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Plan International's Holistic Approach to Adolescent Girls in Crisis
Programming: How Does the Integration of Child Protection and
Education Work in Practice?

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Abstract

In recent years, humanitarian action has increasingly moved away from siloed emergency responses divided by thematic sector, and more towards a holistic approach that integrates sectors, such as Child Protection and Education in Emergencies. Integrated programming has been shown to have multiple benefits, most importantly on program participants such as adolescent girls, who have long been overlooked by the humanitarian sector and therefore are the focus group of Plan International's programming. Through semi-structured in-depth interviews with key program staff from Plan International's offices, this research aims to understand how integrated programming is implemented in programs taking place in West Africa. Mixed findings indicate a partial collaboration across both sectors, caused by challenges such as missing technical expertise and strategic framework, insufficient funding and resistance to change. Proposed solutions for these challenges are knowledge exchange and improved feedback mechanisms, making integration a performance indicator, more opportunities for professional development, more guidance, and ensuring staff a future in the organization. These results are discussed in relation to further research and the implications that they have on humanitarian programming.

Key words: integrated programming, cross-sectoral collaboration, Child Protection in Emergencies, Education in Emergencies

Plan International's Holistic Approach to Adolescent Girls in Crisis Programming: How Does the Integration of Child Protection and Education Work in Practice?

1. Introduction

In humanitarian crisis, children and adolescents face a multitude of challenges. To address these challenges, humanitarian action is characterized by responses that are divided by thematic sectors such as *Child Protection in Emergencies (CPiE)* and *Education in Emergencies (EiE)*. Both sectors show similarity and complementarity in their objectives, which ultimately reinforce each other. Hence, the integration of both sectors adds to the holistic support of program participants' needs. This study will explore how integrated CPiE-EiE programming is implemented within Plan International's programming, specifically in Niger and Nigeria in West Africa.

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1.1 Integrated Child Protection and Education in Emergencies programming

The aim of CPiE is to “prevent of and respond to abuse, neglect, exploitation, and violence against children” (ACPHA, 2019, p. 19) through interventions that support the physical and emotional health, well-being, and dignity of children through specific activities (ACPHA, 2019). The aim of EiE is to ensure quality learning opportunities for all ages in situations of crisis, through formal and non-formal education programs, from early childhood development to higher and adult education (INEE, 2018; INEE, 2004). Overall, both sectors aim to positively influence the lives of children and adolescents, which is most effectively done by viewing the needs and challenges that program participants encounter from a holistic view that takes all aspects into account. To gain such a holistic view, it is necessary to understand the benefits of integrated programming, how CPiE and EiE intersect and why their objectives are mutually reinforcing.

First, integration can be cost effective, prevents duplication, and aligns with current efforts to transform humanitarian response, including the humanitarian development nexus,

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which aims to build greater coherence between the humanitarian and development sectors (Barakat & Milton, 2020). Moreover, cross-sectoral collaboration supports the child centered-approach to humanitarian response, which maximize the impact of multiple sectors interventions (ACPHA, 2020). Hence, integrated programming can benefit program participants in multiple ways. Firstly, education programming can mitigate certain protection risks, such as child marriage and early pregnancy: education improves not only child and maternal health by providing access to information, but higher levels of education are also associated with delayed childbirth and marriage (ACPHA, 2020). Secondly, educational settings can serve as a gateway in providing students with access to primary health care, meals, protection, and sanitation. Thirdly, children who attend school are less likely to slip through the ‘gaps’ of referral systems to other services (for instance specialist psychosocial support). For example, students with physical or mental health problems can be identified through educators, who are then able to provide special assistance. Overall, this can improve learning outcomes and help address certain child protection issues (INEE, 2018). Lastly, safe schools and protected routes to school increase the probability of parents sending their children, especially daughters, to school. Hence, child protection programming can support children and young people to access education and reduce drop-out, therefore positively influencing enrolment and retention (INEE, 2018).

1.2 Plan International’s humanitarian programming

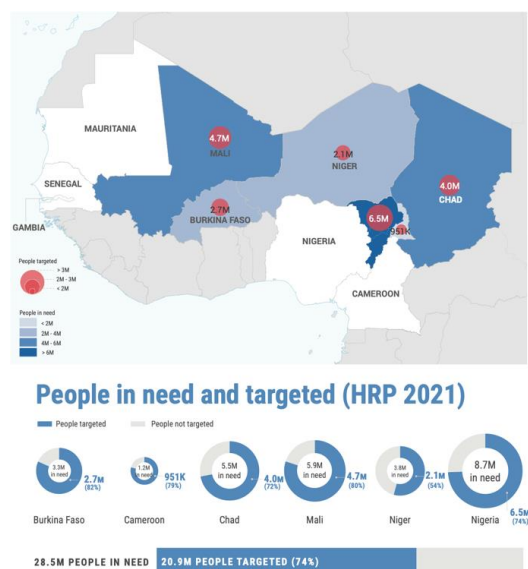
Following research about the benefits of integrated programming, the Plan Federation is working to shift their programmatic approach from a rather siloed approach of thematic sectors to a more integrated approach between thematic sectors. The benefits of integrated programming aim to support the International Non-Governmental-Organization’s (INGO) goal to advance children’s rights and equality for girls. With a long history working in development projects, Plan International also engages in humanitarian action, which includes

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projects that support children's right to dignity and protection and strengthen communities' resilience (Plan International, n.d.). One focus region for Plan International's humanitarian programming is West Africa, where especially the Sahel countries (see Figure 1), are among the fastest growing humanitarian crisis in the world. The region suffers unpredictable weather patterns, food insecurity and malnutrition as well as armed conflict and violence, that has further worsened the situation of affected communities and disrupted their livelihoods (OCHA, 2020).

Figure 1

Humanitarian caseloads Sahel region as of 23 March 2021 (Extracted from UN OCHA, 2021)



In humanitarian crisis, the interplay between education and child protection plays a significant role in enabling adolescent girls to gain power over their own lives. For many girls that live in crisis settings, “the onset of puberty marks a time of restricted mobility and heightened vulnerability as many are forced to leave school and marry early” (Plan International, 2020). Therefore, adolescent girls are vulnerable to insecurity and gender- and

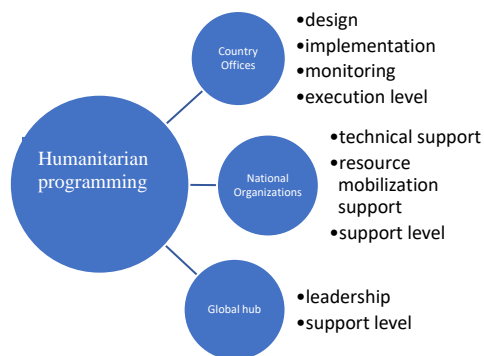
age-specific risk factors, that can include physical and sexual violence and child marriage. Moreover, adolescent girls often have little or nothing to say in matters that concern them and thus have little power to form and decide over their lives. Crisis often exacerbate the risks adolescent girls are exposed to. However, adolescent girls also demonstrate resilience, agency, and capacity to contribute (Plan International, 2020a). Moreover, access to education is the number one protective factor for certain protection risks such as early marriage and pregnancy, gives adolescent girls chances for a better job through knowledge and tools and provides access to crucial health information (Plan International, 2020b). Education can therefore improve social and mental health outcomes and favor psychological growth and wellbeing (Alexander et al., 2010).

However, humanitarian responses have long overlooked the unique needs and experiences of adolescent girls, which is why Plan International has focused more explicitly on this age group in recent years. Hence, there have been multiple projects implemented across the Federation, including in Niger and Nigeria in West Africa, the geographic focus of this research. For these projects, the Plan offices (“Country Offices” - CO’s) in Niger and Nigeria collaborate with Plan offices in donor countries (“National Organizations” – NOs), such as Plan International Norway. COs are generally located in countries, where programs are implemented, and are responsible for the design, implementation, and monitoring of programs within their country. NOs, however, are responsible for technical and resource mobilization support while ensuring effective management and implementation of projects. The leadership team in the Global Hub (GH) provides leadership and support for NOs while aligning field operations (Plan International, n.d.), (see Figure 2).

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Figure 2

Overview humanitarian programming Plan International



1.3 Gap in research

Several publications of research about integrated programming in humanitarian action have illustrated the need for further analysis, evaluation, and research, that build on existing evidence (Burde et al., 2017; ACPHA, 2020; INEE, 2018; Nicolai & Triplehorn, 2003). Moreover, the need for such an evaluation becomes evident through research conducted by ACHPA (2020): interviewees included actors from both sectors, who reported unsatisfactory and unsystematic levels of collaboration in practice. There were multiple challenges identified: firstly, the sectoral divide inherent in the existing humanitarian structure, for example in the sector-specific responses, which hampers the collaboration across sectors. Secondly, donor support is seen as crucial for encouraging integrated programming. Thirdly, the funding gap for both sectors prevents practitioners from adopting comprehensive integrated programming. Fourthly, further evidence is needed to build an evidence-base of the effectiveness of integrated programming. Fifthly, the limited opportunities for cross-sectoral capacity building needs to be extended to bring both sectors together. However, the study also mentions opportunities for improvement. Firstly, there is a need for field-level

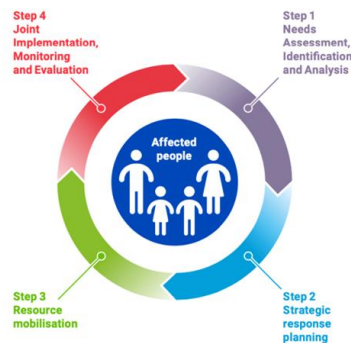
guidance on cross-sectoral collaboration through easy-to-use resources. Secondly, joint results frameworks, which enable joint project planning through shared results, are seen as key to integrated programming. Thirdly, donor guidance on what quality integrated programming entails can be a driving force in promoting integration. Fourthly, system strengthening through collaboration with National Governments, who play an increasing role in humanitarian work, should be a key focus of collaboration. Fifthly, a child-centered approach, that focuses on health development and well-being, is central for an integrated practice. Sixthly, network collaborations (i.e. between ACPHA and INEE) can provide cross-sector learning and ensure that that guidelines cross reference. Lastly, a more thorough incorporation of child protection guidelines in EiE guiding documents, such as the EiE minimum standards, could have an impact on the integration of CPiE into EiE work. In addition to challenges and opportunities, it is emphasized that there is a need for vast improvement through a more systematic approach that would ultimately improve the state of integrated programming across organizations (ACPHA, 2020).

A framework that offers a systematic approach to integrated programming throughout the Humanitarian Programme Cycle, is the CPiE-EiE collaboration framework, developed by The Global Child Protection Cluster and the Global Education Cluster (groups of humanitarian organizations that work in specific sectors and coordinate action). The framework entails recommendations for each step of the Humanitarian Programme Cycle, which consists of 1) needs assessment, identification and analysis, 2) strategic response planning, 3) resource mobilization, 4) joint implementation, monitoring and evaluation (see Figure 3). Step 3 resource mobilization won't be included in the current research, because it would require shifting the focus of the research away from the practical implementation of projects.

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Figure 3

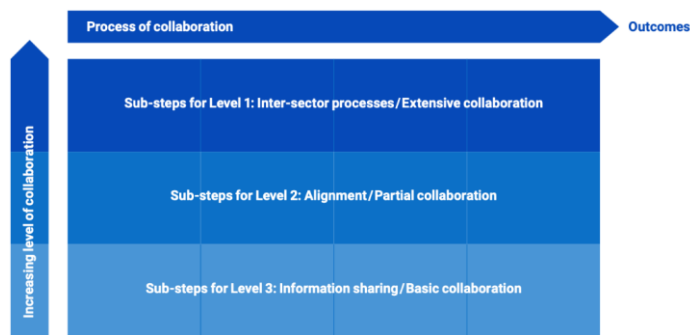
Humanitarian Programme Cycle (Extracted from CPAoR, 2020).



For each step, an objective of collaboration is given. The objective for the needs assessment phase is: “mutual understanding of which children are in need of what responses”. The collaboration during the design of these response is then marked through a “strategic division of roles and responsibilities for delivering services”. Lastly, the objective for implementation, monitoring and evaluation is summarized as “common and complementary activities are implemented and monitored in a way that maximizes coverage, quality and accountability”. Moreover, the framework recommends three minimum actions that are required to achieve this objective. In addition, a detailed chart is provided, that highlights in which sequence the collaboration recommendations should be implemented (see Figure 4). Additionally, the recommendations are placed on three levels: basic collaboration (information sharing) as base level, continuing with partial collaboration (alignment) and ending with extensive collaboration (inter-sector processes) being the highest level of collaboration. This chart can be used for an assessment that identifies the current level of collaboration and how it can be enhanced at each step of the cycle (CPAoR, 2020).

Figure 4

Process of collaboration with three levels (Extracted from CPAoR, 2020)



As an example, the framework provides the following guidance for the needs assessment phase: three minimum actions are firstly, to inform the other sector to maximize the opportunity to include cross-sector considerations/questions, secondly to agree on data that should be systematically shared and the most effective mechanism for doing so, and thirdly, to apply consistent/coherent approaches to response prioritization (geographical areas, population groups). Moreover, the process of collaboration should start with strategical and operational considerations, followed by common understanding of information needs, then joint data analysis and lastly potential assessments. For each sequence, the framework recommends activities that indicate basic, partial, or extensive collaboration. For the step of strategic and operational considerations, level of collaboration is increased if key questions for the needs assessment are not just shared with the other sector, but jointly developed across sectors.

1.4 Research question

In sum, cross-sectoral collaboration enforces a holistic approach to beneficiaries' needs, which need to be seen in connection to each other. For instance, there is a clear connection between CPiE and EiE, which is why Plan International aims to support adolescent girls' through integrated CPiE-EiE programming. However, due to the novelty of

this approach, there is a need for further analysis and improvement of collaboration between thematic sectors. Hence, the current research aims to evaluate which practices of collaboration are being used thus far in Plan International's humanitarian programming in West Africa. Therefore, the focus of the current research is the evaluation of the practice of integrated programming aiming to benefit adolescent girls, but not on the effect, that integrated programming actually has on adolescent girls. Some of the recommendations for enhanced collaboration between clusters stated by the CPiE-EiE collaboration framework (CPAoR, 2020) can be used as inspiration for collaboration between thematic sectors within humanitarian programming and will therefore act as guideline for the evaluation.

Additionally, it is aimed to identify challenges that practitioners encounter and how these can be solved. Since COs, NOs and GH work together throughout the Humanitarian Programme Cycle but have different responsibilities, the CPiE and EiE collaboration will be assessed on two levels: the executive levels through the COs and the support levels through NOs. It is therefore not just important if and how CPiE and EiE actors collaborate, but also how collaboration can be advanced on a CO (design, implementation, monitoring), NO (technical and resource mobilization support) and GH (leadership, support) level. The goal is to support the ongoing improvement of Plan International's humanitarian programming and the identification of possibilities in supporting both COs and NOs in their cross-sectoral collaboration.

This results in the following research question and subquestions:

Plan International's holistic approach to adolescent girls in crisis programming: How does the integration between Child Protection in Emergencies and Education in Emergencies work in practice?

1. What is the current state of collaboration between CPiE and EiE sectors throughout the four steps of the humanitarian programme cycle (needs assessment, response planning, monitoring, implementation & evaluation) in Plan International?
2. Which challenges regarding integrated programming can be identified by key program staff in COs, NOs and GH?
3. How can Plan International's humanitarian programming be improved towards a more integrated approach between CPiE and EiE?

2 Method

2.1 Research design

For this qualitative research, semi-structured in-depth interviews were conducted in a single research episode, for 30-60 minutes each. The interviews were held with Plan International's staff, working in COs, NOs or GH. Moreover, participants with expertise in either CPiE, EiE or program management were chosen, to further promote a variety of viewpoints regarding the state of cross-sectoral collaboration as well as challenges of integrated programming and chances for improvement. Using a diverse set of participants helped to create nuanced answers to the research questions.

2.2 Participants and recruitment

Possible participants were identified through consultation with my Plan International internship supervisors Alison Joyner and Ingunn Vikene, working on GH and NO level. Both work in close collaboration with colleagues from Niger and Nigeria COs as well as with colleagues working in different NOs. In addition, the supervisors approached the Country Directors of Niger and Nigeria COs with the request to identify staff, that is knowledgeable about integrated programming. The information was added to the list of potential participants, which resulted in a total number of 15. Potential participants received an e-mail with an information letter and a consent form. Eleven participants agreed to participate and signed the

consent form, took then part in the interviews, and were included in the analysis. Out of the four people who did not take part, two referred to other colleagues who are more knowledgeable about the topic (which had already been identified and contacted beforehand), one person failed to reply, and one other person stated that there are no relevant projects implemented through the NO, which could be used as base for the interview. Table 1 gives an overview of participants with information about gender, location, office, position, and language used in the interview.

Table 1

Participant information

Participant	Gender	Location	CO/NO/GH	Position	Language used in interview
Participant 1	Male	Niger	CO	EiE specialist	Interpreted in French
Participant 2	Male	Niger	CO	Disaster Risk Manager	Interpreted in French
Participant 3	Female	Niger	CO	Head of Program Development and Influencing	English
Participant 4	Female	Nigeria	CO	CPiE specialist	English
Participant 5	Female	Nigeria	CO	EiE specialist	English
Participant 6	Male	Nigeria	CO	EiE specialist	English
Participant 7	Female	Ireland	NO	EiE Advisor	English
Participant 8	Female	Sweden	NO	CPiE Advisor	English
Participant 9	Female	Sweden	NO	CPiE Advisor	English

Participant 10	Male	Niger	CO	Emergency Response Manager	English
Participant 11	Female	UK	GH	CPiE Global Lead	English

2.3 Interviews

The 30-60-minute interviews were divided into five parts, with the first four parts being the same for all participants and the last part differing, depending on the office the interviewee is working in (working for NO/GH or CO). All participants answered questions regarding 1) general aspects about integrated programming (e.g. What do you understand of an integrated approach?), 2) CPiE-EiE collaboration practices throughout the different steps of the Humanitarian Programme Cycle (e.g. How did you experience the collaboration with CPiE/EiE colleagues during the strategic response planning?), 3) challenges of integrated programming (e.g. What do you find challenging about integrated programming?), 4) chances for improvement (e.g. How can the collaboration across both sectors be improved?). For the fifth interview part, staff working in COs were asked about their collaboration and the support from NOs and GH, whereas staff working in NOs or GH were asked about their supporting role and how the collaboration can be improved on those different levels (e.g. How does the mutual support in adopting an integrated approach look like between GH, NOs and COs at the moment?). Appendices 1 and 2 provide an overview of all interview questions. Changing the interview content depending on the country in which professionals work, the research aims to assess how the collaboration across both sectors can be strengthened on the executive levels through the COs, but also how it can be strengthened on the support levels, through NOs and GH.

The structure was facilitated by guiding questions, which makes the data comparable (Cohen & Crabtree, 2006). The semi-structured questions also allowed participants to shape

the interview to some extent, for instance through elaborating further on a certain subject or raising issues or topics that are relevant for the interview objectives.

2.4 Recording and data transformation

Due to travel restrictions due to the COVID19 outbreak, video chats through Microsoft Teams were chosen as a sufficient method to resemble real life face-to-face conversations (Ritchie et al., 2014). The interviews were audio recorded with permission from the participants. Most interviews were conducted in English, but some also in French according to the preferences of the interviewees. For the interviews in French, my internship supervisor Ingunn Vikene assisted with the translation. Hence, questions were first asked by me in English, then by her translated into French for the interviewee and vice versa with the answers. Interviews held in English were transcribed entirely, whereas only the English translations of the French interviews were transcribed. For all interviews, reliability and validity depended largely on a common understanding of meaning (Louise Barriball & While, 1994), which is why questions were asked as clearly as possible and explained more elaborately if the participant wished so. Moreover, the standardization of semi-structured interviews and comparability of answers, especially in interviews held in French, needed to be facilitated through a suitable translation of interview questions and answers. Hence, participants' answers were translated piece by piece, so the translator would not forget important information.

2.5 Data Analysis

After transcribing the interviews, the transcripts were uploaded into the computer software Nvivo 12. By reading through all interviews and then more closely one by one, I gained an overview of the collected data. The analysis goal was to examine the meanings of data, and more concretely similarities and relationships within the data. Therefore, a substantive approach through a thematic analysis was chosen (Ritchie et al., 2014). This

was facilitated in two ways: 1) through coding according to pre-defined themes and 2) open coding, which was used to identify patterns and topics that were not part of the pre-defined themes. Pre-defined themes were selected in line with the CPiE-EiE collaboration framework (CPAoR, 2020) and its recommended actions for improved collaboration across thematic sectors, which were structured by level of collaboration (basic, partial, extensive). Examples for pre-defined themes for the needs assessment (extensive collaboration) are for instance: jointly develop questions and jointly identify common information needs (see a full list of pre-defined themes in appendix 3). After analyzing the interviews based on pre-defined themes, I went through them again and marked patterns and statements outside of the pre-defined themes but that were relevant for the research questions. This was especially important for identifying challenges and chances for improvement since they were not included in the theoretical framework. Participants mentioned for example that collaboration should be emphasized during the induction for a new role, that staff should be obligated to collaborate with other sectors and that management support is important for facilitating opportunities for collaboration. These codes were then grouped together into categories, which were labelled, such as “collaboration as performance indicator”. Lastly, the description of the connection between categories facilitated highlighting the relationship between for instance challenges and chances for improvement. Hence, “collaboration as performance indicator” could be helpful in encouraging people to adopt this “new way of working” and counter resistance towards it (Löfgren, 2013).

3 Results

The results will be presented in relation to the order of the research questions in the introduction. Firstly, the current state of integrated programming throughout the humanitarian programme cycle will be discussed, followed by challenges and solutions, which were highlighted by interviewees with the aim to improve integrated programming.

3.1 Current state of collaboration between CPiE and EiE

The following part will take a closer look at how extensive the CPiE-EiE collaboration is throughout the steps of the Humanitarian Programme Cycle within Plan International, according to the CPiE-EiE collaboration framework. It is important to mention that all interviewees emphasized the importance of integrated programming for an effective and holistic response. One interviewee said: “The more we integrate, the more we are efficient and the more we help children and address many more needs”.

Every participant reported diverse benefits in adopting an integrated approach, such as efficient use of resources and a holistic response to beneficiaries’ needs. Five participants indicated that the overall awareness of the importance of integration has increased even more in recent years, followed by a growing number of multisectoral projects that use an integrated approach.

3.1.1 Needs assessment

According to seven participants, rapid needs assessments that are conducted during emergencies will generally include multiple sectors. Five participants reported more extensive collaboration in form of jointly identified information needs, supporting the assessment team with technical guidance in developing key questions, joint reviews of assessments tools and cross-sectoral report sharing. However, this was not confirmed by other participants: one interviewee explained that rapid needs assessments tend to be quite shallow and aim to rather get a quick snapshot of the situation, which negatively impacts the degree to which integration takes place, since there is not enough time and funding to effectively integrate both sectors. Another participant indicated that there are not many comprehensive needs assessments conducted, which needs to be improved to facilitate integration.

3.1.2 Response planning

The extent of collaboration during the response planning was reported very differently by the participants, with some indicating basic and others indicating partial or extensive collaboration. Statements that indicated an extensive collaboration were for instance that program outcomes and activities are jointly designed and reviewed across sectors, with the aim to be complementary and supporting both CPiE and EiE.

However, there were also contradicting statements that indicate a basic/ non-existent collaboration: one EiE specialist reported that there is barely any integration when it comes to education projects. Additionally, one issue that indicates a missing collaboration, was raised by six participants: they reported missing integration in the strategic plans, such as the logistical framework matrix (planning matrix that provides overview of objectives, activities, and anticipated results). This results in objectives, outcomes and activities that are not aligned. Participants from NOs indicated that there is partial collaboration across sectors, especially within a project, but that there is room for improvement in collaborating across projects. One participant concluded that this is due to programs being based on different funding and the resulting risk of getting disjointed and losing the view of the overarching goal of a response. One participant stated: “Plan should look at that bigger picture, that what we think is a comprehensive vision and all the sectors actually contribute to this comprehensive intervention to this one boy”.

3.1.3 Implementation, monitoring and evaluation

Implementation

According to all interview participants program implementation is mainly done by partner organizations, such as local NGOs. Four interviewees reported an extensive collaboration with CPiE/EiE colleagues, for example through joint development of the implementation plan, joint decision on implementation approach and joint report writing. However, three participants indicated a less elaborate collaboration across sectors: due to

appointed responsibility for each component in the program logic, sectors might prioritize their own objectives and components and don't see the response holistically. Moreover, collaboration in terms of defining how to work together (referral systems and joint meetings) and training of the other sector are working well according to four participants.

Monitoring and evaluation

There are mixed reports about the extent of collaboration during monitoring and evaluation. However, the collaboration was coded as basic based on most participants' (six) statements. One explained that Plan International's monitoring and evaluation of programs is mainly done by a specialized team, the M&E team, in collaboration with program staff. However, three interviewees indicated that this collaboration is not working well, due to lack of time and prioritization of other tasks, and that the M&E team mainly collaborates with the program coordinator and not the CPiE/EiE staff, which decreases the chance of monitoring and evaluating the program from an integrated perspective. Moreover, one participant mentioned that there is a lack of feedback mechanisms from program participants, which otherwise would indicate extensive collaboration. However, answers by three participants indicated a more extensive collaboration: specialists come together on a quarterly basis to monitor the implemented programs as well as jointly draw a monitoring and evaluation plan.

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3.2 Challenges for adopting an integrated approach to humanitarian programming and possible solutions

3.2.1 Challenge: Missing technical expertise and strategic framework

Seven participants indicated that one challenge lies in the implementation of integration and collaboration principles. Participants emphasized the need for technical expertise (specialized knowledge), for example in how integrated activities can be created, how joint needs assessments can be conducted etc. Even though there are some guiding documents on integration within Plan International, one participant mentioned that language

barriers keep staff from understanding and implementing guidelines. Moreover, three interviewees indicated a missing strategic goal and framework, which emphasizes how the two sectors complement each other in the interest of the child.

The first solution, mentioned by six participants, is to create *more opportunities for professional development* through training crucial for understanding and implementing integration guidelines. One participant stated that the effect can be amplified by following up on such trainings, for example by other COs or NOs. Additionally, interviewees indicated that joint trainings that are attended by both sectors can not only increase the understanding and knowledge of other sectors but also build a basis for mutual support and facilitate spaces for collaboration. One interviewee concluded:

“I think you need very basic [training], making sure that the program staff understand, are trained on what is integrated programming, sort of knows examples. [...]. To understand very common areas where that integration can take place and where it's important. So, I think there's to be some sort of technical training or orientation for the staff.”

The second solution proposed by all participants is *more guidance* by NOs and GH in form of trainings, practical examples, and integration guidelines. Participants mentioned the efforts by COs, NOs and GH to develop an integration matrix and to collaborate across sectors, however, one interviewee emphasized that there is a need for a strategic framework that outlines why and how the two sectors should be working together, for example how log frames can be designed in a more integrated manner. One participant mentioned that institutionalizing the integrated approach can counter decreasing program quality due to high fluctuation of staff. Another participant said:

“I guess some guidance on what a starting point for this type of questions could be [during the needs assessment]. [...] we want to integrate protection, what is the

starting point? What are the different things you can consider programmatically?

What are the questions you can ask? I think very practical guidance could be useful.”

Moreover, five participants from both NOs and COs mentioned that an integrated approach should be reinforced by NOs when receiving program proposals (during the response planning phase) or reports throughout the programme cycle. According to the interviewees, asking critical questions that encourage CO staff to reflect the program logic can lead to a strengthened integration, which should then be followed by closer follow-ups during the remaining step of the cycle, to ensure the implementation of integration guidelines and a continued engagement with COs. One CO staff explained:

“From NO’s side I’m really interested in looking in opportunities together. How to make sure all our programming is integrated first and to fundraise. Sometimes, even if we have good ideas, we don’t have projects to put them in practice.”

In addition, five participants suggested that an *overarching role* that understands both thematic areas and can ensure integration, can guide collaboration. According to interviewees, this role could be taken by project coordinators for example. Moreover, five participants mentioned that managers at organizational level need to facilitate opportunities for collaboration. Management is therefore not required to have technical knowledge of both sectors, but according to interviewees they need to understand the importance of integration and have an overview of the different sectors and how they could collaborate. Two interviewees indicated that missing guidance and insufficient support from management can discourage staff to adopt integrated programming, partly due to its novelty (also see 3.2.2 Resistance to change).

3.2.2 Challenge: Resistance to change

According to three participants, integrated programming is seen by some staff as a new way of working, which can cause insecurity and opposition at times. Moreover, several

participants mentioned that due to the novelty of the approach and several challenges that come with it, it is not a given that staff adopt such an approach. Participants described it as neither easy nor happening automatically, but rather as an intentional process that requires the understanding and willingness to invest time and energy in changing the way of working.

The first solution, mentioned by five participants, is *awareness raising* around the importance of integrated programming and the benefits it entails at different levels. According to one participant, this could encourage CPiE and EiE actors, but also program coordinators and staff, to see humanitarian programming as a holistic response to emergencies, instead of using a more siloed approach.

The second solution, suggested by seven interviewees, is *making integration a performance indicator*, which could reinforce the implementation of such an approach: sector teams would be encouraged to collaborate across sectors and management would be motivated to facilitate the opportunities for such a collaboration. Moreover, including the necessity of collaborating with colleagues from other sectors in the job description and later in the induction of the role could help to reinforce the integrated approach. One interviewee said:

“But I think then also in practice, when you hire staff, or when you deploy staff that in the job description, there's also a clear intention of yes, you are sector specialists, that you should work in close collaboration with your other colleagues. [...] So somehow, maybe to make it people's responsibility and accountability to also connect with others could be helpful.”

Two interviewees explained that resistance to change can result in disagreement regarding working methods among team members, which makes it difficult to find common ground and to work based on the same documents and principles, such as integration guidelines. One CO staff said: “We come from different experiences but when we work in the same organization,

we need to make sure we are following the organizations way of work”. Two participants indicated that sometimes rivalry occurs between sectors, because each sector wants to be the lead in a certain project.

Two participants indicated *that team building activities* inside and outside of work can be helpful in overcoming confrontations due to different work ways and opinions. Joint trainings are mentioned as one example. Moreover, one interviewee mentioned that the focus needs to be on the benefits that a diverse team can bring in terms of learning from each other and bringing diverse perspectives on how to overcome challenges.

3.2.3 Challenge: Insufficient funding

Most participants (nine) mentioned insufficient funding as reason for many other challenges. According to interviewees, funding is the basis for all programs and therefore, if funding does not allow integration components, it is extremely difficult for specialists to follow such an approach. Moreover, participants said that emergencies are often under resourced, which causes the issue of shortage of staff mentioned by eight participants. This results in high demands on specialists and field workers and keeps them for instance from engaging in trainings around integrated programming. Among all participants it was agreed that frontline workers as well as CO staff are overstretched and under time pressure, especially in the response to emergencies. Interviewees emphasized that when new approaches or additional tasks for staff are proposed, it needs to be acknowledged that adequate resources, funding, and time need to be provided. Additionally, two interviewees mentioned the high turnover of staff in emergency responses, which poses a threat on the continuity of qualitative programming. The interviewee said: “And then many colleagues who work in emergencies at field level, at some point they look for more long-term opportunities, because they want more security”. Once certain working methods have been

established (such as integrated programming), it is possible that staff will have to leave shortly after due to their contract ending, and the team is forced to start over again.

One participant suggested *ensuring a future in the organization* as a possible solution for high turnover of staff. The participant emphasized that there is a need for a HR strategy that makes the effort to retain staff in the organization through giving them more career options. This way, so argued the interviewee, the training invested in staff will have positive long-term effects on the quality of the programs.

3.2.4 Possible solution for multiple challenges: Knowledge exchange and improved feedback mechanisms

Knowledge exchange and feedback mechanisms were mentioned by seven participants as solutions for multiple challenges: they can raise awareness, increase technical expertise, and improve team building. According to four participants, the systematic sharing of documents, reports and good practices across sectors improves the communication between CPiE and EiE specialists, encourages a mutual learning, support as well as increases accountability. One participant mentioned that network meetings are helpful for receiving and giving technical support as well as sharing good examples. Additionally, two participants indicated that better feedback mechanisms, which include both hearing more from beneficiaries' side but also the contact with other COs, highlight what is already working well and which aspects of programming need to be improved, which ultimately has a positive influence on the program quality.

4. Discussion

The objective of this research was to evaluate Plan International's current state of integrated programming, while gaining a comprehensive overview of challenges and how they can be addressed to enhance collaboration across CPiE and EiE. The goal was to inform the improvement of humanitarian programming and therefore the holistic support of the long-

overlooked group of adolescent girls. Even though there has been research about the benefits of integrated programming, there is still a need for building on this evidence and assessing how it is implemented into the practice of humanitarian programming within Plan International. It is crucial to evaluate how this new way of working can be advanced so adolescent girls can profit from its benefits and are supported in the best possible way.

Analyzing the collected data according to the recommendations found in the CPiE-EiE collaboration framework (see appendix 3) created a mixed picture of the current CPiE-EiE collaboration in Plan International's West African COs: all actions were found on different collaboration levels (basic, partial, and extensive) during needs assessment, response planning, implementation, monitoring & evaluation. However, participants did not indicate a joint data analysis during needs assessment or design of joint indicators during response planning. Reason for this could be that these tasks are normally done by external team (such as M&E team).

However, based on the findings it can be concluded that the objectives for the needs assessment phase (mutual understanding of which children are in need of what responses), response planning phase (strategic division of roles and responsibilities for delivering services) and implementation, monitoring and evaluation (common and complementary activities are implemented and monitored in a way that maximizes coverage, quality and accountability) have been partially reached.

The mixed statements (from basic to extensive collaboration throughout all steps) cannot be explained by a certain position or location of interviewees. However, there are several possible explanations. For instance, there is a variety of ways in which projects are implemented in reality and therefore, how extensive collaboration/integration is, depending on office, project, or response. Moreover, personal differences such as expectations of cross-sectoral collaboration as well as differences in work experience, training and awareness can

ultimately lead to varying perceptions of what a good collaboration should look like. De Paulo (2000) notes that small sample sizes may limit the perceptions gathered and may lead to bias in the results (DePaulo, 2000 in Oppong, 2013). Hence, the inconsistency of statements may reflect the small sample of people: the partial overview of the whole situation through just 12 interviews makes it inevitably more difficult to see consistency. However, there are also overarching themes that most participants agreed upon: participants indicate that humanitarian response needs to look more holistically at children and adolescents, their needs and therefore at holistic outcomes and less at sector-specific outcomes, which is why integrated programming is generally seen as beneficial and important to advance. Sarrouh & Boothby (2011) support this by emphasizing the complexity of children's and adolescent's lived experiences, which ultimately need to be matched by a complexity of approaches taken to them. Seeing children's needs only through a CPiE or EiE lens neglects the intersection between the two.

Moreover, according to interviewees, so far integrated programming is visible in integrated activities, but also need to be manifested more comprehensive needs assessments, integrated objectives (log frame), and the evaluation of holistic, not just sector-specific program outcomes. A study conducted by ACPHA (2020) confirms the need for strengthened integration in the log frame (ACPHA, 2020). In addition, interviewees advocate for a holistic view on emergency responses through cross-sectoral cooperation across projects. Similarly, Stephensen (2005) advocates for a shared sense of humanitarian relief aid among practitioners, which includes effective cooperation across organizations, and therefore supports the need for a less siloed view on humanitarian action.

There are multiple challenges that were identified by the interviewees, in addition to possible solutions that could improve the current state of integrated programming. Firstly, missing technical expertise and strategic framework were emphasized by many participants

as one of the main challenges in integrated programming. Based on Bandura's social cognitive theory (1982), self-efficacy, the level of a person's confidence in his/her ability to successfully perform a behavior (Brug et al., 2017) is crucial for changing behavior and in this case, adopting an integrated approach. More opportunities for professional development, especially through cross-sectoral joint trainings, can increase knowledge and skills around integrated programming (and therefore self-efficacy) but also encourage mutual support and learning within teams. Moreover, participants indicate that more guidance through tools, a systematic framework, and guidelines, that are designed in collaboration between COs, NOs and GH, can help staff to see the response more holistically while increasing the ownership of the approach, which increases self-efficacy (Bandura, 1982). Moreover, participants indicate that more guidance through an overarching role that has an overview of both sectors can help to increase the cross-sectoral collaboration. ACPHA (2020) also identified limited opportunities for cross-sector capacity building as a challenge for integrated programming and emphasizes that joint trainings in addition to field level guidance should be prioritized to bring sectors together (ACPHA, 2020).

Secondly, participants indicate resistance and insecurity about integrated programming as a new way of working. Ford, Ford, & D'Amelio (2008) emphasize that resistance to change can occur due to expected hardships and negative effects on employees, for instance increased workload and trainings for integrated programming. Interviewees indicated the need for awareness raising through highlighting the benefits of the approach, which is supported by the transtheoretical model that sees awareness raising as beginning of every behavior change (Prochaska & Velicer, 1997). Additionally, participants think that making integration a performance indicator can encourage staff to adopt this way of working. Participants mentioned that this is especially relevant for management, that needs to facilitate the opportunities for staff to collaborate across sectors. Moreover, caused by change in

working methods, participants indicate disagreement on chosen approaches, such as the integrated approach, as a challenge. According to interviewees this can be solved through team building activities such as joint trainings and joint meetings. However, Gratton et al. (2007) sees management and leaders responsible for overcoming differences in a team and leading in a way that combines task- and relationship-oriented methods. Similarly, Ford, Ford, & D'Amelio (2008) do not see the responsibility in overcoming change solely in employees' actions but emphasize that organizational structure, employees' attitudes, staff-management relationship and management's actions towards employees (e.g. communicate that it values employees' efforts) all contribute to overcoming resistance (Ford, Ford, & D'Amelio, 2008).

Thirdly, participants see insufficient funding as a challenge for multiple things, it contributes for instance to shortage of staff, which increases their workload and keeps them from engaging in trainings around integrated programming, which then ultimately hampers the program quality. Moreover, if there is no funding intended for cross-sectoral collaboration, it is difficult for staff to develop projects with an integrated approach. Funding is highlighted as challenge for humanitarian aid by multiple publications (Daar et al., 2018, Miliband, & Gurumurthy, 2015), and more concretely, donor support is reported to be crucial for encouraging integrated programming (ACPHA, 2020). The high turnover of staff typical in emergency responses can be countered, according to participants, by ensuring staff a future in the organization, which facilitates a continuity of integrated programming and high program quality. Dubey et al. (2016) support these findings by identifying work related factors, such as job satisfaction, pay and promotional opportunities play as important in humanitarian organizations (Dubey et al., 2016). Moreover, according to Miliband & Gurumurthy (2015), insufficient funding can be addressed by joining forces in the form of integrated programming, which increases the effectiveness of programs. which is why donor

guidance on this matter can encourage donors to support the integrated approach more (ACPHA, 2020). In addition, according to Daar et al. (2018) a shift from short-term emergency funding toward longer-term humanitarian financing can help to address the needs of program participants better (Daar et al., 2018), as well as bring job security for humanitarian workers.

Lastly, interviewees indicate that knowledge exchange and improved feedback mechanisms provide solutions for various challenges, such as resistance towards integrated programming and missing technical expertise. Hearing more from beneficiaries' side and sharing documents systematically, especially between COs, can raise awareness, improve team building, hence lead to better communication, increased accountability, mutual learning and support. All of these can improve integrated programming within the Federation. Levine & Prietula (2012) note that the impact of organizational knowledge exchange depends on individual, organizational, and environmental characteristics. The authors conclude for instance that "an investment in either learning or exchange can promote organizational performance, while investment in both may be wasteful" (Levine & Prietula, 2012).

4.1 Strengths and limitations

Pairing challenges of integrated programming with possible solutions make this research highly practical and facilitated a knowledge exchange within the organization, since solutions to a certain problem were found not only within one office but by all participants. Additionally, the research compiled a variety of viewpoints from staff working in different locations, with various backgrounds and opinions on integrated programming. Conducting interviews over Microsoft Teams made it possible to interview staff working in five different countries, which otherwise would not have been possible. This strengthened the generalization of findings to similar contexts in humanitarian action. In addition, interviews were held in 60-minute sessions, which allowed for follow-up questions and the possibility to

dive deeper into the topic. With the aim to use the findings to inform Plan International's programming in addition to giving staff the opportunity to voice challenges and concerns, the motivation of participants for contributing was high, which strengthens the findings. However, there is a chance of potential bias in reporting, due to a missing common strategic goal and understanding on what extensive collaboration across sectors entail, which affects the reliability of answers. Moreover, the small sample size may have caused inconsistent findings regarding the current state of collaboration. Another limitation is that interviews were held in French and could not be translated word by word, which is why some information was potentially missed. In addition, the interpretation of answers was potentially flawed due to misunderstandings. This challenge could be addressed by creating a transcript in the target language (e.g. French) which is analyzed by a researcher fluent in that language.

4.2 Conclusions

This research provided an overview of the current state of collaboration between CPiE and EiE and served as a starting point in assessing which collaboration practices are well established and which ones need to be further improved. In addition, challenges, and ideas on how they can be overcome, can guide Plan International's staff in how integrated programming can be advanced. Following these findings, Plan International should focus on capacity building sessions, facilitated across sectors and in various languages, with the emphasis on mutual learning. This should be followed by possibilities for knowledge exchange and sharing of good practices, especially between COs. Exchange between NOs, such as the Nordic collaboration, can be a good example for other NOs, that need to balance missing technical staff. Moreover, the development of an integration matrix that facilitates guidance on how sectors can increase their collaboration with each other within and across projects, will be helpful in advancing integrated programming and the holistic view on emergency responses.

Further research should first assess more rigorously the effects that integrated programming has on beneficiaries to create a more established evidence base. Moreover, the lack of studies about integrated programming indicates more research needs to be done to build an evidence base that can guide humanitarian programming. A review of different collaboration frameworks from other humanitarian organizations could be used to develop a strategic framework for Plan International. Moreover, this small-scale research focused on only a couple of Plan International's Country Offices reveals some trends, but there is a need for more extensive research with a bigger sample size and a mixed methods approach (e.g. interviews and review of log frames) to give a more comprehensive picture of Plan International's integrated programming. Possible research questions could be "How can does integrated programming benefit adolescent girls in crisis in West Africa?" or "How is integrated programming implemented in the West and Central African region (WACA)?"

It can be concluded that the discussion around integrated programming has become louder and that humanitarian actors are motivated to change their way of working away from siloed approaches to a more holistic view on beneficiaries needs. Many participants voiced their passion for integration and the drive to further advance it within their own office and across the federation. This motivation together with Plan International staff's throughout knowledge and skills in humanitarian action build a promising base for expanding the basic to partial collaboration between CPiE and EiE that can be found throughout the Humanitarian Programme Cycle so far. Additionally, participants demonstrated the ability to find creative solutions for diverse challenges from their own and colleagues' work. This highlights the potential that knowledge exchange holds and should be a guiding principle for the next steps. However, the responsibility for advancing integrated programming should not be put solely on staff in COs since there are circumstances that influence the possibilities of collaboration, but that staff cannot impact. Hence, a comprehensive effort that includes all levels within

Plan International as well as advocacy efforts that encourage donors to invest in integration, has the potential to advance integrated programming so children's and adolescent's needs can be addressed in the best way possible.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Interview questions COs

1. What is your role within Plan? And what did you do before?
2. In recent times, Plan International has been working towards a more integrated approach between thematic sectors in humanitarian programming. What do you understand of an integrated approach?
3. What is your experience working with an integrated approach? (Have you worked with many projects that use an integrated approach?)
4. Where in your work does integrated programming become visible in your everyday work? And how? Do you have any concrete examples?
5. How would you describe your collaboration with CPiE/EiE colleagues?

Now I want to talk a little bit more about the Humanitarian Program Cycle: needs assessment, response planning, resource mobilization, implementation/monitoring/evaluation.

6. Do you have experience collaboration between CPiE and EiE actors during needs assessment? And if so, what is your experience with it? (e.g. joint needs assessment, sharing of data, jointly defining information needs)
7. How did you experience the collaboration with CPiE/EiE colleagues during the strategic response planning (step 2)? (e.g. identify common and complementary activities)
8. Have you collaborated with CPiE/EiE colleagues during implementation; (e.g. jointly develop guidance on delivery of common and complementary activities)

9. monitoring and evaluation? (e.g. joint monitoring visits, jointly develop reporting guidance etc)
10. (Do you think there are any benefits of integrated programming? If so, why? If not, why?)
11. What do you think already works well?
12. What do you find challenging?
13. From your point of view, how can the collaboration across both sectors be improved?
14. How can colleagues in National Organizations/Global Hub support you better in adopting an integrated approach?
15. When you started working with Plan, was integrated programming discussed as part of your induction to your work? If so, what was the discussion?
16. Is there anything you would like to add?

Appendix 2: Interview questions NOs

1. What is your role within Plan? And what did you do before?
2. In recent times, Plan International has been working towards a more integrated approach between thematic sectors in humanitarian programming. How would you define an integrated approach?
3. What is your experience working with an integrated approach? (How many projects, that use an integrated approach, have you worked with?)
4. Where in your work does integrated programming become visible? And how? Do you have any concrete examples?
5. How would you describe the collaboration between CPiE/EiE colleagues?

Now I want to talk a little bit more about the Humanitarian Program Cycle: needs assessment, response planning, resource mobilization, implementation/monitoring/evaluation.

6. Is the collaboration between CPiE and EiE actors during needs assessment a common practice? And if so, how does it look like? (e.g. joint needs assessment, sharing of data, jointly defining information needs)
7. How did you experience the collaboration with CPiE/EiE colleagues during the strategic response planning (step 2)? (e.g. identify common and complementary activities)
8. How does the collaboration between CPiE-EiE actors look like during resource mobilization? (e.g. fundraising for common activities or mutually reinforcing advocacy efforts)

9. During implementation, monitoring and evaluation, how do CPiE and EiE actors collaborate? (e.g. joint monitoring visits, jointly develop reporting guidance etc)
10. Do you think there are any benefits of integrated programming? If so, why? If not, why?
11. What do you think already works well?
12. What do you find challenging?
13. From your point of view, how can the collaboration across both sectors be improved?
14. How does the mutual support in adopting an integrated approach look like between GH, NOs and COs at the moment?
15. How do you think can the collaboration between COs and NOs be improved in regard to integrated programming?
16. Is there anything you would like to add?

Appendix 3: Coding scheme

Needs assessment

	Strategic and operational considerations	Common understanding of information needs	Joint data analysis	Potential assessment
Extensive collaboration	Jointly identify key questions		<p>Conduct joint data analysis and interpretation with common and complementary data from both sectors,</p> <p>Work together to ensure coherence between CP and education prioritisation (geographical areas, population groups, thematic response priorities)</p>	<p>Joint Assessment:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Led by both sectors • common data collection tool, methodology, report
Partial collaboration	Each sector adopts relevant key questions from other sector	Jointly develop common information needs	<p>Sectors seek complementary data from the other sector to support their own analysis,</p> <p>Sectors conduct their own prioritisation and consult with other sector to ensure coherence in methodology for common response areas</p>	<p>Sector Assessment – harmonised:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • led by one sector • other sector involved (provide key questions, review methodology, participate in data collection, participate in analysis and interpretation of findings)

Basic collaboration	Key questions are shared with other sector	Sectors list their own information needs and share relevant information with other sector	<p>Sectors analyse their data separately and share analysis with other sector,</p> <p>Sectors conduct their own prioritisation exercise and share with other sector</p>	<p>Sector Assessment – collaborative:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> led by one sector report shared with other sector
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Response planning

	Identify areas of collaboration	Document in strategic plans	Formulate indicators
Extensive collaboration	<p>Jointly identify common activities,</p> <p>Jointly identify complementary activities,</p> <p>Develop collective objectives</p>	Document joint strategies, response plans, integration frameworks	Jointly develop appropriate indicator arrangement that allows for joint response monitoring
Partial collaboration	<p>Jointly identify common activities,</p> <p>Jointly identify complementary activities</p>	Sectors work together to develop strategies, response plans, integration frameworks	Sectors develop their own indicators, consulting the other sector
Basic collaboration	Sectors are aware of common activities	Share draft strategies and response plans to ensure coherence between sectors	Sectors develop their own indicators and share with other sector

Implementation, Monitoring and Evaluation

	Define how to work together	Collaborate to enhance response quality	Joint monitoring plan
Extensive collaboration		Sectors jointly plan to enhance technical quality of the response through leveraging the strengths of each sector,	Jointly develop reporting guidance (clarifying how, where, when, frequency, implementing partner should report),
		Sectors jointly plan to reinforce partner's capacities related to both sectors	Joint monitoring visits,
Partial collaboration	Both sectors ensure functional cross-sector referral mechanisms are in place,	Each sector solicits the technical support of the other sector in selecting/developing/delivering technical content and trainings,	Facilitate child participation (child-friendly feedback mechanisms) Sectors consult each other in developing reporting guidance (clarifying how implementing partners should report)
	Joint meetings + members who participate in other sectors meetings	Sectors jointly plan to reinforce their partners capacities related to both sectors	Joint monitoring visits
Basic collaboration		Each sector shares their developing tools to monitor quality,	Sectors develop their own reporting guidance and share with other sector,
		Each sector solicits the technical support of the other sector to build their partners capacities	Joint monitoring visits