a new generation of civil society actors to emerge and thrive – a Generation Change!

It is envisaged that the Framework programme will gain momentum from the transformation journey which Plan International has embarked upon; to ensure that our global strategy is more than noble words on a page, and that staff are equipped with the necessary skills to, in relevant partnerships, deliver on the strategy.

ANNEX 2: Approach to Civil Society Strengthening – short summary from the Generation Change programme! Proposal.

Key guiding principles when working for Civil Society Strengthening

An important key assumption in the vision of a stronger civil society is that Plan International, as an International NGO (INGO), is part of *global* civil society. Often Plan International also plays a role as part of *local* civil society, always working in close partnership with other CSOs. Understanding the role that Plan International plays - or ideally should play - in each context is essential for building effective strategies to strengthen civil society.⁴ Plan International therefore strives to act and be recognised as a legitimate *agent of change* beyond just its funding or service-provision role. (See more on Plan International's added value as CSO under section 6.5.) In line with this the following principles applies to the work done together with CSO partners in the proposed Framework programme:

We recognise that CSOs need to prove their **connection and relevance to their constituency**⁵/**members** to be legitimate and effective in their work. In the case of Plan International, being an INGO, the closeness and connection to community-based collective actions, including partner organisations, including children, youth and girls led organisations, is key in ensuring our work reflects children's and young people's real interests and amplify their voices.

In the aspiration to strengthen civil society, it is essential to be **clear about what type of and what characteristics of civil society one intend to support**. Not all civil society actors are, or aspire to be, independent and based on democratic principles or genuinely share the vision on children's rights and equality for girls and young women.⁶ This is where the dimensions of legitimacy, representativeness and diversity of civil society serve as essential guiding principles for the Framework programme, especially in relation to children and young people.

The local ownership and autonomy of partners is a key principle in a consistent and effective Civil Society Strengthening (CSS) approach. Amongst others, it requires that Plan International acknowledge CSO partners to make their own decisions about where and on what they work, as well as actively identify their own needs for capacity strengthening. Thus, the Framework programme will continuously support an enhanced partnership approach (see partnership chapter).

In order to stay relevant, the Framework programme will continuously monitor and **adapt to the changing conditions and dynamics in civil society**, not least in the context of shrinking/closing space for civil society. Children and young people are often among the groups that are most affected by legal and political restrictions, threats and pressure, harmful social beliefs and norms in the context of shrinking or closed space for civil society. Girls and young women are especially affected.

The Framework programme will not only react and adapt to changing external conditions, but also at a more general level **contribute to a more enabling environment for civil society** – particularly for children's and young people's collective action. In the perspective of children's and young people's rights, the following aspects are of great concern. These questions were also part of the context analysis guidance that were made as part of the program planning process in the different countries, whereas the response from the consulted children and young people have informed the program approach and design. A few examples of questions and aspects guiding our work on enabling environment:

- To what extent are children and young people – especially girls and young women – supported or limited by adults and other duty-bearers to be members, leaders or form their own collective actions?
- What does the national legal framework for CSOs look like and what implications does it have specifically to children and youth organisations (e.g. registration rules, process, availability, and costs)?
- What does access to funding for CSOs, especially youth-led organisations, look like? Is access to funding regulated or monitored by the state, and if so - how?

⁴ Plan International's Programme and Influencing Approach March 2018

⁵ ...members or the group of individuals of whom interest the body is aspiring to promote or represent.

⁶ Often referred to as "GONGOs" i.e. Governmental NGOs.

- To what extent do CSOs for and of children and young people experience or feel threatened or pressured either by the government, private sector and/or public? Are there cases of violations towards organisations or their members, or "manipulations" to limit their work?
- To what extent are CSOs for and of children and young people able to influence government policy and public decision-making? Organised girls and young women specifically?

Components of civil society strengthening interventions

Civil society strengthening (CSS) can be made both at the individual level by mobilising community members, at the organisational level in strengthening existing civil society organisations, and at the wider level by enhancing the enabling environment. The Generation Change! Programme will work to strengthen civil society puts particular focus on supporting children and young people to organise themselves in groups, organisations or networks (organisations *of* children and young people). It also includes support to collective actions by adults working for the interest of children and young people (organisations *for* the rights of children and young people).

The CSS approach builds on three interrelated components assumed to contribute to a stronger civil society. Almost all programmes work with all the three components, but to varying degrees which will also depend on the starting point in terms of capacity. The different components require working in *partnerships* that – for example - integrate complementary competencies to those of Plan International's.

Primary change agents to support in the efforts to strengthen civil society are:

- Children's and young people's own collective actions
- Collective actions in favour of the rights of children and young people

