Rights-based approach to development
Learning from Plan Guatemala

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Cover image: © Plan / Alf Berg
Children from the Vista Hermosa Xalija pre school, San Pedro Carcha PU.
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Foreword

The question of what role international organisations should play in the domestic development processes has been debated for decades. The introduction of human rights into this debate has offered a new possible answer, an answer that requires a new outlook, new strategies and new perspectives on development. Plan Guatemala has embraced this challenge since 2004 in a way that is to be commended. The organisation’s strategic transition towards a rights-based approach (RBA) represents a fundamental reflection process on the means and ends of development, which has resulted in an approach that provides new impetus to the debate on how best to combine human rights and development.

The goal of my work with Plan was to evaluate and systematise Plan’s shift and to learn from the organisation’s experience of the past five years. The results of this work are summarised in this document, and hopefully serve as useful lessons for anybody interested in working in the area of human rights and development. The document also contains strategic reflections about the future of RBA. These reflections advocate for a more practical understanding of the actual exercise of human rights and on the relationship between poverty, democracy and human rights. Combining political action with a sincere commitment to the lives of marginalised people and groups is the greatest benefit that human rights can bring to our work for social progress.

I thank Plan for its genuine support throughout this project, and I hope that the organisation continues with the same openness, passion and willingness to improve its work on behalf of the children it serves in Guatemala.

Uwe Gneiting
Berlin, Germany, February 2010
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<td>child-focused versions of community development councils</td>
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<td>municipal children’s government</td>
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<td>Convention on the Rights of the Child</td>
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<td>grassroots organisation</td>
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<td>gross domestic product</td>
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<td>human development index</td>
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<td>PHAST</td>
<td>Participatory Health and Sanitation Transformation</td>
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<td>RBA</td>
<td>rights-based approach</td>
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<td>SOSEP</td>
<td>Social Works of the First Lady of Guatemala</td>
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1. Executive summary

This report is the result of a collaborative research project between Plan Guatemala and the Moynihan Institute of Global Affairs at Syracuse University. The objective of this project is to provide Plan Guatemala with an independent examination of the organisation’s strategic transition towards a rights-based approach (RBA). The report is divided into three main parts: 1) an assessment of Plan’s interpretation of a rights-based approach, how this approach is compatible with commonly accepted RBA criteria and how it is applicable to the Guatemalan context; 2) an investigation of how Plan has managed to translate this new strategy into action and how the organisation’s different programmes have implemented the new strategy and; 3) an evaluation of the early results of Plan’s new strategy and of the limitations to its implementation, as well as the trade-offs Plan will have to face.

The project was designed as a qualitative interview study involving a total of 121 activities carried out between February and May 2009. Interviews were conducted with a variety of stakeholders, including Plan staff, community members and government representatives. The researcher was embedded with Plan Guatemala for the duration of the fieldwork.

The project found that Plan’s rights-based strategy is in line with commonly accepted RBA criteria, in particular the organisation’s emphasis on the relationship between duty bearers and rights holders. Plan attributes an important role to the government as a duty bearer (and its responsibility for delivering services to local communities) and aims at transforming passive recipients of aid into active rights holders. Plan has broadly aligned its activities with the international human rights framework based on the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) but makes stronger use of the national legal framework. In its programming decisions, Plan uses the human rights framework primarily as a means to improve results and impact, not as its underlying basis for action. Despite the adoption of RBA, Plan continues to take a predominantly technical approach to its government and community interactions, focusing on supporting institutions in their provision of services and building the capacities of both duty bearers and rights holders. Plan acts primarily as a contractual partner working with the government, rather than an advocacy
organisation challenging government policies on behalf of people living in poverty and children. Plan does not yet use RBA as a tool to address discrimination and exclusion as key sources of unequal power relations between government and people.

Plan’s current strategy is appropriate for the particular social and political context of Guatemala. The country’s high level of inequality and comparatively low human development indicators suggest that exclusion and discrimination are at the root of poverty in the country. A rights-based approach aimed at increasing government services to rural and excluded populations is therefore a sensible approach. In consideration of Guatemala’s violent history, the prevalent scepticism towards political activism and a lack of trust in political institutions and the democratic system, Plan has chosen a local focus on strengthening the capacities of citizens and governments. The organisation has developed a non-confrontational approach towards governmental actors both on the national and municipal level. In order for people to claim their rights in a non-violent manner, Plan has so far emphasised the practical exercise of rights instead of formal human rights education and citizen mobilisation.

The evaluation revealed that Plan has succeeded in diffusing its new strategic approach across the different levels of its organisation. Plan staff demonstrated a coherent vision of what it means to work with RBA and expressed a high level of affirmation for the new strategy. The most significant changes of Plan’s work are the redefinition of Plan’s relations with communities and a greater engagement with government institutions on a municipal and national level. The benefits of the new strategy most commonly mentioned were greater agency and empowerment of communities and more sustainable impact because the government is slowly assuming its responsibility and takes over the provision of services from Plan. Respondents acknowledged the profoundness of the change and the personal dimension that was part of the adjustment.

Plan’s strategic change is not only visible in the organisation’s strategic plans but has also found its way into the implementation of its programmes on the ground. Plan’s relationship with local communities has shifted from technical interactions to
more cooperative partnerships geared towards enabling the pursuit of their own development objectives. The organisation is now seeking the involvement of government institutions in all of its programmes and projects and coordinates its activities with local and national government actors. Plan has managed to establish cooperative relationships with a variety of government institutions and agencies and has helped them increase their ability to fulfil their human rights obligations. After five years of implementing its new strategy, Plan has proved that its strategic approach can be effective and that it is feasible for an international development organisation to contribute constructively to the strengthening of democracy and the fulfilment of human rights in Guatemala.

Plan’s programmes have changed to varying degrees. While programmes with a clear constitutional duty bearer, such as health and education, predominantly focus on the strategic principle of constitutional responsibility by respective ministries, other programmes, such as water, participation and protection exhibit a more multi-dimensional rights-based approach, involving greater focus on citizen participation and education, the involvement of various government actors, and a greater focus on municipal level engagement. Plan’s strategic principles have guided the organisation in its strategic approach but have been implemented with different levels of success. The report shows that the implementation of inclusion and solidarity as core principles lags behind.

Plan’s work has been most effective using two of five avenues that have the potential to improve human rights significantly. Plan has worked extensively to affect the attitudes and behaviour of rights holders (both adults and children) and has heavily invested in supporting government institutions in the implementation of programmes. However, three other human rights-related factors have not gained the same kind of attention and emphasis: 1) legislation and policies on a national level; 2) the strengthening of democratic spaces and processes and; 3) civic (or collective) action. While Plan’s results to date constitute a significant achievement, there are many additional opportunities for the organisation to increase its impact based on RBA.
Plan has managed to find strategic ways of combining the organisation’s long history and expertise in community-level work with its new commitment to a rights-based approach. By focusing its efforts on facilitating the interaction between duty bearers and rights holders on a municipal level, Plan takes a bottom-up approach to rights-based development that differs from strategies of other rights-based development organisations. Despite the organisation’s new rights-based approach, Plan continues to take a predominantly technical approach in its interactions with government and communities, focusing on increasing capacities on both sides. While this approach has proved to yield positive results in the short term, it remains to be seen if this non-confrontational and apolitical understanding of RBA is sufficient to challenge some of the structural causes that are at the root of poverty in Guatemala. In the future, the identity of a rights-based organisation may more directly challenge the organisational confines of a traditional child sponsorship organisation.

The research concluded with six recommendations for Plan’s future strategic orientation. First, we recommend that Plan more explicitly acknowledges, analyses, and addresses the lack of inclusion and the differences of power that exist on a communal, municipal and national level. This is particularly important in Plan’s situation analysis work, and in its facilitation and monitoring of community assemblies, community and municipal development councils and children’s groups. Second, Plan should facilitate the expansion of citizen participation beyond project identification and prioritisation to include monitoring the quality, coverage, accessibility and costs of government services in order to strengthen government accountability. Third, Plan should go beyond a technical approach to RBA and increase its political activity and place a greater emphasis on advocacy efforts on a national and regional level in order to address structural causes of poverty in Guatemala. This applies in particular to CRC reporting, the dissemination of the Law of Free Access to Information and implementation and increased government budget allocations to social services. Fourth, Plan should foster partnerships with local civil society organisations of a non-contractual nature, in order to increase the influence and capacity of communities in the local democratic process and to increase their ability to link with one another and to speak with one, unified voice. Fifth, Plan should define more explicitly how a rights-based approach affects its own role and
relationship with local communities. While Plan’s non-confrontational approach has enabled strong relationships with government and community leaders, it likely limits the transformative power of a rights-based approach. Moreover, Plan should develop more downward accountability mechanisms towards the communities the organisation works with, recognising its own power towards them while allowing community members to internalise a rights-based view by learning and applying those mechanisms in their interaction with Plan. Sixth, Plan should ensure the sustainability of its work and address emerging new forms of dependencies. While local communities are now less dependent on Plan’s direct material support, they now rely on Plan to facilitate and organise activities. Political instability and lack of resources also limit the ability of the government to deliver services without Plan’s support. Plan should develop strategies that address those weaknesses and make both citizens and government less reliant on the organisation’s presence.
2. Introduction

This report is the result of a collaborative research project between Plan Guatemala and the Moynihan Institute of Global Affairs at Syracuse University. The objective of this project is to provide Plan Guatemala with an independent examination of its strategic transition towards a rights-based approach (RBA). The findings of this research will also serve as a basis for a case study providing academics and practitioners with insights into Plan’s experience in moving from a predominantly service-delivery to a rights-based approach to development. The primary audience of this report is Plan Guatemala.

The project is divided into three main areas of inquiry. First, the research team aimed to gain an understanding of Plan’s interpretation of what it means to work with a rights-based approach. How Plan understands the intersection of human rights and development and how it translates this understanding in its programmatic strategy was at the core of this first part of the investigation. In addition, we asked if this particular strategy represented an adequate and feasible approach for the political, social and cultural context in Guatemala. In the next section, the team investigated how Plan has managed to translate this new strategy into action. We investigated if the new strategy had been diffused throughout the organisation and how the different programmes had implemented the new strategy. Finally, the team identified some of the early results of Plan’s new strategy and also investigated limitations to its implementation. Following from these observations, conclusions on Plan’s strategy were drawn and suggestions for future action were formulated.

The task of evaluating a particular rights-based approach of an international development organisation poses a number of challenges. The convergence of human rights and development constitutes a broad and complex field of inquiry. Although there is a general agreement among scholars and practitioners on what common goals and principles a rights-based approach should entail, there is not one correct way of implementing RBA. A strategic shift informed by RBA is contingent on the particular organisation’s mandate, resources and other characteristics, the particular role and meaning that the organisation attributes to human rights in its
development efforts and the geographical, political and social conditions in the communities where this approach is implemented.

a. Research process

The project was designed as a qualitative interview study involving a variety of participants both inside and outside of the organisation. A total of 121 activities were carried out between February and May 2009, involving individual interviews, focus group interviews, and internal group discussions with Plan Guatemala. The participants of these activities included management and staff of Plan Guatemala, representatives of national government institutions and municipal governments, adults and children in the communities where Plan works, members of partner organisations and other international NGOs that work with a rights-based approach, and external experts.

The researcher was embedded with Plan Guatemala for the duration of the fieldwork. The project design and planning process was carried out collaboratively by the research team and Plan Guatemala, which secured complete access and support to the researcher for the duration of the project. The researcher visited all programme sites of Plan Guatemala and interacted with partners and programme participants at all these sites. Because of its greater local expertise, Plan programme unit staff selected the participants on the community and municipal level. The extended field research period of three months allowed the researcher to gain substantive insights into Plan’s internal processes, the culture of the organisation, and the particular interpretation and application of its rights-based approach.

The focus of the project design was primarily process-oriented, giving the researcher team insights into the dynamics, relationships and processes associated with the strategic transition to a rights-based understanding of development work. Given the short time frame since the initial implementation of the new strategy (first adopted in 2005), we decided to focus our evaluation of the feasibility and appropriateness of RBA for Plan in Guatemala on two areas. These were, in the first place, the opinions expressed by various
stakeholders and, in the second, in-depth qualitative investigations of specific early outcomes in the five primary rights areas selected by Plan (health, education, participation, water and protection). However, the findings of this investigation were also compared to quantitative data from Plan’s internal monitoring system and to a results-oriented programme evaluation carried out during the same time period.

b. Why it is important to think about strategy

During the past decade the international development community has been exposed to significant internal and external criticism questioning the effectiveness, accountability, and sustainability of their work. After decades of heavy investment by northern donors and governments in international development programmes and projects, the impact of these efforts are today viewed by many experts as limited. In response, international development agencies have participated in various projects to learn from past development experiences and to rethink their approach to development. Joint initiatives to set standards for effective and accountable development work, such as the Paris Declaration or the Sphere Project among others, are exemplary results of this reflection process.

As joint initiatives proliferated, many international development organisations started to rethink their individual strategic approach to development. Following a period of dominant market-driven and technical approaches, a growing number of donors and NGOs began to adopt RBA as a new framework for their efforts to eliminate poverty and create sustainable economic growth. With RBA, underlying structural causes of poverty, including unequal power relations, exclusion, discrimination and inequality, move towards the centre of developmental efforts. This new focus on underlying political, cultural and social causes of poverty created unfamiliar challenges for development work previously accustomed to more circumscribed, technical interventions within a service-driven approach. Organisations using RBA will typically spend more time analysing root causes of poverty, pay greater attention to the most excluded groups and link their strategic response and programmatic planning
process more directly to a thorough analysis of political, economic and social conditions.

Plan has joined this period of reflection both on a national and an international level. Internationally, the organisation is slowly moving away from a traditional service-delivery approach and has officially declared its Child Centred Community Development (CCCD) approach to programming a rights-based approach.\textsuperscript{1} On a national level, Plan Guatemala has critically investigated its achievements of more than two decades of work and has questioned the sustainability and effectiveness of its previous work. This examination of the organisation’s work opened the door for the adoption of RBA. Plan’s current strategic approach (PT 2010) is a first attempt to address root causes of poverty and it has fundamentally changed the way the organisation understands its own role. After nearly five years of implementing this strategy, an assessment of its validity and feasibility is an important and necessary process, which will help Plan Guatemala to continue to improve and adapt its strategic orientation.

\textsuperscript{1} Plan International (2008)
3. Plan’s rights-based approach in comparative perspective

The growing popularity of rights-based approaches and their adoption by a variety of international development organisations have led to a wide range of rights-based interpretations, strategies, tools and programme approaches. As a result, there is not one rights-based approach to development. In order to assess Plan’s rights-based approach from a conceptual perspective, this section will identify core characteristics of RBA and compare those with Plan’s own interpretation of these key insights.

a. RBA sees human rights as both the means and the end of development

Introducing human rights norms to development broadens the base of any engagement by adding a set of universal and indivisible civil, political, social, economic and cultural rights as constitutive and instrumental for development. RBA changes both the goals of the development work and the processes used to reach those goals. Understanding poverty as a violation of human rights leads to a more profound understanding of the dimensions and causes of poverty, which consequently leads to a change in processes and strategies of how to address these causes.3

An organisation’s overall goals are generally summarised in its mission statement. Plan Guatemala, as a branch of Plan International, orients itself toward the mission statement of Plan International. Plan International’s mission statement mentions human rights instrumentally as a process to improve the quality of life of children (not as the goal of its work).4 With regards to the organisation’s programming approach, the current definition of Plan International’s programming approach is clearly articulated as a “rights-based approach … to address structural causes of child poverty”, indicating that Plan International uses RBA as the underlying framework of its

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2 The description of the core RBA characteristics draws on a variety of authors, including Uvin (2004), Sen (1999), Harris-Curtis (2003), Nelson (2008), Chapman (2005), Gready and Ensor (2005).

3 Paragraphs in italics indicate the general criteria against which Plan Guatemala’s rights-based approach was evaluated.

4 Mission statement, retrieved from website ‘About Plan’ (plan-international.org/about-plan)
programming approach.\textsuperscript{5} While there are signs that Plan International is transitioning towards becoming more of a rights-based organisation, it is the researchers’ perception that the organisation to date primarily utilises human rights as a tool for analysis and as a guide for programming, but it does not see the fulfilment of human rights as its core mission. An examination of the strategic programme goals of Plan Guatemala confirms a similar finding at the national level. Although human rights are not mentioned explicitly, language, such as “to assure access to health services …” (health programme of Plan Guatemala) indicates a rights-based understanding to programming (i.e. working towards the assumption of responsibility by the state as duty bearer).\textsuperscript{6}

As a result of the application of human rights to Plan Guatemala's programming and less to the overall organisation, human rights play a predominantly instrumental role. They represent a strategic tool that guides the organisation in its programmatic decision making by identifying the state as duty bearer and by supporting the ability of rural communities to claim their rights. Rights-based tools, such as participation and empowerment, and concepts, such as constitutional responsibility and the relationship between rights holders and duty bearers, are frequently mentioned in Plan’s strategic plan and play an important role in Plan’s overall strategic approach to its work in Guatemala. At the same time, human rights and development remain separate concepts for Plan. While Plan defines itself as a development organisation (not a human rights organisation), it utilises human rights concepts as a strategic instrument to involve government institutions and to mobilise citizens. Human rights play a lesser role in internal processes or organisational conduct and, as a result, remain an external concept. Consequently, they do not appear to have the same influence on Plan itself that Plan advocates for the interaction between the Guatemalan state and its citizens.

\textsuperscript{5} Plan International (2008)

\textsuperscript{6} Plan Guatemala (2004)
b. RBA addresses root causes of poverty and attempts to change power relations

By seeing poverty as a violation of human rights, the perspective on the underlying causes of poverty changes from being technical (lack of resources) to being structural. The acknowledgment of the critical importance of systematic factors, such as exclusion, discrimination and inequality, are at the heart of RBA. Unequal power relations are central to the perpetuation of structural injustices and resultant persistent poverty. In addressing these power relations, development work shifts from charitable neutrality to advocacy aimed at challenging powerful actors and their policies. Scholars generally agree that while charity is apolitical, the assertion of rights always is political.

Plan’s RBA attempts to address structural causes of persisting poverty in Guatemala. Plan works exclusively in rural communities, which are generally the most excluded and neglected areas. By enabling the government to extend its efforts in these areas, it emphasises the government's responsibility to ensure the universal access to basic rights, such as health services or primary education. Previously, Plan did not engage consistently with government institutions, selectively took over services the government should provide, and used external resources to finance most of its programmes on its own. With this new approach, Plan is developing more sustainable and domestic solutions to promote human development in Guatemala. It supports government programmes by providing technical expertise and temporal financing to jump start government action. The two most illustrative examples of this approach are the agreements that Plan Guatemala has reached with the ministries of health and education. Both of these agreements have as their long-term goal the complete handover of all of Plan’s current activities to the government. Besides these concrete agreements, Plan has also fulfilled a more intangible role by raising awareness of government officials about the systematic neglect of rural populations in Guatemala. As one programme
manager of Plan explained, “One of our greatest achievements is that we have made these communities visible again to the government.”

However, Plan’s rights-based approach remains a work in progress. In its attempt to involve the state as the duty bearer, Plan takes a predominantly technical approach to its government interactions, focusing on supporting institutions in the provision of services. As a result, Plan acts primarily as a contractual partner of the government and less as a lobbying advocate for people living in poverty, which leaves the unequal power relations between government and people mostly unaffected. The focus of cooperation between Plan and the government is in executing existing government programmes and in supporting the government with technical expertise and resources. While this is an improvement from Plan’s previous approach (since it attributes a more explicit responsibility to the state), it falls short of a rights-based approach. While the areas of health and education offer hopeful signs of a government taking responsibility, these commitments are primarily driven by the provision of expertise by Plan and individual leaders within the government, rather than by a self-sustaining relationship of accountability between the government and its citizens. This means that government programmes may be discontinued if leadership changes or Plan withdraws from these areas. As one government representative explained:

We will never be able to do the same work without Plan since we do not have the same strong ties to communities, we do not have the technical expertise and we do not have the human and financial resources to execute all this on our own.

The failure of the central government to fulfil its human rights obligations is not merely a question of lacking resources or capacity, but is closely linked to existing patterns of discrimination and inequality. One external expert pointed

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7 Interview by Uwe Gneiting with Plan Guatemala executive staff member, conducted in Guatemala City, 10 February 2009

8 Interview by Uwe Gneiting with head of municipal government, conducted in Morales, Guatemala, 5 March 2009
out that clientelism, corruption and discrimination against rural and indigenous populations are deeply rooted in the Guatemalan political system and undermine the state’s ability to fulfil its human rights obligations.\(^9\) The same expert cautioned that international agencies such as Plan are not likely to be able to change those systemic conditions on their own. Another external informant remarked, “How can Plan expect its work to be sustainable if it works within an unsustainable system?”\(^10\) As we will show later in this report, Plan’s work in health and education has led to positive results, which are a result of a more direct and cooperative partnership with the central government. And, although the sustainability of these efforts is not guaranteed, they do constitute an improvement compared to the project-oriented, isolated development programmes and projects of the past. In order to make the organisation’s results more sustainable, Plan would have to push further towards a more political approach and develop strategies explicitly aimed at facilitating direct accountability of the government towards people living in poverty as well as institutionalising poverty-action policies in existing government programmes and laws.

c. RBA attributes a clear role to the state as duty bearer and transforms passive aid recipients into active rights holders

*RBA identifies the state as the principal duty bearer to respect, protect and fulfil human rights. RBA does not only require the state to abstain from violations (acts of commission) but also puts emphasis on the government’s responsibility to actively advance all rights and avoid contributing to violations through neglect and failure to act (acts of omission). The goal is to transform passive recipients of services into active rights holders by giving priority to individual responsibility, agency and greater participation of people in all decisions that affect their lives. The relationship between a government and its people changes, as a result, from one of benevolence to obligation, where*

\(^9\) Presentation by Fernando Carrera, economist, Guatemala City, 17 April 2009

\(^10\) Interview by Uwe Gneiting with education specialist of the Inter-American Development Bank, conducted in Guatemala City, 22 April 2009
governments are held accountable by their citizens for their actions and omissions.

Plan has adopted a clear focus on the duality of duty bearers and rights holders and their relationship with each other. It is the central concept of Plan’s rights-based approach. In the simplest terms, Plan expresses its rights-based approach in the formula: duty bearers + rights holders = RBA.\(^\text{11}\) In each of the five rights areas, Plan has attempted to identify the constitutional duty bearer (i.e. ministry or other government agency) and has managed to engage these institutions. This approach has been more feasible in the areas where a clear responsibility is attributed to a specific state institution, such as education (ministry of education) and health (ministry of health). In the other rights areas in which Plan works (water, participation, protection), the responsibility of ensuring the protection and fulfilment of a particular human right is less clear and Plan is forced to engage with a variety of government institutions both on a national and municipal level.

Across all of Plan’s activities, violations of child rights occur for many different reasons and the government is not the only party with a significant ability to affect the human rights of children. Plan acknowledges this by addressing the important role of community members in its programmes (for example, ensuring that all children are sent to school by their parents or that water quality is improved by improved hygienic habits). However, Plan strictly differentiates between the legal human rights obligations of the state as a duty bearer and the obligations of others, including citizens, parents, or teachers. While prioritising legal obligations in its current strategic programming is central to establishing the basic responsibilities of the government, Plan should also invest in increasing the awareness of other duty bearers capable of affecting the dignity and rights of children. Since the idea of human rights points well beyond the law, legal obligations only represent a starting point for the enjoyment and expansion of rights.

\(^{11}\) Gomez, Ricardo (2006)
Plan has also made substantial efforts to change its relationship with local communities from a provider–recipient relationship to a facilitator–rights holder relationship. The active participation of community members is an integral part of Plan’s work in each of its programmes and is a stark improvement from its previous efforts. Successful examples of community participation can be observed particularly in Plan’s protection programme (community protection networks) and its participation programme (strengthened community organisations and organised children’s groups). However, Plan does not place a priority on explicitly declaring community members as rights holders. General human rights education has not been the central focus of Plan’s work. Except for Plan’s participation and protection programmes, in which Plan disseminates national legislation to raise awareness of people about their legal rights, the focus of Plan’s capacity-building activities is predominantly directed onto applied practices. These are enabling people to achieve more to ensure the protection of children’s rights, such as adopting healthy sanitation habits and parenting styles, findings illustrated in interviews with community members. When asked about activities Plan had conducted in the community, the issue of human rights was rarely mentioned. One of Plan’s executives expressed this practical RBA approach by saying, “We are not trying to make a custom out of the law but instead law out of custom.”12 In other words, Plan takes a distinct approach to raising awareness about child rights in its communities. In Plan’s first phase of its rights-based approach, it emphasises the concept of learning by doing by encouraging the exercise of rights rather than education about rights. While we acknowledge the complications of introducing human rights concepts to communities that are unfamiliar with them, we suggest that knowing about rights and exercising them are complementary and should not be seen as separate, sequential steps. While Plan’s current emphasis may not be on teaching community members about their rights, knowledge of rights and their significance might already provide individuals with arguments in politically

12 Interview by Uwe Gneiting with members of Plan Guatemala’s Community Development Team, conducted in Jalapa, Guatemala, 23 March 2009
contentious situations and give them new tools to overcome their powerlessness towards government authorities.

d. RBA increases participation

*Human rights and participation are closely tied. Participation is a right itself, but also a critical tool for people to claim and exercise their rights. The active participation of people in all decisions affecting their lives is a necessary element of levelling the playing field in interactions with other, more powerful actors. Empowerment through participation is therefore at the heart of RBA. Participation from an RBA perspective is not only focused on the ability of individuals to effectively claim rights in interactions with political authorities, but also plays a crucial role within the development work by including those affected by interventions in all aspects of decision making throughout all phases of the programme cycle.*

Participation is a priority of Plan’s strategy. It is one of the five human rights that Plan promotes and it is anticipated that it will be the dominant area of work in the foreseeable future. Plan views participation as the transversal theme that spans across all other programme areas. In Plan’s vision, participation will soon become the dominant programme area primarily because people increase their capacity to claim and exercise their rights on their own. Apart from a strong focus on political participation, Plan also considers participation in its operational work. The active participation of children is one of the five strategic principles that Plan applies in all of the organisation’s programmes and, as a result, a variety of children’s groups have been formed in the communities, such as school governments and community youth promoters. Plan has also used participatory techniques in its planning and diagnostic work (for example in a participatory study about child abuse and maltreatment and a participatory diagnostic study in a new programme area). However, these activities were primarily designed to gather information rather than enable participants to have direct influence on Plan’s

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[13 Plan Guatemala (2004)]
decision-making process. It can therefore be concluded that neither adults nor children appear to have had many opportunities for input into Plan’s decisions on what type of activities it carries out in the communities and how these activities are designed and carried out. Instead Plan has focused its efforts on strengthening the capacity of communities to organise and to participate politically both within their community and via the local government.

The conception of participation in Plan’s strategy yields interesting insights into the relationship between rights and participation under a RBA. In the case of Plan Guatemala, the focal point of participation has shifted away from the space between communities and the NGO towards the political space between citizens and government authorities. Plan justifies the primary focus on political participation by pointing to the government’s role as primary duty bearer and its legal responsibility towards its citizens. Plan holds that participation of individual community members in Plan’s activities is always voluntary and is different from the relationship between a government and its subjects. Plan also claims that the organisation’s mandate is primarily based on universal human rights contained in international treaties, such as the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC). Since the Guatemalan government is a party to those treaties, Plan has no obligation to consult with communities about the issue areas of its activities.

While Plan can derive some legitimacy from international treaties and the constitution, we offer two arguments for why expanding local participation in Plan’s decision-making processes will strengthen the organisation’s impact. Firstly, Plan is likely to increase the effectiveness of its rights-based work by allowing communities to participate in the interpretation of human rights for their daily lives. International treaties, such as the CRC provide only general guidelines in terms of the substance and scope of a particular human right. The translation of those rights into practice happens on a local level. In order to facilitate the adoption of a rights-based view by local communities, Plan should develop spaces where rights can be discussed and interpreted by adults and children. Secondly, while prioritising political participation of
communities is a valuable step forward, Plan will benefit from making explicit the power relations created by Plan’s presence as a resource-rich international actor. While its role is not similar to a government, its activities have consequences for communities and any decisions Plan takes may violate the right of people to participate in policies affecting their lives. While Plan may not be legally obligated in the same way as the government is, it should view more comprehensive participation as a prudent strategy designed to increase not only its own legitimacy as an external actor, but also to strengthen its sustainable impact.

**e. RBA requires implementing a rights perspective within the organisation**

*Human rights have not only an instrumental but also an intrinsic value. In addition to addressing root causes of poverty, RBA requires an organisation to look inward and acknowledge the power relations that emerge as a result of the interactions between a resource-rich external actor and the local population. Human rights principles are equally applicable internally and need to be considered in all internal processes and throughout all phases of the programme cycle. As one scholar put it, “RBA starts at home.”*

Plan has made efforts to include human rights principles in its programming work that go beyond the strategic duty bearer–rights holder duality. It has abandoned the traditionally exclusive approach of child sponsorship (i.e. offering benefits only to sponsored children and their families) and has made progress to work more inclusively in communities. Plan now ensures in all its programmes that benefits of programmes and projects are distributed across the entire community. For example, school utensils are now given to schools and handed out to all students, and no longer given to individual families. By working increasingly with municipal governments, Plan also manages to work more inclusively since municipal programmes generally apply to all communities within the municipality and not only the ones in which Plan’s

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14 Uvin (2004)
sponsored children live. Furthermore, Plan has taken initial steps to apply human rights internally and to become more participatory in its decision-making processes. The management style appears participatory and inclusive, thus facilitating an open environment of discussion and free expression. Plan has created a democratic forum (Child Centred Community Development [CCCD] Committee) that links different levels of the organisation and has played an instrumental role in the creation and diffusion of the new strategy.

However, the efforts of Plan to apply human rights internally remain limited. Plan primarily views human rights as a strategic tool enabling government action in promoting the rights of citizens and fostering engagement with its citizens. Plan insists on not being a duty bearer because it is concerned that this would reintroduce expectations of Plan as a provider of resources and services. Plan staff reported that this attitude was prevalent during Plan’s previous strategy and has created a high level of dependency of communities. Preventing dependency of local communities is an important step forward, but it should not be understood as a limit to the accountability of Plan towards those affected by its work. Plan’s power as an international NGO lies in its resources, expertise, the organisation’s reach and its international links.

In order to become a more effective organisation in applying RBA, Plan should consider looking at human rights not just as a tool in accomplishing development goals, but also as an end in itself. Currently, Plan staff do not take an explicitly political approach in their work and interactions with communities. While promoting the active participation of children is part of Plan’s community work, other rights issues, such as gender or exclusion, are not addressed.

**f. RBA goes beyond traditional governance or civil society projects**

*RBA may entail familiar concepts, such as governance and civil society support but it goes beyond a technical understanding of these approaches.*
Traditional good governance programmes in many cases fall short of RBA standards because they fail to address root causes of challenges to more effective governance. They thereby depoliticise democracy and are primarily geared towards improving institutional efficiency and are motivated by economic aspects. RBA differs from this neutral conception of governance by acknowledging the political nature of such an involvement. By placing the fulfilment of human rights at the core of governance, interactions with governments become political exchanges (even if they are carried out in a cooperative manner) and address power relations that exist in a particular political system.

Plan has managed to build a strong relationship with several government institutions on a national level and has succeeded in forming agreements with entities – such as the ministry of health and the ministry of education – that are in line with Plan’s rights-based agenda. Plan takes a mainly cooperative approach to its work with government institutions and focuses its engagement on the execution of existing government plans and policies. This approach clearly differs from the more confrontational approach towards the state by more advocacy-oriented human rights NGOs. Plan staff reiterated that establishing programmes required developing cooperative relationships with governmental authorities. Also, for historical reasons, there remains a high level of scepticism within the government towards international NGOs and, as a result, liaisons in Guatemala between NGOs and the state remain fragile and sensitive endeavours. This view was confirmed by interviews with representatives of national and municipal government institutions who repeatedly named Plan’s cooperative approach as one of the main reasons why they prefer to work with Plan instead of other international NGOs.

There are important trade-offs associated with taking a more cooperative or a more adversarial approach in interactions with government agencies. Plan’s decision to focus primarily on the technical support for existing government programmes has led to real benefits in terms of effectiveness, but also limits Plan’s ability to address structural causes of inequality and discrimination.
Since Plan does not want to risk the cooperative relationships it has established, it accepts that little leverage is left to advocate for alternative government plans or for creating public pressure on addressing urgent human rights concerns. Furthermore, Plan’s cooperative approach to government makes the organisation dependent on the political willingness of government leaders to engage with Plan and limits its freedom to act according to the most pressing human rights concerns. This thwarts the aim of RBA which is to gear activities towards the most indigent and marginalised populations. As one scholar asked, “Are poor people being punished for the sins of the people that govern them?”\textsuperscript{15}

On a municipal level, Plan’s approach to governments is less apolitical. While Plan is taking a cooperative approach here as well, its central initiative is more overtly political and aims at creating municipal child-focused public policies. These efforts move beyond serving as an implementation agency and here Plan is assuming a more political role in facilitating and influencing the policy-making process. Child rights play a central role in these policies and form the basis and focal point of the formulation process.

\textbf{g. RBA provides a moral and legal framework for action and creates room for strategic alliances on multiple levels}

\textit{Working with human rights creates a common ground of accepted legal and moral norms and principles that has been formally accepted by the vast majority of countries around the world. Human rights as the foundation for action has the potential to supersede political and religious ideologies and to open spaces for different organisations, movement, and people to come together and to combine forces in order to speak with one voice for the fulfilment of these universal rights.}

Plan bases its work on the legal frameworks and treaties that exist internationally and within Guatemala. Although Plan’s areas of rights-based work are not aligned with the categories of the CRC (survival, development,}

\textsuperscript{15} Uvin (2004)
protection and participation), Plan works exclusively for the promotion of rights that are internationally accepted as child rights. On a national level, Plan is referring to the legal framework that exists in Guatemala. The constitution and a number of other laws enable Plan to base its work on a solid legal foundation. The right to free, primary education and access to basic health services are explicitly mentioned in the Guatemalan legal framework along with the constitutional responsible entity (ministry of education and ministry of health, respectively). Other laws passed within the past decade serve as additional support for Plan’s efforts, including the National Law for the Integral Protection of Children of 2003 (backing Plan’s protection programme) and the Decentralization Law, the Law of Urban and Rural Development Councils, and the Municipal Code of 2002. These laws are used to further legitimise and strengthen Plan’s participation programme. Plan utilises the existence of these legal documents to educate people about their legal rights and the rights of their children. In addition, it facilitates Plan’s interactions with government since Plan is now able to find a common ground for action with state authorities. In both interactions (with rights holders and duty bearers), the reference to legal frameworks increases the urgency and potency of rights claims since their non-fulfilment constitutes a legal violation.

Plan has taken limited advantage of the potential alliances and partnerships that a rights-based approach yields. The most successful example, in which Plan has engaged in a strategic alliance with other organisations that are working on child rights, is the Municipalisation Table, an alliance of multi-lateral organisations, such as the UN Children’s Fund (UNICEF) and other NGOs that came together to advocate for child rights on a municipal level. Plan takes a more contractual approach in engaging with local partners. Plan engages in contracts with local partners for many of the programmatic capacity-building activities that it carries out, such as training of teachers (PRODI, FUCUDE), strengthening of community development councils (FUNCEDE), and projects with children’s groups (DEMOS).
Plan is part of a small group of international NGOs employing a rights-based approach while still executing projects on the community level itself. Most other organisations, such as Oxfam, ActionAid and Save the Children, have moved towards partnerships with local civil society organisations. The main reason why Plan executes its projects directly, and without a local intermediary, lies with the particular organisational nature of Plan. The organisation has a long tradition of working as a community organisation and continues to see its direct ties to communities as one of its key organisational strengths. Therefore, the efforts to partner strategically with local organisations are limited and remain not a priority for Plan. The only example indicating Plan’s efforts to strengthen local civil society is represented by its relationships with community-based organisations, such as the community development councils, formally established in 2002 by the Law of Urban and Rural Development Councils. Plan views the need to strengthen those councils as an integral part of its participation programme and involves the council as its main point of contact for most community activities. While the strengthening of community organisations is an important component of supporting rights holders, the question of whether the sole focus on community-level engagement with local civil society is a sufficiently powerful approach to empower citizens towards its government remains open for debate. Moving beyond the community level by cooperating with existing local civil society organisations that are active in the particular geographic area would offer an additional path for Plan to increase the effectiveness of its work.
h. Comparing Plan’s RBA with other organisations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The models</th>
<th>ActionAid UK</th>
<th>Oxfam GB</th>
<th>SC Sweden</th>
<th>Plan Guatemala</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Popular RBA emphasising grassroots</td>
<td>Equity RBA emphasising campaigns</td>
<td>Classical RBA based on international human rights</td>
<td>Local governance RBA emphasising duty bearer–rights holder relationship</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Critical development problems</td>
<td>Poverty and powerlessness of people living in poverty</td>
<td>Poverty and the lack of equity, structural thinking</td>
<td>Lack of child protection, accountability, and capacity</td>
<td>Lack of participation, exclusion and government capacity and accountability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Development analysis</td>
<td>Micro (local), linking to global</td>
<td>Macro (global), linking to local</td>
<td>Country-based analysis</td>
<td>Country-based analysis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Development goals</td>
<td>Use poverty reduction goals, not human rights goals</td>
<td>Use poverty reduction goals, not human rights goals</td>
<td>Use human rights goals</td>
<td>Improve quality of life of children by addressing child rights</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Stated with the popular fighting poverty theme</td>
<td>Aligns to five goals, described in human rights terms</td>
<td>Clearly defined in human rights terms – the realisation of the CRC</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Development processes</td>
<td>Through grassroots empowerment</td>
<td>Through the mixture of global campaigns and country-based development programmes</td>
<td>Through child rights programming</td>
<td>Through child rights programming</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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16 This table is partly derived from Plipat (2006). The comparison refers to the country offices of ActionAid, Oxfam and Save the Children in Vietnam and Plan in Guatemala
| The use of international human rights standards | Limited | Selective and inconsistent use in campaigns | Strong part emphasis on monitoring and reporting | Gradual  
|-----------------------------------------------|--------|--------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------|---------  
<p>| Human rights education (HRE) | Important for the grassroots approach – people living in poverty have to know their rights in order to claim them | Not important – RBA is delivered through the links of five aims and the mobilisation of global campaign, which are already based on human rights | Very important for all stakeholders – in order to realise the rights of child | Limited human rights education for both duty bearers and rights holders – emphasis is on the practical exercise of rights |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Overall use of human rights framework</th>
<th>ActionAid UK’s Popular RBA</th>
<th>Oxfam GB’s Equity RBA</th>
<th>SC Sweden’s Classical RBA</th>
<th>Plan Guatemala’s Local governance RBA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Add on approach</strong></td>
<td>Uses human rights as a tool to strengthen grassroots communities</td>
<td>Selectively uses human rights in campaigns</td>
<td>Uses human rights framework as base for all its work</td>
<td>Based on CRC, investment in five rights</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Tactical approach</strong></td>
<td>Variety of human rights principles, i.e. participation, empowerment, accountability</td>
<td>Created its own five aims based on international human rights to link and as base for all programmes</td>
<td>Uses various human rights tools</td>
<td>Use human rights as a tool to interact with duty bearers and rights holders</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Comprehensive approach</strong></td>
<td>Advocacy at global level</td>
<td>Advocacy at global level</td>
<td>Strong advocacy and use of UN human rights mechanisms at the international level</td>
<td>Limited advocacy on national and global level</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Key forces</strong></td>
<td>Empowers people to claim their rights</td>
<td>Advocates for changes through campaigns at the global level</td>
<td>Strengthens protection and realisation of child rights through reporting and monitoring, HRE, and child participation</td>
<td>Strengthens the democratic process on a local (municipal) level</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Key issues</strong></td>
<td>Food rights, the right to livelihoods</td>
<td>Economic rights</td>
<td>Child rights</td>
<td>Child rights</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Human rights components in development strategy</strong></td>
<td>No, mentioned as a programme area among other development programme areas</td>
<td>Yes, developed around five sets of human rights</td>
<td>Yes, multi-dimensions of child rights</td>
<td>Based on CRC, investment in five rights</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strategies</td>
<td>Heavy component of capacity building, strengthening local groups and movements</td>
<td>Five strategic change objectives</td>
<td>Prioritises areas and groups of children most denied and abused</td>
<td>Capacity building of municipalities and communities, and empowerment of children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Programming</td>
<td>Moving from area-based to theme-based Diverse programme goals based on countries</td>
<td>Three types of intervention: humanitarian, campaign and development Chooses priority themes for each country within the context of its five aims</td>
<td>Twelve programme area and strategies and recently developed child rights programming</td>
<td>Child Centred Community Development (CCCD) approach to programming</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advocacy</td>
<td>Limited capacity in lobbying work internationally Nationally, lobbying done through local GROs and NGOs</td>
<td>Campaigns as key advocacy tool Internationally conducts lobbying work itself Strong advocacy element at the national level</td>
<td>Internationally conducts lobbying work itself, targeting UN bodies and sometimes the EU Nationally, lobbies through partners, mostly city-based civil society organisations</td>
<td>Limited but increasing advocacy on national and international level Strong emphasis on lobbying municipal government</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4. Plan’s strategic approach in the Guatemalan context

Any strategic approach to development has to match the particular context in which it is implemented. The project, therefore, attempted to answer whether Plan’s strategy is adequate in the Guatemalan context and whether it responds to the particular economic, political and social characteristics of the country. The overall conclusion is that Guatemala represents an appropriate yet challenging context for the application of a rights-based approach. The high level of inequality in the country and the lack of strength of the current democratic system, combined with the existence of a solid legal framework, constitute both challenges and opportunities for the feasibility and effectiveness of a rights-based approach.

a. Guatemala has a high level of inequality

A rights-based approach addresses structural causes of poverty and their systematic impact on the development of countries. Inequality is one of those causes since it is an indication for unequal power relations, discrimination, exclusion and the systematic denial of human rights. A comparison with other countries demonstrates the relationship between income, human development and inequality. Although Guatemala leads other countries in per capita gross domestic product (GDP), the country continues to lag well behind the average human development index (HDI) scores of other Latin America countries (Guatemala ranks 121st out of 177 countries in the 2007-2008 Human Development Index – see table below). More importantly, countries in Central America and around the world with lower levels of per capita GDP lead Guatemala in terms of human development scores, indicating a strong relationship there between inequality and poverty. Inequality in the Guatemalan context is closely associated with issues of discrimination and exclusion, in particular of the rural and indigenous population, which for centuries have been discriminated against and still today constitute the most indigent and most neglected groups in Guatemala. As a result, there is a

17 United Nations Development Programme (2007)
18 For instance, in 2005, Vietnam with a GDP per capita of just over $3,000 scored an HDI of almost 0.74 compared to Guatemala’s 0.69 with a per capita GDP of more than $4,500 (Ibid.)
need for rights-based development strategies in order effectively to address these structural causes of poverty. By making the fulfilment of human rights the main objective of its development work and by increasing government responsiveness to the most vulnerable sections of domestic society, Plan is able to contribute towards combating historic problems of exclusion and discrimination in Guatemala.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>GDP per capita (PPP* US$)</th>
<th>HDI</th>
<th>Gini coefficient</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Costa Rica</td>
<td>10,180</td>
<td>0,847 (position 50 of 177 countries)</td>
<td>49.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guatemala</td>
<td>4,568</td>
<td>0,696 (position 121 of 177 countries)</td>
<td>55.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>El Salvador</td>
<td>5,255</td>
<td>0,747 (position 101 of 177 countries)</td>
<td>52.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Honduras</td>
<td>3,430</td>
<td>0,714 (position 117 of 177 countries)</td>
<td>53.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nicaragua</td>
<td>3,674</td>
<td>0,699 (position 120 of 177 countries)</td>
<td>43.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* purchasing power parity

**b. Strengthening of democracy as a non-violent tool for social change**

RBA calls for a social transformation in order to reverse the structural causes that impede the development and the fulfilment of human rights for people living in people and excluded parts of a population. Systemic change (which is the only way to break the cycle of poverty in Guatemala) can only be achieved through a profound social transformation. Strengthening democracy is a non-violent way to achieve this form of social transformation and Plan’s particular approach to strengthening the democratic system in Guatemala is seen as appropriate for three primary reasons.

Firstly, given Guatemala’s violent history, Plan’s non-violent, non-confrontational approach to social change and government–civil society relations is adequate and sensible. Relationships between the state and
NGOs have been historically difficult and there remains a certain level of scepticism within the political establishment towards the work of civil society organisations that for a long time were associated with the guerrilla movement and an anti-government agenda. Being cooperative in its interactions with government authorities enables Plan to reduce these concerns and it opens new avenues for partnerships between NGOs and state institutions.

Secondly, Plan’s focus on increasing the political participation of all citizens on a local level also is appropriate for a context where participation levels are particularly low (a lasting result of the internal conflict) and people’s trust in the political system is poorly developed. The people of Guatemala continue to regard any kind of authority and public institutions with a high level of suspicion. In order to strengthen the democratic system in Guatemala, the relationship between government and its citizens has to be rebuilt from the ground up, which is what Plan does by focusing on the fruitful interactions between rights holders and duty bearers on a local level. By enabling people to have positive experiences in their interactions with their municipalities (which remain an important political unit of identification for many people in Guatemala), the confidence of citizens in the democratic system can be slowly reconstructed.

Thirdly, human rights remain a politically charged concept in Guatemala. Associated with the political left, the approach has the potential to be politically explosive. Therefore, Plan’s focus on the local interaction between rights holders and duty bearers, the practical application of human rights and the focus on democracy and citizenship (instead of human rights) can be seen as appropriate as well. Lastly, Plan acknowledges that the profound changes that constitute the long-term vision of a rights-based approach can only be achieved through a profound change in attitudes and behaviours. Such changes are more likely to be achieved with children and young people than with adults, who often remain affected by the violent history of the country and are hesitant to engage politically or join political groups or organisations. The fact that more than half of Guatemala’s population consists of people younger
than 18 gives further legitimacy to Plan’s focus on children and adolescents in its work.

**c. Existence of a national legal framework**

Guatemala offers a national legal framework that facilitates Plan’s application of a rights-based approach since it gives Plan a legal basis for its work in all of its programme areas. More than a decade after the official end of its civil war in 1996, Guatemala continues to reveal a discrepancy between constitutional rights outlined in the Guatemalan Peace Accords and the actual fulfilment of those rights by the state. Despite the commitment expressed in the Guatemalan constitutions of 1985 and 1993 to ensure the right to free education, basic health services and food security for all citizens, those rights are far from being fully implemented. With regard to basic services, Guatemala continues to lag behind other countries with similar levels of economic development. The central government’s level of expenditures in health and education are not sufficient to provide adequate services to its citizens, in particular in the rural areas.

Given Guatemala’s ongoing struggle with the legacy of years of civil strife and authoritarian rule, an explicit inclusion of rights-based efforts in development initiatives promises significant benefits for NGOs working in Guatemala. The central government no longer openly resists the work of international NGOs in Guatemala but, primarily, lacks the capacity to provide constitutionally guaranteed services. Plan’s rights-based approach contributes to improving the responsiveness and capacity of constitutional duty bearers in fulfilling their human rights obligations and delivering on promised services. The low capacity of government institutions combined with the relatively strong legal human rights foundation in Guatemala makes an approach like Plan’s – that combines the two factors – a promising strategy, as long as it is coupled with strategies that address more structural factors, such as discrimination and exclusion, as described above.
5. RBA implementation

In this section, the research team presents results on the progress of RBA implementation. Plan’s rights-based approach constituted a drastic departure from the organisation’s previous, more service-driven work. It is therefore important to examine how Plan’s management and staff have reacted to this strategic change, how operational practices have changed and how Plan’s programming has been affected by the strategic reorientation. Forty-three individual and group interviews were conducted. Within Plan, approximately 80 management and staff members participated in this exercise to assess the level of understanding of RBA, the overall perception of the new framework and specific opinions on its validity and early results.

a. Internal diffusion and acceptance of strategy

The evaluation revealed that Plan has succeeded in diffusing its new strategic approach across the different levels of its organisation. Respondents demonstrated a coherent vision of what it means to work with RBA. The understanding of RBA by Plan staff in the different programme offices was very much congruent with Plan’s strategic plan. The predominant changes that people perceived from Plan’s previous strategy were a greater level of engagement and participation of communities and a stronger link to and more cooperation with municipal and national government institutions.

While RBA introduced drastic changes to the daily operations of Plan Guatemala, Plan’s management and staff appear to be overwhelmingly in favour of the new strategy. The benefits of the new strategy most commonly mentioned were greater agency and empowerment of communities and more sustainable impact because the government is slowly assuming its responsibility and takes over the provision of services from Plan. Respondents acknowledged the profoundness of the change and the personal dimension that was part of the adjustment. A frequent comment when asked about the transition process was, “I had to be convinced personally first before I could start advocating the new strategy to communities.”
The vast majority of respondents (more than 90 per cent) was in favour of Plan’s focus on five rights and the application of the organisation’s five strategic principles and supported a further strengthening of Plan’s rights-based approach. The most common suggestions for future strategic change included (in no ranking order):

- Greater integration of programmes: Several members of programme office staff mentioned that programmes remained separated and would benefit from more integration. They explained that the closer you move towards the community level, the more visible and important are the links between the different rights that Plan works on. Plan continues to have separate programmatic initiatives, which lead to numerous isolated activities with community members and it should increase its efforts to take a more integrated approach to human rights.

- Greater focus on results as complementary tool to capacity building: In particular, field staff advocated for a greater emphasis on extending community support from capacity building to project work so that communities have tangible results as a result of their participation with Plan’s activities. Since municipalities are often not able to answer to rights claims by communities, it was recommended that Plan could play a facilitating role by providing resources for projects to be executed.

- More training for field staff: The work of field staff has changed significantly since the introduction of the rights-based strategy. This requires a new skill set and field staff advocated for greater emphasis on training and capacity building, in particular with regards to group facilitation, working with children, and a more methodological approach to their work.

- More inclusion and coverage across and within communities: Several respondents remarked that Plan is still not reaching the most indigent and most excluded people in communities and should therefore put greater effort into reaching this goal. In addition, Plan implements programmes selectively in communities, which leads to different levels
of services across communities. These differences can create perceptions of inequality and Plan should proactively explain the variation in emphasis in different communities.

b. Changes in programming

The next question was what impact Plan’s new strategy has had on its programming. Respondents within and outside Plan observed two main changes in Plan’s programming: 1) a redefinition of Plan’s community work and 2) a greater engagement with government institutions on a municipal and national level. Other, less frequently mentioned programme changes included a more inclusive work approach achieved by working primarily on a community and municipal (rather than family) level and greater child participation in programme activities.

i. Redefinition of relationship with communities

The new strategy had a transformative effect on the relationship between Plan and the communities in which the organisation works. Previously, Plan’s work with communities was focused around the delivery of materials and resources. It was a technical and project-oriented approach to combating poverty at the community level. With the inception of its rights-based approach, Plan drastically reduced the material help it was giving to communities since the resulting dependency and expectations between communities and Plan were not a sustainable basis for development work. The new focus of community-level work shifted towards organising and building the capacity of community members so that they could claim their rights from the government. As fieldworkers from Plan succinctly remarked on several occasions, “Suddenly the cheque book was missing.” Plan faced the challenge of redefining its relationship with communities and achieving the same level of cooperation without material incentives.

This study shows that Plan has succeeded in redefining its relationship with most of the communities. According to informants from each of...
Plan’s programme offices (at both field and management level), more than 75 per cent of all communities have accepted Plan’s new approach and have a productive relationship with Plan. While some communities have yet to embrace the shift towards RBA and some scepticism persists across many others, it is possible for an organisation such as Plan to shift relatively quickly away from a paternalistic and technical relationship towards a rights-based partnership. While community members frequently expressed their regret at not receiving more material help by Plan, they acknowledged the power and long-term benefits that a more capacity-oriented approach by Plan brings. Several expressions by community members illustrate this observation:

- “Plan is leaving us something that nobody can take away from us: consciousness. If we continue to use it, it will be like Plan never left.”

- “Plan has been the seed that we needed to advance.”

- “You cannot develop as a community without the active consciousness of its people.”

ii. Involvement of government authorities

The second big change that Plan’s rights-based approach has brought to its programming is the engagement of the state as a central element in all its programmes. Constitutional responsibility is the guiding principle for Plan in its interactions with government institutions. While Plan’s previous mode of operations focused entirely on the community level, it now places a greater emphasis on involving (or at least

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19 Interview by Uwe Gneiting and Otto Valle with members of a Community Development Council, conducted in Masagua, Guatemala, 19 February 2009

20 Interview by Uwe Gneiting and Otto Valle with members of a Community Development Council, conducted in Masagua, Guatemala, 19 February 2009

21 Interview by Uwe Gneiting with members of a Community Development Council, conducted in Sioux, Guatemala, 4 March 2009
coordinating with) national or municipal government actors in all its
tivities. A visible illustration of how Plan has changed its approach
towards the state is the collaboration of Plan and the Guatemalan
health ministry. Plan had a previous agreement with the health
ministry, in which Plan committed to finance the provision of basic
health services to rural communities. Plan defined the project goals
and executed the programme with little support from the ministry. In the
new agreement, signed in 2004, Plan took a more rights-based
approach by appealing to the constitutional responsibility of the
government to provide basic health services to all of its citizens. As a
result, it was agreed that the financing of the project would gradually be
assumed by the ministry, a process completed in 2009. The
implementation of the project was led by the ministry and local health
service providers, while Plan only provided technical support. Plan did
not play an advocacy role in this case.

The primary focus of Plan’s government interaction has been on the
municipal level. The organisation’s emphasis on the links between
rights holders and duty bearers results in the identification of the
municipal government as the primary duty bearer for many citizens’
claims. It started to engage municipal government and created a staff
position in each of its programme offices explicitly for the interaction
with municipal authorities (it is the only Plan country organisation in
Central America that has done this). According to Plan staff, the
organisation has created cooperative relationships with 12 of 22
municipalities. With eight more municipalities a basic relationship was
established and only two municipalities have yet to establish a
relationship with Plan. Interviews with the representatives of ten
municipalities left a positive impression about the progress of Plan’s
ingagement with local authorities and verified the comments by the
local staff. Plan was seen by all municipalities as an important partner,
valued in varying degrees for its cooperative approach, its technical
expertise, its local reach and its resources. In contrast, awareness
about Plan’s rights-based approach among local government authorities was limited and those actors generally expressed very limited overall interest in human rights perspectives.

c. Implementation of strategic principles in Plan’s programming

Plan introduced five principles in its strategic plan to guide the implementation of its programmes. According to Plan, these principles represent the programmatic Child Centred Community Development (CCCD) approach to programming and emphasise a rights-based approach to development. The research showed that Plan has had varying success in implementing the five principles. While the implementation of the two principles of constitutional responsibility and municipal strengthening have made significant progress, the principle of active child participation shows moderate levels of success, and the two principles of inclusion and solidarity lag behind.

i. Constitutional responsibility

Constitutional responsibility was the principle named most frequently as the most successful example of Plan’s shift towards RBA. Reference was made mostly to Plan’s success in engaging the ministries of health and education and building relationships and a greater sense of commitment to children’s issues with municipal governments. The level of responsibility that state institutions have assumed to date as a result of Plan’s efforts can be labelled a significant achievement by Plan.

Despite this success and Plan’s rigorous efforts to involve government institutions in its programming, three main limitations are identified here. Firstly, Plan’s success in operationalising constitutional responsibility is dependent on the existence of one responsible government agency. While health and education are clearly linked to the respective ministries, no such singular responsibility exists in the

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areas of water, participation and protection. For example, a lack of clearly defined responsibilities between national and municipal actors continues to undermine the development of a coherent strategy to systematically train and build the capacity of development councils on a local level. Those development councils are a cornerstone enabling the effective political participation of local communities. Instead of a strong government role in the community-level capacity building of development councils, Plan still continues to carry out most of these programmes with partners on its own.

A second area of concern is the level of sustainable commitment that the constitutionally responsible institutions are able to demonstrate. A high number of government respondents voiced doubts about being able to continue to fulfil their responsibility without the material and technical support of Plan. Plan is seen by most as an indispensable partner and much of their capacity continues to depend on Plan’s engagement and its support of initiatives and programmes. What we observe is a shift of dependency from the community to the government level. Government agencies are now Plan’s new dependents.

Lastly, the sustainability of government services and effective local-government relations are jeopardised by the high level of government instability and turnover on both the national and local level. Relationships and work agreements with government institutions have to be restarted frequently due to recurrent changes in leadership and political programming. Plan’s participation programme and the organisation’s relationship with the Executive Coordination Secretary of the Presidency (SCEP) serves as an example. Due to a change in political leadership and a new prioritisation of institutional engagement, the SCEP, which is the national institution formally responsible for developing and strengthening the development council system, has shifted its efforts to manage a social policy programme headed by the
Guatemalan First Lady. According to an external informant, the arrival of new political leadership has effectively stopped the decentralisation process, which is a critical step in strengthening local participation.

ii. Municipal strengthening

The involvement of municipalities in the organisation’s work represents a second example of relative success in the implementation of Plan’s new strategic approach. Plan has made the establishment of links with municipalities a priority for each of its programme offices and has had significant success in applying this principle. As mentioned above, Plan has created specialised positions (municipalisation managers) in each of its programme offices, charged exclusively with strengthening the capacity of municipal governments. Beyond creating such relationships with 20 out of 22 municipalities, Plan’s engagement has led to the creation of child-centred public policies in nine municipalities and of municipal children’s governments in a further nine municipalities. Eight municipalities have committed themselves to Plan’s quality learning initiative and have signed tripartite agreements with the departmental offices of the education ministry. In ten municipalities, Plan has contributed to the signing of municipal water plans and strategies.

Plan has made efforts to integrate its programmatic areas on a municipal level by focusing on the creation of municipal public policies. This strategy offers particular advantages in terms of participation, sustainability and effectiveness. Its creation involves the active participation of not only the municipal government but also local civil society. Public policies are not limited to the particular government in power but apply to the municipalities in general, making it less susceptible to changes in political office. Finally, they attribute a

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23 Interview by Uwe Gneiting with former executive staff member of the Executive Coordination Secretary of the Presidency, conducted in Guatemala City, 18 March 2009

24 Presentation by Renzo Rosal, Public Policy Expert, Guatemala City, 17 April 2009
specific budget to proposed programme and activities, making the path to implementation more realistic.

As with the principle of constitutional responsibility, Plan faces a number of obstacles in the successful strengthening of municipalities. Firstly, the interviews with ten different municipal authorities also revealed that municipalities are valuing Plan’s support but are not necessarily sharing Plan’s commitment to child rights. Answers show that the relationship in many cases continues to be understood in technical terms, which is reflected in a low awareness and commitment to child issues among municipal authorities. Secondly, interviews with communities in an area where Plan is currently phasing out its activities show that municipalities have not yet reached a level of capacity (and commitment) that make the achievements to date sustainable. Community respondents observed a decrease in municipal activity and responsiveness after Plan terminated its activities in the area. As a result, patterns of dependency (which used to be a perceived problem for Plan under its previous strategy) continue to exist. While local communities are now less dependent on Plan’s material resources, any progress remains highly reliant on Plan’s presence and ability to facilitate interactions, organise communities and help them to find access to municipal authorities. Thirdly, achievements on a municipal level are largely tied to individual leadership and have yet to be institutionalised independently of such favourable circumstances. While the level of influence and power of the municipal mayors is significant, Plan staff reiterated the need to build the capacity of municipal staff and municipal committees, which are generally more stable than the leadership of municipal governments.

iii. Active child participation

Plan has made active child participation an element of all programmes, primarily by encouraging the formation of organised children’s and youth groups as part of its programme activities. In the education
programme, democratically elected school governments have been formed in almost every school in which Plan works. In the area of protection, a large network of community youth promoters have been trained to promote the rights of children in the communities. In water and health, school committees on water and hygiene have been formed and so-called Jovenes Pares (young peers) are raising awareness about the risks of HIV to their peers. Lastly, in the participation sector, child-focused versions of community development councils (COCODITOs) and municipal children’s governments (COMUNAs) have created spaces for children to participate politically.

Group activities with children and adolescents in communities supplied the researchers with first-hand impressions about Plan’s efforts to promote children’s participation in the communities. Children generally appeared outspoken and confident in their interactions with researchers and there was a significant difference in these dynamics between those who were members of children’s groups and those who were not. Children spoke very positively about their experience in their respective groups and named having more knowledge about their rights and feeling less fear as the two greatest benefits of these experiences. This finding was confirmed by teachers and parents who reported that children had an increased ability to participate (i.e. more outspokenness, more confidence, more knowledge) as a result of Plan’s activities. Yet, Plan’s internal monitoring data on the perceptions of children offers a more complex picture of children’s participation. According to a recent survey of 20,000 sponsored children, children perceive a much higher level of freedom to express themselves in their private homes than in their interaction with adults in the community and community organisations. While 92 per cent feel as though they can express themselves freely in their homes, only 36 per cent of children feel that the community organisations give them access to information, and only 33 per cent feel that the community organisations take children’s opinions into consideration when making their decisions.
Plan interprets the principle of child participation less as part of its rights-based strategy and more as a central ingredient of the organisation’s own programme design and activities. The purpose of this principle is not so much associated with strategic ways of combating root causes of poverty, but instead finds its main rationale in Plan’s organisational mandate as a child-centred organisation. Thus, the focus of this principle is directed more on the immediate effects of participation on the individual child than on the permanent place of these groups within political institutions. Since several of the children’s groups and networks exist without significant government support, the sustainability of the children’s groups remains in question. As one manager of Plan self-critically reflected, “I am not sure that you will see COCODITO’s or COMUNAs ten years from now.”

iii. Inclusion

This principle (together with the principle of solidarity below) has been the one with the most room for improvement in its implementation. Plan has broadened its local engagement beyond individual children and their families in order to include the community at large in its programme activities. As a direct result, Plan has been able to reduce tensions within communities – which were reported to occur regularly under its old strategy – about the allocation of resources. Working now in a more community-wide setting, Plan hopes to create less competition for resources and the gradual emergence of a sense of solidarity. However, Plan’s new strategy has also caused new frictions since families are used to the direct delivery of resources and at times lack the understanding for why they do not receive any more direct material support from Plan (or why families that are not affiliated with Plan receive the same level of support). Plan couples its community-focused approach to its engagement with municipal governments, a further contribution to the possibility of achieving municipality-wide coverage of its initiatives.
While Plan has made significant progress in distributing resources in a less discriminatory fashion within communities, there remain two main areas of concern. Firstly, Plan offers different levels of services to different communities, creating the impression that it treats some communities better than others. None of Plan’s programmes are perceived to cover all of its communities and levels of support therefore differ even between neighbouring communities. Secondly, Plan continues to struggle with the goal of reaching the most indigent and excluded children and families. Plan builds its community interactions on existing community structures (i.e. by identifying the community development council as its principal point of contact with adults), which in many cases are dominated by the most powerful members of the community. Although the community development councils are supposed to be elected democratically through community gatherings, several informants remarked that they often reproduce existing inequalities and imbalances of the community. Furthermore, local political authorities continue to use the councils for their own political interests and women and children remain regularly excluded from participation and decision making. These concerns will be further discussed in section 6.

iv. Solidarity

Among all the principles, the implementation of solidarity as a strategic principle is least advanced. From a human rights perspective, increasing the sense of solidarity in communities by promoting the participation of all members of the community is seen as an important objective since the power of citizen claims is augmented when a community manages to come together and speak with a unified voice. Community members and Plan fieldworkers diagnosed low levels of solidarity within the communities. Several field observations supported those impressions. In one case, community water systems were reported to be compromised by families damaging the tubing to divert
more water to their individual homes. In other communities, tensions were reported between community leaders and the rest of the community. Members of the community development councils were accused of advancing their own personal interests rather than working for the benefit of the entire community. In yet another instance, parents of sponsored children complained about the loss of the distinctive benefits they used to receive as families with sponsored children. Those instances point toward the difficulties Plan continues to experience in advancing a vision of greater solidarity within communities.

The interviews with Plan staff showed that solidarity as a core principle is less well understood than other principles. When asked about the definition and implementation of this principle, answers pointed towards a conflation of the principles of inclusion and solidarity. The most commonly named example of applying the principle of solidarity in practice referred back to the inclusion of children whom Plan had previously helped in their community work and those whom they had not helped. The meaning of this principle was therefore perceived as Plan’s solidarity with communities, not solidarity within communities themselves. No clear reference was made to strategies and activities to increase the sense of unity within communities and to strengthen the participation of excluded groups and families in community activities outside of Plan’s programmes.

The main positive example for fostering solidarity is the creation and support of community-wide protection networks (protection programme) and community councils charged with identifying families with the greatest needs for scholarships (education programme). In the health and water programme, no signs for increasing the solidarity of communities were found. In participation (the programme that supposedly should address this principle most directly), the record is mixed. Plan’s emphasis on strengthening the participation of women
and children can be seen as an effort to build a greater sense of solidarity in communities. However, the organisation also continues to work primarily with the existing community leadership and with people who are openly seeking a leadership role. A more conscious effort by Plan to encourage the participation of excluded sections of communities may offer opportunities to strengthen community solidarity.

**d. Comparison of Plan’s programmes to RBA criteria and strategic principles**

In this section, we compare Plan’s overall strategy with the actual programmatic implementation on the ground. Do Plan’s five individual programmes exhibit the characteristics essential to rights-based approaches? Does Plan implement the strategy and the principles outlined in its programmes? The findings reveal that Plan has modified its programmatic approach significantly and that the end result is a transitional mix of needs-based and rights-based activities and methodologies geared towards the eventual assumption of responsibility by the Guatemalan government as legal duty bearer to ensure the fulfilment of children’s rights. Programmes show differing operational points of focus (i.e. application of strategies) that reflect differences in the particular right, the operational situation, and the obstacles faced. In particular, the programmes on health and education differ significantly in their approach from the three other programmes on water, participation and protection.

i. Education

Plan’s education programme focuses on improving the quality of primary education in rural areas, which was confirmed by experts to be the fundamental problem of the education system (according to Plan only 30 per cent of children enrolled in primary schools complete all six
While the programme of quality learning was a central element of Plan’s previous strategy as well, the modality through which Plan now attempts to reach the goal of improving the quality of primary education in rural communities has changed markedly. Plan has added a rights-based component to its education strategy by engaging the constitutional duty bearer (the ministry of education) in its programming. The agreement outlines a mutual commitment to improve the quality of primary education in rural communities and, most importantly from a rights-based perspective, sketches out the gradual transition of this responsibility to the ministry. This agreement is not only a significant achievement for Plan but has also proved to be a creative and effective way of supporting the government to assume its responsibility and increase its efforts in the area of education.

Plan has maintained needs-based elements in this first phase of rights-based implementation of its education programme since the ministry of education only gradually assumed its new responsibilities. The organisation continues to supply school utensils and materials to children and it pays for scholarships for boys and girls to attend secondary schools. In addition, Plan in some cases supports communities in the construction and repair of school buildings. Overall, these activities still constitute more than 60 per cent of Plan’s programme budget. Plan has succeeded in implementing these activities in a more inclusive manner by handing out utensils using the schools (benefiting all school children) instead of giving utensils directly to the families with sponsored children (only benefiting the sponsored children). Despite the organisation’s successful efforts to engage the ministry as the main constitutional duty bearer, visits to schools confirmed that schools continue to have urgent needs and that Plan continues to be perceived as the only actor responding to these needs.

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25 Interview by Uwe Gneiting with education specialist of the Inter-American Development Bank, conducted in Guatemala City, 22 April 2009; Plan Guatemala (2004)
Plan remains the primary source of support for teachers and school administrators both in terms of material help and in training teachers. Plan’s work in education has clearly moved towards RBA, but there remains additional room for an even greater emphasis on rights. The new approach attributes a role to the government in providing educational opportunities to its citizens and it raises the awareness of government officials on the national level about the education situation in rural communities. Plan has also worked in a rights-based manner by promoting children’s right to education on a community level (talks with parents) and by starting to advocate for mechanisms that allow communities to monitor the performance of the government. On the other hand, there are areas where Plan could move further in a rights-based direction. Most importantly, Plan should closely monitor the progress of the transition process towards greater assumption of responsibility by the education ministry in order to ensure the feasibility of its programmatic strategy. Also, Plan does not put a strong emphasis on doing advocacy work and thereby does not address some of the fundamental causes for the lack in quality of primary education in Guatemala, such as teacher training, teacher turnover and allocation of resources. Interviews with Plan management and staff confirm that Plan may move in this direction in order to become more inclusive (at the moment Plan is implementing its education programme in roughly 50 per cent of the communities) and to scale up impact (policy changes are likely to have nationwide effects).

ii. Health

The health programme of Plan is one of the most single-focused programmes. Most of its resources and energy went into the support of the government’s Coverage Expansion Program, which formed the basis of the agreement between the ministry of health and Plan. This agreement can be seen as a significant success for Plan and was most frequently mentioned as an example of success by Plan management
and staff. The responsibility for providing basic health services has been successfully transferred to the ministry of health and the government appears to have assumed this responsibility. The success of this programme is directly traceable to Plan's work and investment. As a result of Plan efforts, basic health services are now available in more than 300 rural communities of Guatemala where previously Plan provided this service (and around 300 more where there was no previous health coverage at all). People are utilising these services and are actively participating in supporting the programme. Community members have received training by the ministry and are involved in the implementation of the programme in different functions, such as assisting in the delivery of health services and checking up on patients in the communities. There are now mechanisms in place for giving feedback about the quality of the service which represent an important component in the empowerment of rights holders. However, it is as yet unclear how established this feedback process is.

Plan had a previous agreement with the health ministry, which serves as a good contrast to the programmatic changes undertaken since the introduction of RBA. By focusing on the responsibility of the ministry to provide basic health services to its citizens, Plan achieves a clear attribution of responsibility by the government and thereby ensures that the institutional roles and tasks are more clearly defined and separated (i.e. Plan’s role is solely to support the government to be better able to assume its responsibility). This new approach also enabled Plan to work in a more inclusive manner since it addresses the entire community in its work (and not only selected families) and supports the expansion of the health programme to communities in which Plan has not previously worked. At the same time, the programme’s predominant focus on the collaboration with the ministry has made it more difficult to apply some of Plan’s strategic principles, such as active child participation or solidarity. The only way in which children are actively participating is through their utilisation of health services.
and through health-related activities in their schools (which falls under the education programme). The programme has no clear mechanism in place to increase a sense of solidarity within communities, nor does it address the dynamics of the duty bearer–rights holder relationship. Due to the centralised nature of the decision-making process within the health system, people have little leverage to claim their rights against local authorities and remain recipients of government services. Efforts to establish social audit mechanisms have been initiated but it is too early to evaluate the implementation and effects of those audits.

The success of Plan’s health programme combined with the limited application of Plan’s strategic principles leaves the question of how relevant these principles are in each programme. Given that the process of providing reliable health services in rural areas is primarily a technical and operational challenge that requires coordination on the national level, the room and opportunities for local participation and citizen action are limited. Since Plan had the opportunity of supporting an existing government programme that was in line with its own organisational objectives, the organisation did not feel the need to engage on a political level. This technical approach, however, could become a challenge to the sustainability of the results in the medium and long term. As was confirmed by Plan programme staff, there is no guarantee that the current government programmes to extend the coverage of basic health services would continue.

iii. Water

The strategy of the water programme has only been recently implemented and programme offices are at different points in this process (in some programme areas Plan started three years ago, in others only last year). It was therefore more difficult to get a coherent picture of the implementation of this programme. The strategy corresponds to a rights-based approach comprehensive both in its underlying rationale as well as in its implementation. Plan spent
significant time and resources on a large diagnostic study on water quality and reasons for contamination before drafting and implementing its water strategy. This form of strategic analysis and research is a critical element of a rights-based approach since it thoroughly assesses the situation and provides clear evidence about related human rights violations. It thereby provides a strategic tool for advocacy directed at political authorities. The overall water strategy has a 15-20 year time frame, thereby acknowledging the long-term changes (in policy, attitudes, institutions etc.) associated with implementing a rights-based strategy.

The right to clean water is possibly the most complicated to be applied through Plan's rights-based strategy. While this right is acknowledged as part of the right to the highest attainable standard of health in the CRC, it is not explicitly mentioned in the Guatemalan constitution and there is no national law, policy, or strategy that assigns a government institution to its fulfilment (the health ministry and municipal governments are generally assumed by Plan to be the responsible actors). Accordingly, it is difficult for Plan to identify and target one responsible actor. Plan has realised this disadvantage and has lobbied for the institution of a national water policy and has supported municipal governments in getting local water strategies passed, a decision that represents a rights-based response to the lack of access to clean water of rural communities. The organisation also applied its two-fold strategic focus on duty bearers and rights holders to this programme. Apart from lobbying for a national water policy and the support of local governments, Plan attributes an active role to community members in their quest for access to clean water. The organisation departed from a technical approach and started to implement (in cooperation with the health and education ministry) two main programmes geared at raising awareness and capacity on a community level about hygienic habits to improve water quality. These two programmes are the health school programme (carried out by the
education ministry) and the PHAST programme (carried out by personnel from the health ministry) and have, according to our observations, been well received by the communities.

A thorough situation analysis, advocacy for national and local policies (in combination with others through the Guatemalan network on Water and Sanitation - RASGUA, involvement and coordination with government institutions and focus on the active agency of community members (both adults and children) are positive elements of Plan’s water strategy that correspond to RBA. The implementation of its strategic principles has been more difficult since a clear constitutional responsibility is not assigned. Municipalities are targeted and strengthened and children were observed to be an active component of programming activities. As in other programmes, it remained unclear how the principles of inclusion and solidarity were addressed and applied in the execution of activities. Activities were executed community-wide and were geared to the benefit of all community members. Yet there was no clear effort discernible to ensure that all community members were reached, nor that they participate in the planning of projects or community decisions.

iv. Participation

The participation programme is considered the programme with the greatest relevance to implementing a rights-based approach. The organisation’s strong and direct focus on the duality of the duty bearer–rights holder relationship makes the programme the central piece of Plan’s rights-based strategy. The programme represents Plan’s strategic logic that strengthening democracy (as a non-violent form of social change) is necessary to affect structural causes of persisting poverty and inequality in Guatemala. Promoting the right to participation for all citizens is a key element to strengthening the democratic process and to increasing the responsiveness and accountability of the government. Giving children a stronger voice by
creating spaces for their participation addresses the issue of their
general neglect and exclusion from decision processes (both within
communities and the government). Plan’s participation programme is
also consistent with the general RBA criteria used for this evaluation.
By sensitising duty bearers, empowering rights holders and building the
capacities of both, the unequal power relations between the state and
citizens in Guatemala are addressed and a more democratic process in
political decision making on a local level is achieved. In contrast to
other programmes, Plan has directly emphasised human rights in its
interactions with both duty bearers and rights holders. The organisation
uses child rights in its promotion of municipal policies and it teaches
members of community councils about their legal rights to participate in
the political process.

As in its other programmes, Plan has had mixed results in
implementing its strategic principles in this area. Plan has implemented
the principle of constitutional responsibility and municipal strengthening
by targeting and engaging municipal governments. Since the
municipality is the primary space for the political participation of
citizens, it represents the core political actor facilitating and promoting
citizen participation. Plan has worked to strengthen spaces for political
participation (such as the municipal development councils) and has
trained municipal governments on administrative tasks, thereby
increasing the capacity of municipalities to be responsive to citizen
claims. Plan has also engaged with actors on a national level in order
to strengthen the national system of development councils. However,
at the national level, the accountability mechanisms are less clearly
developed since there is no one institution formally responsible for
enhancing the political participation of citizens. Plan has also put a
strong emphasis on promoting children’s participation, which is a
central element of both a child-focused rights-based approach as well
as Plan’s organisational mandate. The creation of spaces for children
to participate in their schools, communities, and on a municipal level is
an effective tool to open up opportunities to make their voices heard and their opinions to be taken into consideration. As in many other programmes, the more difficult principles to implement are solidarity and inclusion. It remained unclear to the researchers how Plan has translated these principles into practice. Plan works mostly with existing leadership and does not question existing power structures in communities.

v. Protection

The protection programme is the most recent programmatic area that Plan added to its portfolio. Similar to the water programme, Plan undertook extensive research in 2003 about the situation of child abuse in Guatemala before formulating its strategy in this area.\(^{26}\) The protection programme is divided into two main parts – protection and prevention – representing the duty bearer–rights holder relationship that is the basic core of Plan’s work. This strategic approach acknowledges the variety of factors that can have an impact on child rights and attempts to increase the capacities of both rights holders and duty bearers to do their part to ensure the integral protection of children.

Plan’s implementation of its protection programme gives additional insights into the opportunities and limitations of the organisation’s rights-based approach. Plan makes strong use of human rights in this programme by utilising the legal framework of child protection that exists in Guatemala as the basis of its capacity-building activities. By educating community members about the rights of children to be protected, Plan increases the power of children towards parents and other members of the community. The power of human rights (in their legal form) as a tool to empower children was observed in several conversations with children, parents, and other adults. On the other

\(^{26}\) Plan Guatemala (2007)
hand, Plan’s efforts to engage government institutions remain a fragile achievement. Its attempt to increase the government’s efforts to attend to abuse victims has worked well in one programme area while in the other there was no apparent willingness for cooperation. The sustainability of community organisations that have been created by Plan also very much depends on the willingness of municipalities or the human rights ombudsman to support them. Commentaries by programme participants demonstrate that this support is not very strong and that many organisations remain dependent on Plan’s support.

Plan is perceived to have devoted significant efforts to the application of its five strategic principles in the protection programme. It has engaged with several government institutions (e.g. the health ministry and the judicial system) encouraging them to assume their responsibilities in contributing to the protection of children in Guatemala. The application of this principle is complicated by the fact that there are different institutions that are responsible for different tasks, such as helping abuse victims (health ministry) and prosecuting abusers (judicial system). Municipalities do not play a significant part in this programme (except for the inclusion of a protection component in municipal public policies). Children and adolescents participate actively in this programme, in particular through the formation of community youth promoter networks that do promote child rights in their communities. The protection programme is also one of the few examples where the idea of promoting solidarity is put into practice. By supporting the creation of community protection networks, Plan created alternatives to existing community structures and strengthened these new networks to train other community members and report cases of abuse and maltreatment. The networks are also more inclusive since they provide access to people not part of the traditional community leadership (women and children).
6. Effectiveness of Plan’s rights-based strategy

a. Conceptual approach to measuring effectiveness

Measuring the effects of Plan’s rights-based work is a more complex task than doing the same for previous development interventions. The cause–effect relationships assumed for traditional development interventions (i.e. logical frameworks) are not capable of capturing the complexity of broad social and cultural change associated with RBA. Rights-based approaches seek to analyse and address the root causes of poverty and derive policies based on framing poverty as a violation of fundamental human rights in developing countries. Results are often more long-term and less clearly attributable to the efforts of a single organisation or intervention. Human rights violations can occur as a result of planned, wrongful action (persecution of critics, discriminatory policies, abuse of a child etc.) but may also be the result of acts of omission (lack of basic health services, children not going to school, failure to report child abuse etc.). Identifying and dealing with root causes of intentional actions violating rights might be easier since it usually involves only one perpetrator and broader, structural factors may not be central to solving the problem. At the same time, human rights can also be advanced using very different strategies. While legal frameworks and government policies and programmes are central in advancing rights, many improvements can begin with changing the behaviour and attitudes of individuals. Linking the two levels of collective local action and government effectively by creating spaces of political participation offers the most promising avenue for a sustainable improvement of human rights.

An appropriate rights-based strategy recognises this complexity of factors and addresses them in its programming. A sound rights-based strategy also acknowledges the importance of links between different factors that contribute to the full enjoyment of a particular right. The right to primary education in Guatemala for example is violated on different levels and in different ways. Due to a lack of awareness as well as economic constraints, some parents do not send their children to school, thereby violating their children’s right to
education. At the same time, the federal government (i.e. the constitutional duty bearer) fails to fulfil its responsibility of investing in the education sector. As a result, the education ministry does not have the capacity to equip and monitor schools or to train and remunerate teachers appropriately. There are no established links or mechanisms for parents and communities to report and give feedback about teacher performance to the government. Insufficient teacher training and a high teacher turnover are the direct result of inadequate legislation and education policies.

Generalising from the example of education, external actors have opportunities to affect the following five categories relevant to the promotion of human rights: 1) attitudes and behaviours; 2) spaces and processes; 3) institutions; 4) legislation and policies and; 5) civic action. Understanding the interactions between these five categories is central to designing a rights-based strategy and to measuring its effectiveness. The graph below illustrates these relationships.
Figure 1: Effectiveness Framework

This model was developed as an instrument to measure the effects of Plan’s rights-based strategy. It reflects the complex dynamics associated with social change processes and departs from a linear conception of development interventions. The categories of the model are built on indicators at the outcome, not impact level (i.e. factors that can be influenced by Plan and contribute to an improvement in human rights but not the human right itself). Considering the relatively recent implementation of RBA within Plan, the research team focused on qualitatively tracing some of the early results of this transformational strategy. Below is a summary of how Plan has included the different factors in its five programme areas:
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Education</th>
<th>Health</th>
<th>Water</th>
<th>Participation</th>
<th>Protection</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Attitudes and behaviours</strong></td>
<td>Capacity building for greater awareness by parents and teachers of children’s right to quality education</td>
<td>Capacity building for greater awareness of sanitation habits to prevent illness and of government obligations to provide services</td>
<td>Capacity building for greater awareness of the importance of healthy habits to ensure water quality</td>
<td>Capacity building for greater awareness of child protection rights and differences in parenting styles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Spaces and processes</strong></td>
<td>Support of process for parents to monitor school performance and deliver data to the ministry</td>
<td>Support of participation of communities in health service programme execution and monitoring</td>
<td>Support of cooperation between communities and municipalities to execute water projects</td>
<td>Municipal development councils are capacitated to give more room for the participation of citizens</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Institutions and programmes</strong></td>
<td>Creation of greater awareness of ministry about rural communities and supporting the adoption of new teaching methodologies</td>
<td>Support of health ministry better to execute the Coverage Expansion Programme</td>
<td>Support municipalities in the creation of municipal water plans</td>
<td>Strengthening of municipalities to be more responsive to citizen’s claim</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Legislation and policies</strong></td>
<td>Member of the Great Alliance for Education</td>
<td>Member of the Mesa Sectorial de Salud</td>
<td>Advocacy for a national water policy and to institutionalise the healthy school programme</td>
<td>Advocacy for the creation of child-centred municipal public policies</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Civic action

| Support of process for parents to monitor school performance | Support of participation of communities in health service programme execution and monitoring | Support of communities to execute water projects | Building the capacities of community development councils to petition local governments; support of children’s groups to undertake projects | Creation of Community Protection Networks and young community peers that are active in their communities |

b. Plan’s actual effects on rights-based indicators

Examining the effectiveness of rights-based strategies requires a different approach to measurement. Due to the complex and long-term aspirations of RBA, the effectiveness of rights-based programmes to empower rights holders and make duty bearers more accountable and responsive has to be measured by assessing trends and processes, which are often qualitative in nature, and not by solely relying on fixed, quantitative indicators. “This is a process, not a project”, as a member of one of Plan’s partner organisations in its protection programme explained. In order to draw conclusions on Plan’s effectiveness (and the feasibility of its strategy), we examined if and to what degree Plan has been able to affect social, political or cultural change within the five categories described above.

i. Attitudes and behaviours

Changing attitudes and behaviours of adults and children through human rights education and capacity building affects the respect, protection and fulfilment of human rights by breaking with cultural traditions and increasing the awareness of the rights of a certain excluded group (i.e. women or children) or about a certain topic (such as children’s right to education or how to improve water quality). This change in attitude can also have an impact on how people view their role in society and in the process of development, which in turn can lead to increased activism and engagement in the political process.
Plan has devoted substantial energy to raising awareness and capacity on a community level, indeed these undertakings are an integral part of each of Plan’s programmes. Community visits and observations by Plan field staff indicate that Plan’s efforts have had a positive impact on the behaviours and attitudes of children, adolescents and adults in most communities. Changes among children observed by community members (parents and teachers) and Plan field staff included increased confidence and a greater level of articulating their views. “We have less fear now”, was an expression that the researchers heard from children on several occasions when asked about the changes they observed within themselves as a result of Plan’s activities. Children (in contrast to most adults) showed a general knowledge about human rights, were able to name several child rights when prompted, and appeared to translate them into their daily lives (“we have fewer arguments now and respect each other more”). Plan’s activities with children and adolescents have also facilitated the emergence of individual leadership, in particular female adolescents. The researchers encountered young women leaders in several communities, who were displaying a great sense of engagement and articulating vividly their plans and hopes for the future. All of these young women directly attributed their ability and motivation to Plan’s support. The formation of these female leaders is an important achievement for Plan, not only because of their potential role as future leaders but also because of the symbolic value that female leaders represent in a male-dominated culture.

Changes of attitudes and behaviours were observed to be less pronounced among adults. As Plan staff repeatedly emphasised, it has been much easier to work with children and adolescents than to try to influence the habits and attitudes of adults in the communities. The areas where Plan was perceived to have increased awareness among adults in the communities are in the areas of water/sanitation habits and the prevention and treatment of HIV (the two topics most
frequently mentioned by communities as beneficial to them). In addition, teachers and parents observed a positive change in parenting styles due to Plan’s focus on child protection and its educational programme Raising Children with Love. “There is less violence in our families now”, as one parent mentioned while a member of a municipal protection committee remarked on the power of the legal application of human rights:

Before, people saw children as their property and they thought that they could do with them whatever they want. Now they know that children have rights and they are afraid of the law.27

Plan field staff also mentioned that in many cases communities have developed a stronger sense of agency as a result of Plan’s new approach and the organisation’s focus on the active role of communities. People are more aware of their responsibility and role (as community council members for example) and have a greater commitment to work towards the advancement of their community. As one fieldworker of Plan observed, “People suddenly don’t want to be poor anymore.”28 This was confirmed by interviews with community members. While the researchers also encountered a few communities that perceived Plan’s rights-based approach primarily as a reduction in help and advocated for more material support, most community participants were enthusiastic about Plan’s new focus. As one community leader summarised it, “Plan has been the seed that we needed to advance.”29 Another woman from a community where Plan

27 Interview by Uwe Gneiting with members of a Municipal Protection Council, conducted in Guanagazapa, Guatemala, 1 April 2009
28 Interview by Uwe Gneiting with Plan Guatemala community facilitator, conducted in Coban, Guatemala, 25 February 2009
29 Interview by Uwe Gneiting and Otto Valle with members of a Community Development Council, conducted in Masagua, Guatemala, 19 February 2009
is currently phasing out explained, “Plan has given us great instructions. Now all we have to do is continue using them ourselves.”

ii. Spaces and processes

Creating and supporting spaces of interaction between rights holders and duty bearers as well as citizen groups can have a positive impact on the human rights situation. By creating room for participation, governments are more directly exposed to popular scrutiny and are exposed to greater pressure to fulfil their accountability towards their citizens. These spaces of participation therefore have the potential to create a more level playing field. Supporting the establishment of participatory processes to monitor government performance can also contribute to a better provision of government services or the advancement of a particular human right.

The support of participatory spaces and process has been the most successful in Plan’s participation and protection programmes. In participation, Plan has managed to strengthen participatory spaces on a municipal level, such as the municipal development councils, which are the primary spaces for direct citizen interaction with local authorities. Comments from different sources confirmed the critical importance of this relatively new space of participation. According to Plan staff, community members, and external informants, the creation of development councils has given communities a new opportunity to participate in decisions regarding the development of their community. Plan has supported the formation and organisation of these councils and their various commissions. Meetings with three councils showed that Plan’s activities remain critical since members are not yet fully aware of their individual function and the general role of the council. As internal data from 14 of Plan’s 22 municipalities shows, Plan has supported this space in nine out of the fourteen municipalities while in

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30 Interview by Uwe Gneiting and Otto Valle with members of a Municipal Development Council, conducted in Masagua, Guatemala, 19 February 2009
five others efforts have been limited. The reason for this discrepancy in activity levels between different programme units is unknown. The overall goal achievement of Plan’s sub-programme to strengthen the municipal government is surprisingly low at 36.93 per cent.\textsuperscript{31}

Despite Plan’s efforts to strengthen the municipal government and the spaces for popular participation within the municipality, the positive effects of this process have yet to become visible to the communities. The overwhelming majority of communities remain disappointed with the level of response by municipalities to their claims. Most of the community leaders reported having asked their municipality for help with projects, but only two indicated receiving measurable support. Municipality leaders acknowledged that people are making more claims and are asking for more help than before (which is not only attributable to Plan’s efforts) and they admit that they have been able to respond to only a small fraction of the claims made by communities. The main reason for the inability of municipalities to respond to citizen claims is a lack of resources on a municipal level, which was cited as the main obstacle by all ten municipality leaders interviewed.

Creating more spaces for children’s participation is another area where Plan has had some success in its participation programme. While the effects on children’s attitudes have been very positive, the effects of Plan’s work on spaces for children’s participation are mixed. The establishment of school governments and the introduction of a more active teaching methodology have enabled a more active role for children in their schools. Beyond their school environment, children reported mixed experiences about the space they are given in community affairs and meetings. A survey by Plan of almost 40,000 sponsored children in Guatemala confirmed this finding. While 88 per cent of children mentioned that they feel as though they can express themselves freely in their homes, only 33 per cent feel that the

\textsuperscript{31} Data retrieved from Plan Guatemala participation programme monitoring database
community organisations consider the opinions of children and adolescents in their decisions.³²

Other programmatic achievements of strengthening spaces and processes can be found in the protection programme where Plan has worked to strengthen an institutional process to respond to and attend to cases of child abuse and maltreatment. The establishment of a telephone help line for abuse victims and of community protection networks are two more examples of Plan creating processes and spaces that help to improve a particular human right (i.e. child protection). In the education programme, the attempt of Plan to involve communities in the monitoring of their schools is also worth mentioning although this process is just in its start-up phase.

iii. Institutions and programmes

Strengthening institutions in their capacity better to plan and implement programmes that improve the human rights situation are another area, in which an organisation like Plan can contribute. Its technical expertise, its human and material resources and its presence in remote communities make Plan a valuable partner to these institutions.

Plan has had a significant impact on government institutions and their programmes both on a national and a municipal level. On the national level, the most striking examples of success are Plan’s support of the health and the education ministry. Its cooperation with the health ministry in support of the Extension of Coverage Programme of basic health services has brought health services to more than 600 communities that previously were serviced by Plan only or did not have any access. As a result, 82 per cent of children under one-year-old in these communities have medical check-ups at least twice a year (up from 52 per cent).³³ The delivery of the services to all of these

³² Data retrieved from Plan Guatemala (2009)
³³ GETSA (2009), Evaluation of Plan Guatemala’s Health Program
communities is today financed by the health ministry, which indicates a successful completion of this cooperation. Plan’s engagement with the education ministry shows similar characteristics although progress has been slower. Plan has trained teachers and supported schools in the adoption of a more active teaching methodology in more than 300 communities. The ministry has started to take over the support of these schools and has introduced components of Plan’s quality learning programme in its new national curriculum (although it remained unclear what the exact contribution of Plan in this process has been). Another successful cooperation has been the agreement with the Social Works of the First Lady of Guatemala (SOSEP), which works on the construction and maintenance of day care facilities for children aged 0 to 6. Plan has helped this institution by supporting communities to qualify for those facilities.

On a municipal level, Plan has made the strengthening of municipalities the priority of its participation programme. According to Plan, it wanted to ensure the municipalities’ ability to respond to citizen claims before extensively mobilising communities. Plan has done so by strengthening municipal offices, supporting systematisation and computerisation and building the capacities of the municipalities in resource mobilisation. Again, the level of activity ranges widely from municipality to municipality with an average goal achievement of 53 per cent in the area of strengthening municipal offices. According to the municipal leaders interviewed (as well as Plan staff), Plan’s capacity building was seen as effective since it has increased their awareness of child issues, increased the capacity of municipal staff and has enabled them to organise themselves better. However, many saw the

34 Interview by Uwe Gneiting with Plan Guatemala executive staff member, conducted in Guatemala City, 9 February 2009
35 Interview by Uwe Gneiting with Plan Guatemala executive staff member, conducted in Guatemala City, 11 February 2009
36 Data retrieved from Plan Guatemala participation programme monitoring database
effectiveness of the training as limited due to the lack of resources which are needed to put those newly won capacities to use. Plan’s capacity building and training was seen as particularly valuable by new municipal governments which faced a steep learning curve in their new role. The greatest focus of Plan’s work with municipalities, however, was the creation of child-centred public policies. This activity will be discussed in the section on legislation and policies.

iv. Civic action

Strengthening the capacity, organisation and mobilisation of local citizen groups (adults and children) is an important component of empowering rights holders. The unified force that these groups gain by their collective action greatly exceeds the power individual citizens would have. The groups and movements can affect the human rights situation by engaging in projects or capacity-building activities as well as by working beyond the community level and serving as a vehicle to advocate to local and national authorities.

Plan has managed to affect positively the ability of community groups to engage within their communities. Due to its long-standing ties to communities, the organisation has been able to form and sustain groups in each of its programme areas. Examples include the community development councils (which are not independent civil society groups) and several child and adolescents groups, such as Young Peers (informing their peers about HIV) or school governments (enabling children to participate in their schools). The most successful examples, however, are to be found in Plan’s protection programme where both adults and adolescent groups have been formed and are now taking over important functions in their communities. The formation and training of community protection networks and their subsequent work within their own communities has contributed to an increase in awareness about child rights and to changes in attitudes with regards to child-raising and parenting styles. These groups also
serve an important monitoring function by investigating and denouncing cases of child abuse and maltreatment and by being the link to municipal authorities (such as the municipal protection committees or the local representatives of the human rights ombudsman). Community members commented on several occasions on the great influence that their initiative to raise awareness about child rights has had in the communities. Furthermore, Plan has supported the formation of a large network of so-called Youth Community Promoters which have been enabled for the most part by personnel from the human rights ombudsman and which now promote child rights in their communities (often in collaboration with the community protection networks). These groups were observed to have a high level of agency and personal engagement and serve as a good example of how Plan has sparked civic action on a community level.

Plan has not worked much on promoting civic action across communities and has therefore not had significant impact on strengthening the voices of civil society towards the government. The exception to this is Plan’s strengthening of development councils on a community and municipal level which has been described throughout this report. However, since the formation of the council system is mandated by law and since these councils remain closely linked in their work to the state, they cannot be considered voluntary organisations or parts of civil society. Furthermore, they are at times highly politicised since municipal mayors attempt to influence their composition and their work. Because of their ties to politics and their relative isolation as community organisations, their ability to serve as independent voices for community needs remains limited. Supporting existing civil society groups to engage across communities and to represent the concerns of communities vis-à-vis the government would be one alternative for Plan to increase further the power and scope of civic action.

v. Legislation and policies
Proposing, opposing and supporting legislative initiatives and policies that contribute to the protection and fulfilment of human rights is one of the most traditional and important ways of affecting lasting social, cultural and political change. In order to augment the leverage and power citizens have towards their government, a solid and explicit legal foundation has to exist in order for people to be able to exercise their rights. International organisations have the ability to play a positive role in the establishment of such laws and policies.

Plan has made significant efforts in the promotion of child-centred public policies on a municipal level but has undertaken limited and only selected efforts to engage in national-level advocacy. The organisation formally is a member of a range of strategic alliances, such as the Great Campaign for Education (aiming to raise government expenditures for education to 4.5 per cent of the national budget) and the Sectorial Table for Health (led by the Swedish Embassy in Guatemala), the Guatemalan Water and Sanitation Network (advocating for a national water policy, which is currently stalled in Congress), and has advocated together with the National Commission against Child Abuse for a reform of the Guatemalan penal code (a goal which has been recently achieved). Apart from the reform of the national penal code, Plan has had limited influence on the formulation of new legislation or policies. Influencing national-level policy has not been a primary goal of Plan for two reasons. Firstly, Plan is primarily making use of the existing legal framework consisting of the Guatemalan constitution and a series of other laws that were passed in recent years, such as the Decentralization Law of 2002 and the Integral Child Protection Law of 2003. It therefore chooses to focus more on the application of existing laws. Secondly, Plan’s focus is primarily on the municipal level. The central initiative in its interactions with municipal governments has become the creation of child-centred public policies, which are based on improving the child rights situation on a local level.
Plan has contributed to the passing of child-centred public policies in nine of twenty-two municipalities in which it is active. In several others the policy creation process is underway (only two of twenty-two municipalities are reported by Plan to be not cooperative). Plan reports a 44 per cent success rate with regard to its efforts in creating public policies (diagnostic, formulation, approbation and dissemination).\(^{37}\)

Considering the relative short time frame of Plan’s implementation of its rights-based approach and the novel nature of the relationships with municipalities, this should be considered a significant achievement and an important step towards a more democratic and child-focused political process. Plan’s impact on policy formulation on a municipal level is not only an effective way of strengthening the capacity of duty bearers but has increased the power of citizens as well. It also places child rights on local policy agendas and serves as a guiding tool to plan, finance and implement programmes aiming at the improvement of the situation of children in the municipality. As one municipal mayor explained his use of their new public policy, “With this policy under my arm, I go from door to door of the national and international institutions to collect funds for our projects and programmes.”\(^{38}\) The mayor further emphasised that many of the initiatives the municipality has taken on in the areas of education, health and water could only be developed through this process since the municipality did not have the resources to fund them on its own. The policies also serve as an important benchmark for government performance and give citizens the ability to monitor the execution of their political commitments. Since they are generally agreed upon with municipalities and not with a particular government, they should survive turnovers in political office.

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37 Data retrieved from Plan Guatemala participation programme monitoring database

38 Interview by Uwe Gneiting with head of municipal government, conducted in Masagua, Guatemala, 19 February 2009
7. Conclusion and recommendations
a. Conclusion

The transition from a needs-based to a rights-based approach to development work is a profound process of transformation that affects all parts of an organisation. While a needs-based approach involves charity, material assistance and the satisfaction of immediate needs, a rights-based approach views poverty as a systematic violation of human rights and shifts away from the symptoms towards the underlying root causes of poverty. International organisations embracing RBA no longer act solely as providers of goods and services but instead become political participants in struggles for justice by supporting the rights claims of excluded groups. Adopting a rights-based approach hence requires a redefinition of organisational goals and profoundly changes the types of available strategies and activities. RBA fundamentally changes the roles external actors play in local development processes and forces them to redefine themselves as organisations. Only by acknowledging this profound transformation, can an organisation effectively contribute to the structural changes that constitute the long-term goals of a rights-based approach to development.

Plan Guatemala has embraced this challenge and has made remarkable progress in its transition towards RBA. As this assessment found, Plan has devoted significant time and energy on a critical reflection on its own history in Guatemala, its role as an international development organisation, and the sustainability and effectiveness of its work. The result has been a drastic redefinition of the organisation’s understanding of the development process and a significant change in its strategic approach to development work. Plan has managed to find strategic ways of combining its long history and expertise in community-level work with its new commitment to a rights-based approach. By focusing its efforts on facilitating the interaction between duty bearers and rights holders on a municipal level, Plan takes a bottom-up approach to rights-based development that differs from strategies of other rights-based development organisations. Unlike organisations such as ActionAid, Plan is
not working to support local movements and grassroots organisations (GROs) to claim their rights but instead focuses on strengthening existing community structures as democratic expressions of community life. Thus, the focus of Plan lies (so far) less on grassroots activism but instead on the practical exercise of human (and child) rights by local communities and their ability to participate in the local democratic process. Plan combined its rights-based approach with its organisational strength and engages in the struggle for human rights and democracy where it has the most expertise and influence, namely, the local level. It can be concluded that the organisation has seen some encouraging early results in helping excluded and powerless communities to find their voice and claim their rights while at the same time it has worked to ensure that authorities have the capacity to respond effectively to them.

The research team found that Plan’s strategic change is not only visible in the organisation’s strategic plans but that it has found its way into the implementation of programmes on the ground. Plan’s relationship with local communities has shifted from technical interactions to more cooperative partnerships geared towards enabling the creation of their own development objectives. In contrast to its previous work, the organisation is now seeking the involvement of government institutions in all of its programmes and projects and coordinates its activities with local and national government actors. Plan has managed to establish cooperative relationships with a variety of government institutions and agencies and has increased their ability to fulfil their human rights obligations. After five years of implementing its new strategy, Plan has proved that its strategic approach can be effective and that it is feasible for an international development organisation to contribute constructively to the strengthening of democracy and the fulfilment of human rights in Guatemala. The continuous monitoring of this feasibility and of the progression towards Plan’s ambitious goals is one of the major challenges for the organisation in the future.
Plan has a long tradition of doing needs-based development work at a community level. Given the organisation’s history and expertise in this area, it is not surprising that Plan’s transition process towards a rights-based approach has been in line with its organisational strength and has centred on the local level. Internationally, the organisation remains partly a traditional child sponsorship organisation with the associated donor expectations and constraints. As has been acknowledged by Plan itself, combining a traditional child sponsorship approach with a rights-based approach to development is a challenging task, because a traditional focus on a single child does not necessarily require addressing structural causes of inequality and poverty. Plan has implemented a rights-based approach within its own organisational constraints by focusing on what it does best, namely, working with communities to improve their quality of life. Despite its new rights-based approach, Plan continues to take a predominantly technical approach in its interactions with government and communities, focusing on increasing capacities on both sides. The main innovation is that Plan now encourages a more active role of communities and simultaneously calls on the government as duty bearer to fulfil its role. While this approach has proved to yield positive results in the short term, it remains to be seen if this non-confrontational understanding of RBA will be able to overcome some of the structural causes that seem to be at the root of poverty in Guatemala. In the future, the identity of a rights-based organisation is likely to challenge the organisational confines of a traditional child sponsorship organisation and questions about the compatibility of those two organisational identities will become more pronounced.

Plan’s work over the past five years has been most effective using two of the five avenues that have the potential to improve human rights significantly (see graph). While this constitutes a significant achievement, it also reflects an important limitation to Plan’s current impact. Plan has worked extensively to

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39 Personal interview by Uwe Gneiting with Plan Guatemala executive staff, conducted in Guatemala City, 20 April 2009
affect the attitudes and behaviour of rights holders (both adults and children) by building their capacities based on the existing legal framework (in particular in participation and protection) and on a variety of rights-related topics. Furthermore, Plan has heavily invested in supporting government institutions in the execution of programmes and can point towards a substantive increase of government responsibility in the areas of health and education. The agreement with the health ministry and Plan’s work with the SOSEP to ensure pre-primary education illustrate these achievements. Yet, three other human rights-related factors 1) legislation and policies on a national level; 2) spaces and processes and; 3) civic action) have not gained the same kind of attention and emphasis. As this research has showed, these factors are particularly relevant if Plan hopes to move beyond the impressive initial results and aims for self-sustaining and productive interactions between local communities and the government. Spaces and processes matter because they constitute opportunities for participation and the emergence of political power exercised by rights holders. Plan has worked on expanding spaces of participation, such as the municipal development councils and participatory processes, such as attempts at community involvement in the monitoring of government services, but efforts remain limited and should be extended to other civil society actors. Secondly, Plan has predominantly focused on community development councils as vehicles of adult participation. Due to their general fragility and isolation, their potential to spark civic (and collective) action remains limited. In order to increase the power of communities and to connect their voices, local civil society groups, which could serve as a connecting and empowering mechanism, could also be supported by Plan. Thirdly, it became clear during the research that effectively advancing the rights for which Plan is advocating requires more attention to national-level policy processes, even when using a local, bottom-up approach. The ability of local government actors to respond to the rights of citizens strongly depends on support at the national level. Supporting government action without the corresponding legislation and policies carries the risk of making success solely dependent on the support of individual political leaders and the continuing presence of Plan. The
Guatemalan constitution, which is referenced by Plan as its guiding legal document, offers a good basis for a rights-based approach but remains limited with regard to crucial human rights issues. In order further to expand the rights of citizens, additional advocacy efforts at the national level should focus on the passing of specific legislation designed to implement constitutional protections, including efforts to improve the quality of education and budgetary measures to secure the funding of existing government programmes, such as the Health Service Expansion Programme.
b. Points of discussion

i. Power relations and inclusion

Inequality and exclusion are rooted in unequal power relations that limit the ability of people to participate politically and to claim and advocate for the fulfilment of their rights. These power relations cause citizens to have unequal access to the local democratic spaces that have been created, which means that marginalised groups (the most indigent members of a community, indigenous communities, the disabled, women and children etc.) will not be as well served by the government and have very limited means to address this injustice. Plan’s programme staff has recognised that it generally reaches only a fraction of community members and does not generally reach the most indigent and most excluded. Plan should therefore more explicitly
acknowledge, analyse and address the lack of inclusion and the differences in power that exist on a communal, municipal and national level. Working on behalf of people living in poverty requires establishing equal access as well as the ability for all community members to participate in decision-making processes that affect their own lives. Plan should identify as well as reach out to vulnerable, discriminated against and otherwise disadvantaged members of the community. While Plan has, to date, mostly worked within the established system of local governance (i.e. the locally established development councils), it should also examine in what ways those structures may reflect and perpetuate existing inequalities and discrimination.

Plan can increase its efforts to combat the problems of exclusion and unequal power relations by more closely monitoring the composition of the democratic vehicles that it attempts to strengthen, such as community development councils. Plan can further encourage community leaders to consider and reach out to disadvantaged groups in order to facilitate more inclusive decision processes on a community level. Plan can furthermore engage with communities in analysing power relations and exclusion through the use of Participatory Rural Appraisal tools. Ultimately, Plan must pay attention to a two-step process. The mere participation (or inclusion) of more people in community affairs does not necessarily change unequal power relations that are often deeply rooted in social settings. These people might still not see an increase in decision-making power despite their presence at events and discussions in their communities. Therefore, Plan needs first to encourage the greater inclusion of disadvantaged groups and, subsequently, work to facilitate democratic and inclusive decision-making processes. Putting the principle of inclusion into practice comes with costs for the organisation and the complete fulfilment of this principle might remain an ideal. However, it is the aspiration towards this ideal that gives rights-based approaches their
ambitious nature. Effectiveness remains a critical concept under RBA but promoting a truly inclusive process leading to positive results becomes a critical prerequisite.

ii. Participation

Greater participation of adults and children in local political processes has been a core theme of Plan’s rights-based strategy. Plan has expanded the space of children’s participation both inside and outside of their community and has strengthened critical spaces of political participation, such as the community and municipal development councils. While this is a significant achievement, it is equally important that the participation of citizens does not remain limited to project identification and prioritisation. We recommend that Plan should also facilitate the scaling up of citizen participation beyond the project identification and prioritisation stage in order for citizens to have the capacity to monitor the fulfilment of government obligations and thereby to strengthen the accountability of government institutions.

There are several tools that Plan can use to expand the scope of citizen participation. Supporting social audit mechanisms is one obvious first step. Plan has already worked towards the creation of such mechanisms (in its health programme for example) but so far, however, with limited success. Other activities that would increase the capacity of citizens to participate include budget literacy trainings in order for citizens to be better able to monitor the quality, accessibility, cost and financial transparency of government project implementations. Another suggested effort focuses on encouraging more widespread citizen usage of the new Free Access to Information Act that was recently passed in Guatemala but has not yet been utilised much by citizens.

Lastly, we recommend that Plan considers expanding the scope of citizen participation also in its own decision-making processes. Ironically, the universality of human rights as the sole source of
legitimacy for Plan’s activities has limited the organisation’s efforts to include people in the selection of issues, the design of programmes and the evaluation of results. As of today, community members are primarily involved in the implementation of Plan’s projects and programmes and less so in programme planning and design processes and decisions. Since the organisation does not view itself as the constitutionally responsible duty bearer, the participation process has shifted away from the space between communities and Plan towards the political spaces between municipal governments and communities. This shift puts primary emphasis on the accountability of a government to its citizens, but it should be complemented by encouraging participative and inclusive decision-making processes also linking Plan to local communities.

iii. Advocacy

Plan has placed the primary focus of its interactions with government institutions on the implementation of existing legislation and policies and the support of municipal and national authorities to implement existing programmes and projects. In Plan’s view, lack of resources and capacity is the primary reason why constitutionally responsible institutions fail to meet their human rights obligations towards the citizens of Guatemala. While a lack of resources and capacity matters, it is important to recognise the role of more fundamental factors limiting the Guatemalan state to be more responsive to its citizen’s concerns and claims. These factors include the historic discrimination against rural and indigenous populations, a high level of corruption and clientelism, a culture of impunity and the strong links between government representatives and powerful economic and military interests. A purely technical approach to NGO–state government interactions is not likely to be adequate in addressing many of these factors limiting the government’s responsiveness to disadvantaged local communities.
Plan can choose among a number of options if it decides to expand its advocacy efforts on the national level. One such option would be the participation in the drafting of shadow reports on the national situation of child rights. Such reports would summarise Plan’s and other NGOs’ expertise about the situation and children and would be submitted to the United Nations committee monitoring the Child Rights Convention (CRC). The government and NGO reports could then be used to enter into a discussion with government officials about how further to improve the situation for children in the country. Another option would be to advocate for a revitalisation of the decentralisation process (including greater budget autonomy for municipalities), which would aim at increasing resources at the municipal and local levels. Plan could also advocate for a more proactive implementation of the Free Access to Information Act that was recently passed and which is geared towards increasing transparency of government spending.

Beyond Guatemala’s borders, Plan should be open for coordinated regional and global advocacy efforts, it should feed its own observations information and experiences to the international level and it should attempt to influence the targets and message of transnational advocacy campaigns affecting child rights.

A stronger involvement in these political processes may expose Plan to greater risks associated with challenging the interests of political leadership on the national level. Those risks can be mitigated by partnering with local civil society actors or with networks of other international organisations. Plan can then let local partners decide on the risks associated with advocacy messages. Also, becoming more political is not limited to policy advocacy and directly challenging the powerful, but can express itself in expanded situational analysis (including research), agenda setting or negotiations with political authorities. Most importantly, increasing advocacy efforts on the national level does not entail siding with a specific political faction or
becoming involved in party politics. Plan should only take sides with the people that it is trying to support – the children of Guatemala.

iv. Partnerships

Plan works in cooperation with local civil society organisations in all of its programmes but mostly on a contractual service-delivery and not a mutual-partnership basis. As a result, Plan retains control over the activities carried out and also remains the critical factor in the achievement of its goals. The organisation’s efforts to strengthen and empower local civil society are for the most part limited to the community level. The primary point of contact with communities (apart from community volunteers) is through the legally established community development councils. These councils constitute hybrids between civil society and the state since they are established by law as public entities and mandated to function as part of the national development system. Their members are elected private, non-remunerated citizens representing their own communities. Although it appears sensible for Plan to interact and support this system on a community and municipal level, the predominant focus on building the capacities of those councils may limit Plan’s ability to foster other, authentic expressions of community organising emerging outside of the councils. In addition, the councils are often not representative of the communities (non-inclusive membership) and are politicised by municipal leaders.

Plan should consider diversifying its partnerships with local civil society organisations beyond the community development councils. Local civil society could further facilitate and enrich citizen participation on a municipal level. In order to increase the influence and capacity of communities in the democratic process, it is critical that they have the ability to link with one another and to speak with one unified voice. Local civil society organisations that work across communities and that are more stable in their existence (community development councils
are re-elected every two years) could be an important vehicle to achieve this link. Engaging in more equal partnerships with such local civil society partners working across communities could therefore be one way of increasing the effectiveness and the sustainability of Plan’s work. As one informant expressed succinctly, “The only sustainable factor in all this is civil society.”

v. Plan’s role as an organisation

An organisation’s strategic orientation is generally closely tied to the way the organisation sees its role as a development actor. Given Plan’s organisational characteristics described above and its strategic interpretation of RBA (focusing on local interaction of duty bearers and rights holders), it is not surprising that Plan has chosen a non-political approach to its rights-based work. As mentioned above, Plan has not engaged in national-level advocacy or the mobilisation of local civil society groups since such actions are likely to lead to more confrontational encounters with government officials. Plan has been careful to maintain a certain level of neutrality, although the research indicates some acknowledgement of some of the political power Plan already has. The interviews revealed different opinions on the extent to which Plan should take on more politically controversial positions. While approximately 40 per cent of the respondents perceived Plan as a non-political actor, 60 per cent saw the organisation as a political (yet non-partisan) actor. The researchers also observed some ambivalence within Plan if the organisation is or is not part of civil society. This finding implies that there is a need for Plan to ask itself what its role within a rights-based approach is and should be. It is of critical importance that Plan sees itself as a civil society organisation and as a part of global civil society in order to have legitimacy to be an active participant in Guatemalan society, to work with a human rights-based approach and to engage in advocacy activities.
Until now Plan has chosen a more instrumental approach to RBA. Its focus on building the technical capacity of rights holders and duty bearers and supporting their activities has allowed the organisation to take a relatively neutral approach to its community and government interactions. As was discussed in section 2, Plan has refrained from addressing power imbalances within communities and generally avoids being confrontational in its work with the government. While this has allowed Plan to build relationships quickly with government and community leaders and engage in the execution of programmes, it also limits the transformative power of a rights-based approach. By not questioning institutional politics (within governments) and structural injustices (within communities), Plan leaves some fundamental issues, such as exclusion or discrimination, untouched.

The question then is how Plan’s role should change in the future in order to overcome some of these limitations. Ultimately, Plan will be faced with the question of how much control over the processes and outcomes of its work it is willing to relinquish. So far, Plan has ensured that it remains in control of its programmes and that results are attributable to its work. It continues to execute its programmes directly, to deliver material help and to have direct ties to the communities. In comparison to its former role as direct provider of material support, Plan in its new role as facilitator has less direct control over activities and outcomes. This needs to be explicitly acknowledged and means that the organisation has to engage in more process-oriented, long-term and flexible goal setting and performance assessment. However, this would require Plan to give up some of some of its control over activities and results and to accept a more organic and less linear approach to its work, which would have significant repercussions on its definition of success and its ability to report results to donors.

Lastly, the question remains as to what human rights mean for Plan as an organisation. Plan has been explicit about not being a duty bearer
itself because it is based on voluntarism and it seeks to avoid raising expectations for material aid within the communities. In contrast to democratic governments, which are primarily accountable to citizens, international NGOs have multiple stakeholders creating sometimes conflicting accountability demands. Still, formal differences between the role of a government and a NGO aside, any actor with power and the ability to change peoples’ lives should consider developing appropriate means of accountability to those affected by its presence. As a resource-rich organisation with a large international network Plan holds significant power over marginalised people living in poverty in rural communities in Guatemala. Accountability mechanisms towards communities are less common and more complex to develop. RBA requires developing some form of downward accountability that will represent critical learning mechanisms for Plan and that can thereby improve Plan’s effectiveness. Creating accountability for its power by including communities in a meaningful way in the creation and evaluation of programmes is not only the right thing to do, but it is part of a process of increasing the effectiveness of Plan’s efforts. Members of those communities are then more likely to understand and internalise a rights-based perspective if they learn those mechanisms in their interactions with Plan.

vi. Sustainability

Another result of Plan’s technical and apolitical role is the fact that the question of sustainability remains a topic of concern. On a government level, Plan is viewed by both national and municipal authorities as a valuable source of technical support. Interviews with government officials showed that the importance of Plan’s support remains high and that institutions continue to be highly sceptical about their ability to maintain their activity level if Plan left the area. On a community level, a similar situation has emerged. Plan’s perceived role has shifted from being a service provider to being a facilitator since the organisation
now predominantly engages in organising and building the capacities of community groups and opening spaces for them to interact directly with government authorities. Plan’s new focus on increasing the capacity and participation of rights holders has reduced the dependency of communities on Plan’s resources. However, the research shows that dependency continues to be an issue associated with Plan’s presence. Communities are now overly reliant on Plan’s facilitating role and spaces of participation for both adults and children were disappearing again as soon as Plan stopped advocating for these spaces and no longer sustained the interaction between the government and communities.

The two main reasons why Plan’s achievements to date might not be sustainable are the political instability and fragility that is characteristic of many state institutions in Guatemala and the inherent lack of resources that many of those institutions are facing. Since many of the spaces for participation and other institutional changes (in particular on a municipal level) are not institutionalised yet, they can disappear or be discontinued when governments of political leaders change. Plan programme staff recognised this as the major obstacle of their work. The inherent lack of resources of many governments in the developing world is the other major challenges for the sustainability of Plan’s rights-based approach. Duty bearers might have the willingness to assume more responsibility but might not have the resources to execute and maintain programmes or projects. If citizens continue not to see any results from their increased participation and engagement, then participation fatigue is likely to set in and trust in democratic systems and the state in general further declines. Signs of this development have been observed in Plan’s case where the majority of communities voiced disappointment about the level of support and responsiveness that municipal governments have shown.
The research team is aware that the past five years represent only the first phase of Plan’s rights-based approach and that it might be too early to ask for sustainable results (in particular when considering the fundamental, long-term changes implied in RBA). Also, Plan has emphasised that the implementation of its five strategic principles will ensure the sustainability of its efforts. However, we recommend that Plan takes additional steps to increase the sustainability of its efforts in order to ensure the long-term feasibility of its strategy. Placing a greater emphasis on the institutionalisation of changes within government institutions (by for example focusing on building the capacities of second-level bureaucrats instead of political leaders) and systematising its efforts to enable municipalities to look for outside funding (as has been achieved in some cases) are two apparent first strategies. Furthermore, Plan is encouraged to develop indicators that monitor the progress of the interactions of duty bearers and rights holders so that the organisation has the opportunity to reassess its strategy in the future. Sustainability has been one of the great challenges of many development interventions in the past and has been one of the principal reasons for Plan to shift towards a rights-based approach. A rights-based approach, however, does not automatically guarantee sustainability and it is therefore critical that Plan remains vigilant about this topic in the future.

vii. Operational areas of improvement

Besides the strategic considerations outlined above, there are several operational concerns that could be addressed in order to strengthen Plan’s rights-based approach. Three of them are summarised below.

1. Human resource training

Plan has devoted significant efforts to training its personnel in its new strategic approach and it has managed to disseminate its new strategy within the organisation. Following a diagnostic regarding the current level of knowledge about human rights and
democracy, Plan’s staff received training about human rights and democracy by one of Plan’s local partners. In addition, Plan now has their own trainers who conduct capacity-building exercises on a regular basis. In addition, the internal Community Development Committee includes representatives from each programme unit and has served as a vehicle for dissemination of information and strategic considerations. However, the research shows that there is a need further to educate and train personnel. When Plan staff was asked about their training, the general consensus was to need more capacity building. As one fieldworker explained, “Plan has told us what to do but not how to do it.” 40 The most common suggestions for training were related to new methodologies and tools to be applied in their community work, such as facilitation of groups, working with children etc. The role of community-level staff has changed drastically as a result of the introduction of Plan’s rights-based approach. Plan staff is now acting as a facilitator, which implies taking a less technical and more people-oriented approach to its work. Translating this new role into reality would mean for fieldworkers to detect and address communal dynamics that are in conflict with human rights principles, such as exclusion and discrimination, and to apply techniques that make human rights real for people in communities.

2. Programme integration

Plan continues to place a high premium on its programmatic work. Much of its personnel structure both in the headquarters and on a programme unit level is organised around programmatic tasks and responsibilities. Headquarter staff remarked that people remain primarily tied to their programmes.

40 Interview by Uwe Gneiting with Plan Guatemala community facilitators, conducted in Jalapa, Guatemala, 24 March 2009
rather than necessarily viewing their efforts within the broader idea of human rights. This is an important area for improvement since the integration of programmatic tasks has direct consequences for the effectiveness of Plan’s work. The principle of the indivisibility of human rights has real implications on the ground where the access to one right has a direct affect on the ability of people to access another (children need to be healthy to be able to go to school, for example).

Plan has moved towards greater programme integration. The organisation’s strategic approach is the gradual integration of all programmes under its participation programme, thereby making the strengthening of rights holders and duty bearers the central theme of all of its programmes. Plan has started to do that on a local level by basing its engagement with municipalities on public policies, which take an integrated approach to child rights. It has also started to engage cross-programmatic initiatives, such as the healthy school programme and some of its protection initiatives (PHAST, Raising Children with Love) that cross programmatic separations and involve a range of government institutions. This process should be expanded in order for people to take advantage of the complementary benefits that improvements in individual human rights can bring.

3. Measuring success

As mentioned above, the task of measuring the effectiveness of rights-based approaches is more challenging than assessing traditional development interventions that rely on the contributing role of the development organisation. Plan has made some initial efforts to adjust its monitoring and evaluation mechanisms to its rights-based strategy. It has established mechanisms that are geared towards measuring the advances of its participation programme, which entails Plan’s core rights-
based efforts (i.e. focus on strengthening rights holders and duty bearers). Given the ambitious nature of Plan’s long-term goals (i.e. a profound social transformation), it will be critical for Plan to monitor and evaluate its continuing progress towards these goals. The indicators that Plan has used so far in its logical framework have been appropriate for assessing the initial achievements of Plan in influencing rights holders and duty bearers since Plan has been playing a very active role in this process. In the future, however, the challenge will be to modify these indicators in order to be able to assess the gradual processes through which duty bearers and rights holders relate to each other without the constant interventions by Plan. These indicators most likely will be more qualitative in nature. They should be determined with the active participation of the people involved in these processes and they should be flexible in nature since it is difficult to predict the exact course of processes of social change. In this process, Plan will be forced to accept that the goal is not to measure its direct influence on changes in social and political processes but first to assess the actions of duty bearers and rights holders and then draw conclusions about its own contributions to these changes.
References


About the Moynihan Institute

The Moynihan Institute of Global Affairs is located in the Maxwell School of Citizenship and Public Affairs at Syracuse University in Syracuse, NY. The institute’s mission is to extend, integrate and focus the Maxwell School’s commitment to exploring the international and global concerns raised by an interdependent world of diverse cultures, economies and political systems; to support interdisciplinary, collaborative research projects among teams of faculty and graduate students, to work on understanding and solving critical world problems; and to maintain a productive dialogue between the academic and policy-making communities in the process of translating theory into practice.

The Transnational NGO Initiative represents one of the major programmatic thrusts of the Moynihan Institute. The initiative was established in 2004 in recognition of the growing importance of non-governmental organisations in world affairs. The initiative is comprised of three components. A research component is designed better to understand the challenges to governance, leadership and effectiveness currently facing NGOs that work in a transnational context. An educational component is dedicated to training a new generation of students in the skills and perspectives they will need to work with or in transnational NGOs in the future. Third is a professional engagement component designed to facilitate learning among transnational NGO leaders and between such leaders and academic experts.

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