

Strategy to Strengthen Plan's Disaster Management

March 2007



Executive Summary of the Strategy to Strengthen Plan's Disaster Management

Overview

As an international, child-centred development organisation, Plan holds well-prepared disaster response as a priority. The vulnerability, dependence, and physical and emotional needs of children mean that the impacts of disasters are often more extremely felt by children than by other members of society. Plan aims to be prepared to respond with a child-centred community development (CCCD) approach to emergencies and disasters, commensurate with its overall priorities and resources.

The Strategy to Strengthen Plan's Disaster Management (hereafter referred to as 'the strategy') aims to reinforce preparation for disasters. Plan-wide disaster risk reduction practices will be supplemented by building a disaster response framework and skills capacity. Disaster response and risk reduction is set within Plan's rights-based principles, policies and strategies. Plan will work with communities to prepare for and respond to disasters which threaten children's rights and needs. Disaster management approaches in Plan are integrated with its work on child protection, child-centred community development, youth engagement and with vulnerable children.

The intention of the strategy is to ensure Plan responds to the vulnerable situations that children and their families face in disasters, and to do so in a consistent way across the organisation. Plan recognizes that it is not a disaster response agency, but will respond to disasters with a long-term development vision in a manner commensurate with its vision, mission, reach, size and capacity. The focus of the organisation will always be children, their families and their communities, and child-centred development will remain Plan's programming approach.

Goal

Plan will become an effective and recognised humanitarian response and disaster risk reduction actor, known for its particular focus on children, and for the integration of its disaster response and disaster risk reduction work with its long-term development programs. Plan will reinforce and expand its ability to respond appropriately to disasters. It aims to be prepared for disasters through disaster risk reduction practices being embedded throughout Plan, as well as having a clear and operational disaster response framework.

Strategic Objectives

The strategic objectives aim to enable Plan to strengthen its ability to respond to disasters. Each disaster will require a different response; Plan aims to respond to each appropriately.

In line with its overall priorities and resources, Plan's disaster response strategic objectives are to do its best to:

Objective One – Integrate disaster risk reduction practices into all Plan programs

Plan aims to integrate risk management principles and disaster risk reduction practices in all programs.

It is important that the investment made into Plan's child-centred development projects is safeguarded through disaster risk reduction programming. Plan aims to analyse disaster and emergency threats wherever it operates and provide early warning where and when possible.

Disaster risk reduction provides the link between humanitarian disaster response and development. A coherent approach to chronic and predictable crises can decrease vulnerability and empower communities to be resilient to the impact of natural hazards, protect development gains and prevent future development losses, and promote consistent and strategic funding. This approach begins with rigorous assessment of the risks facing Plan's development work and continues with mitigation and risk reduction work commensurate with the identified risks.

By facilitating community ownership and youth involvement in disaster risk reduction activities, Plan will remain true to its child-centred community development (CCCD) methodology, enhance accountability to the children

and families with whom it works, and increase the likelihood of communities returning to normality as soon as possible after disasters. Developing robust and replicable risk reduction practices, encouraging the integration of children and young people into all aspects of the project cycle, should also contribute to constructive changes in international policies and practice. Plan will advocate the inclusion of disaster risk reduction practices into international, national and community development planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation.

Objective Two – Develop disaster response capacity

Plan aims to develop systems and procedures to ensure swift and appropriate allocation of resources and capable staff in response to disasters.

Plan will reinforce its disaster response capacity, building a disaster response organisation structure and formalising a decision-making framework. Strengthening the disaster response capacity will enable Plan to become more effective. Plan aims to develop and adopt clear lines of control, emergency funding sources, and systems and structures to ensure rapid responses to disasters. Plan acknowledges its existing framework partnership agreements with donors and will build on these relationships by developing similar partnership arrangements with other donors.

Plan aims to have a clear decision-making framework which identifies the scale of a disaster and what Plan's response will be, including the type of funding that will be needed.

While all children must be treated equally, Plan has a particular obligation to children in its partner communities with a duty to assist these communities in the aftermath of a disaster. While the duty to assist is clear, there may be times when Plan has limited capacity to assist directly; in these cases, the decision-makers must react quickly to decide the extent of Plan's direct or indirect intervention. There are also cases in which Plan does not operate in a country or region, yet the decision-makers decide Plan's involvement in responding to a disaster is necessary: clear structures, protocols and funding need to be established for these interventions.

Objective Three – Build Plan employees' capability to respond professionally to disasters

Plan aims for staff to have the ability to respond to disasters, fundraise, and to manage public relations and policy work.

Plan aims to respond professionally to emergencies and crises, so intends its staff to have specific and complementary skills for responding to disasters, fundraising, public relations and policy work. Plan aims to develop capacity to respond to disasters according to internationally agreed standards.

Plan recognises that it has a responsibility to ensure staff safety: a security strategy is essential to counter the risks faced by Plan staff working in disaster response and other situations where staff are exposed to physical danger or threats. The development and promotion of security management policies and procedures will reduce the level of personal and organisational vulnerability and will enhance staff confidence and operational performance when responding to disasters.

Objective Four – Ensure the Strategy to Strengthen Plan's Disaster Management is understood throughout the organisation and with partners

Plan aims to ensure all staff and partners understand the strategy to respond to emergencies and crises.

This objective aims to ensure Plan staff and partners globally understand the strategy to respond to emergencies and crises, which is in line with the Policy on Disaster Response as well as resource and program constraints. Plan aims to be well-prepared to respond with a child-centred community development approach to emergencies and disasters, commensurate with our overall priorities and resources.