1. Introduction

This strategic plan maps out Plan Ireland’s priorities for the next four years and identifies its goal and the objectives required to achieve it. Plan Ireland’s mission is to enable vulnerable and marginalised children to realise their rights through high quality, sustainable programmes and this strategic plan will guide Plan Ireland (PI) in its organisational choices and decision-making.

Creating diverse and sustainable sources of revenues, particularly unrestricted income, is a major challenge for PI at a time when fundraising is under considerable pressure due to challenging economic conditions in Ireland. PI also faces the fundraising and sponsorship challenge of relatively low public awareness.

With the recent strong growth in PI’s grant income and increasing influence within Plan International has come the challenge of acquiring higher levels of unrestricted funding to provide the required ‘match’ funds for grants and to upscale the workforce to deal with increasingly complex programme and organisational requirements.

Thematically and geographically, the focus of PI’s work has been refined throughout the life of the last strategic plan. The areas of education, household economic security and disaster risk management have been, and will remain, the core thematic priorities with child protection, gender, environment and disability underpinning all of PI’s work. Work has, in the main, been focused on West Africa for development programmes, though child sponsors’ funds are invested across all 50 countries in which the sponsors support children. In the area of disaster risk management PI responds globally.

Managing for results has become increasingly important and PI has responded to this by investing more in building capacity in-house, in Plan’s Country Offices (COs) and in influencing and supporting Plan’s global initiatives in this area. The ultimate aim is to provide better and more focused programmes to support children.

Plan Ireland aims at all times to be accountable and transparent. It endeavours to ensure that as much as possible of the funds it receives are spent on its programme work.

2. Background

In operation since 2003, PI is a relatively young organisation. During the second strategic plan from January 2009 to June 2012 PI has grown significantly in terms of its income, the volume and breadth of its work, staff numbers and supporter base. Its ambitions have evolved simultaneously. It has developed all departments and added resources. It has made particularly strong progress in developing the Programme function.

This document sets the road map for the organisation for the four years to mid-2016, and is PI’s third strategic plan. The scope was agreed by PI’s Board and the exercise was undertaken from July 2011 to May 2012. Generating the plan involved all staff, one-on-one and group meetings with members of the management team, working sessions with the Board’s Strategy Committee and the involvement of the Board and Members. Input was also received from Plan International’s headquarters, Plan field staff, colleagues in other National Offices and institutional donors of PI.
3. Operating Context

Plan Ireland Strategy 2012-2016

PI is a National Office (NO) within the Plan International structure; however, it is a separate legal entity. PI’s resources are primarily focused on assisting programmes in Plan’s 50 developing countries of operation, with a particular focus on West Africa. PI also engages indomestic programming particularly advocacy and development education.

Plan International Model: Plan International is made up of 50 COs, four Regional Offices (ROs), an International HQ (‘IH’), and a number of affiliate offices in strategic hubs. Each CO (or Programme Country) delivers programmes and the CO is managed through ROs and IH. The various NOs can fund programmes in COs, provide relevant technical expertise and offer grant management support based on a CO’s requirements. Although this has been done on an ad hoc basis in the past, as part of Plan’s new global strategy (One Plan, One Goal 2012 to 2015), a more organised and systematic approach to this work is being developed.

Plan International also has responsibility for global campaigns and brand both of which impact on PI’s programme and marketing work.

Plan Ireland within Plan International: PI is very active in Plan International to whom it provides funding and technical assistance. PI also involves itself in the governance and running of the organisation by participating in formal governance structures and other fora and has earned representation on Plan executive and non-executive groups (for example, it leads on the Governance and Nominations Committee, is Chair of the global National Office Programme Director group, is on the Global Leadership Team, etc.), which enables it to exert influence within Plan International. It is important that this international work does not overly take from PI’s work given its limited resources.

Governance: PI is compliant with the Irish development NGOs’ Code of Corporate Governance and is very committed to the efficient and transparent running of the organisation. Recognising the increasing need in the sector for transparency PI has adopted standards which are more stringent than those currently required under legislation. In addition to its annual statutory audit PI also avails of the opportunity to be audited by Plan International’s Global Assurance division.

PI’s executive team is accountable to an Irish Board (currently nine members) and four Board Committees. The Board’s commitment to governance is reflected in the emphasis on transparency, accountability, effectiveness and on value for money in all aspects of PI’s work. PI’s monitoring and evaluation function has been resourced to provide affirmation of the effectiveness of the work being carried out across the organisation.

Irish economy: one of PI’s key roles is to raise money to fund its work. PI’s ability to grow and ultimately assist more children and their communities has been hampered by the performance of the Irish economy. Thus, the organisation has made a conscious effort to seek funding outside of Ireland.

It has proven harder and more expensive to raise funds and to retain donors. To counter this, PI is working hard to retain support, is striving to create more innovative and lower priced support options, and is establishing a Fundraising department to attract new income streams.
4. Vision, Mission & Goal

VISION: Plan Ireland’s vision is a world in which all children realise their full potential in societies which respect people’s rights and dignity.

MISSION: Plan Ireland enables vulnerable and marginalised children to realise their rights through high quality sustainable programmes.

GOAL: Plan Ireland strives to be a recognised, effective organisation, with diverse, predictable and growing income streams supporting the delivery of quality, sustainable programmes for children and youth, with a focus on those most marginalised.

PI’s vision and mission align with Plan International and are based on the Child Centred Community Development (CCCD) approach. The approach incorporates an understanding that meaningful changes in the lives of children requires social, political and economic change at many levels, transcending community and national boundaries and also focuses on the structural causes of child poverty, and the gaps and violations of child rights.

The goal represents PI’s ambition to contribute to the achievement of the mission and vision taking into consideration the external environment and the internal operational context and enablers. To fulfil this goal, PI adopts a multi-pronged strategy where the results of quality, sustainable programmes for children will be maximised through advocacy, development education and national engagement with the Irish public.

Income is vital to enable PI to carry out its work and PI recognises the importance of maintaining stable revenues, thus it is committed to diversifying and growing its income streams.

PI has started to diversify its income in recent years and has reduced its dependence on child sponsorship. It has diversified from sponsorship accounting for 44% of income in 2008 to a broader income base in 2011 comprised of 62% grants, 27% sponsorship/regular giving, and 11% fundraising which includes appeals, trusts and foundations.

It is PI’s intention to grow each of these three income streams. PI intends to increase the breadth of institutional donors and grow grant income further. Plans are in place to establish a Fundraising function, which will be a new area of focus, and Plan Ireland is confident of growing child sponsorship income and numbers of other regular givers during the life of this strategic plan. As part of this, PI will seek to offer new regular and once-off giving products in order to stimulate the market and further diversify income streams.

5. Plan Ireland’s Programme Priorities

PI’s strategy to achieve its goal combines quality programmes overseas and in Ireland.

The programmes focus on three thematic areas:

- Education
- Household Economic Security (HES)
- Disaster Risk Management (DRM)

These themes are central to Plan’s work in ensuring that children and youth can develop to their full potential and have the resources and security necessary to promote the achievement
of their rights. Education opens opportunities to generate income and earn a living, and with improved economic security a person has more resources to invest in education. Effective DRM helps to protect household assets, while education is an important medium to learn about DRM and risk reduction. In addition, all of PI’s programmes incorporate four cross-cutting themes: child protection; gender equality; environment; and disability. The CCCD approach places the child at the centre of all of its work as an active participant of its own development.

In Ireland, PI engages with the Irish public through advocacy, campaigns, and development education.

Managing for results and value for money will be central tenets of this strategy. With more demands on resources and with the constantly increasingly professionalism of the development sector, PI will continue to invest in its own capacity to support inclusive, effective programme interventions. Key technical expertise will be strengthened and a holistic approach to understanding and delivering sustainable outcomes for children and youth will be strengthened from programme intervention up to Board level.

6. Enablers

PI’s people, systems, communications tools, and income enable it to carry out its work effectively with children and their communities, as well as with sponsors, donors and supporters.

**Plan Ireland’s people:** PI’s staff are a great resource to the organisation. PI also relies on, and invests in, volunteers and interns to assist in its work. An employee engagement survey was commissioned as part of the strategic planning process and helped inform human resource planning. Staff numbers in the PI team have grown from 8 to the current 19 people over the past three and a half years. The organisation continues to evolve as learning becomes embedded both in the programmes and within personal development plans for staff.

In terms of people and roles, as with any small to medium sized organisation, there is considerable dependency on a few senior individuals, something which does represent a risk. PI intends to increase overall capacity and competency and endeavour to reduce dependency on individuals. There is a consequent commitment to staff training and development.

**Plan Ireland’s systems:** Since its inception PI has continued to invest in systems and processes. This has enabled it to serve the organisational requirements particularly in finance and child sponsorship/regular giving. It is PI’s intention, where it is cost effective, to continue to invest in systems and processes. With this in mind PI is currently investigating the feasibility of investing in a management information system.

**Plan Ireland’s marketing:** PI has been an active player in online communications and has embraced all things digital. This complements PI’s on-going marketing work in conventional media such as radio, TV and print media. PI has a full suite of digital assets including a strong corporate website, email marketing applications, blogging sites, and well supported social networks across Facebook, Twitter, YouTube etc. These assets are essential in communicating with our various stakeholders and play an important role in all donor acquisition, retention, media engagement, advocacy, campaigns and profile building.

PI also recognises that there is scope to make digital work more effectively. It is essential that it is abreast of all changes in the digital world that could impact on its development. Digital assets can be better used to foster communication between sponsors, can reduce sponsor communications costs and can be used in a more targeted manner to attract new support. This plan aims to make digital central to its communications platform whilst recognising the merit of traditional communications.
### 7. Specific Objectives Required to Deliver the Goal

Success for the organisation has been defined in terms of achieving the five key Objectives listed in Table 1 (below). These have been highlighted as priorities for the organisation over the next four years and are listed in order of priority. Each Objective will be underpinned by a series of detailed activities which will be monitored to ensure delivery against the plan.

**GOAL: Plan Ireland strives to be a recognised, effective organisation, with diverse, predictable and growing income streams supporting the delivery of quality, sustainable programmes for children and youth, with a focus on those most marginalised.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Objectives</th>
<th>Measured as</th>
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| **1. Support the delivery of high quality, child centred development and humanitarian assistance programmes overseas** |  • Number of programme evaluations conducted annually with evidence of feedback and learning taking place  
• At least 80% of activities, budget spend and outcomes are being achieved annually by FY16  
• Grant acquisition success rate of 33% by 2016  
• Annual programme review by PI’s Programme Committee shows that programmes have increasing conformity to DAC criteria of Relevance, Effectiveness, Efficiency, Sustainability and Impact |
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<td><strong>2. Diversify and grow income</strong></td>
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| **2a. PI will grow its annual income from €7.5m to €12m over the four year period, through a combination of organic growth and revenue from new sources** | • 2016 grant income of €9m  
• 6,500 child sponsors, 2,000 other regular givers, €350K tax revenue. Total sponsorship, tax, regular giving at €2.25m  
• Average monthly revenue per sponsor to exceed €22  
• Fundraising income grown to €750k by 2016  
• 65% of fundraising revenue is unrestricted  
• Funding received from at least two new institutional donors per annum  
• Child sponsorship attrition rate does not exceed 18.5%; other regular giving attrition not to exceed 14%  
• Increase sponsor communication year on year to 23.5% (from 20%) |
| • Relationships with existing donors nurtured and quality work delivered  
• New donors acquired to complement programme priorities both directly by PI and in collaboration with other NOs  
• Continued engagement with COs to maximise local income opportunities  
• Grant target from institutional donors  
• Sponsorship, regular giving and tax target  
• Fundraising team established and generating recurrent income | |
| **2b. Diversify PI’s income streams and ensure a more sustainable income base. Focus on retention of existing donors** | |
| • Set up Fundraising function that generates recurrent income  
• Broaden and diversify institutional funding base to complement programme priorities  
• Increase engagement with sponsors and regular givers by modernising the child sponsorship and regular giving product suite | |
| **3. Increase awareness of PI and support for its work among the Irish public** | |
| • PI will utilise all communication outlets to deliver a clear and focused PI communication strategy, linking all departments, that states who PI is, what PI does, why PI does it and what PI wants to achieve  
• Events organised (breakfast meetings, Because i am a Girl, launch, photo exhibitions, sector events etc.) to generate awareness of PI amongst the public and within the sector  
• Campaign events organised to generate awareness of certain issues. Low cost social media maximised for this  
• Strategically engage with child rights agencies, Dochas members and other relevant networks to influence donor, government and EU policies and positions on issues related to CR | • Increase media coverage by 8% year-on-year  
• At least 5,000 children and adults reached annually through development education  
• 10 ambassadors, one additional patron by FY16  
• Each year hold at least one sector event, two Because I am a Girl, three corporate, and four sponsor specific events  
• Donor & government policies and positions show an increase in focus on child rights |
### Objectives

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<tr>
<th>4. Develop greater depth of skills and knowledge in PI with a specific focus on leadership, management and technical skills</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Assessment of technical, leadership, and management skills undertaken</td>
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<td>- Allocate the required resources to deliver training plan for staff</td>
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<td>- Execute training and development plan and update annually</td>
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<th>Measured as</th>
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<tr>
<td>- Training and development plan in place by October 2012</td>
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<td>- Budget and training days target to be established by December 2012</td>
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<td>- Bi-annual staff engagement survey</td>
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<th>5. Improve management systems and processes</th>
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<td>- Carry out systems audit to ascertain where efficiencies can be made and processes improved (for example MIS is to be installed)</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Allocation of resources and budget required to implement new systems</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Execute the plan to invest in new systems and processes</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Comprehensive and robust internal controls that ensure appropriate use of funds across the organisation</td>
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<td>- Appropriate system in place to measure strategic plan progress</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Systems audit completed by Oct 2012</td>
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<td>- Resource and budget plan in place by December 2012</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Annual audit; Global Assurance audit 2013 and 2016</td>
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<td>- Quarterly reviews of strategic plan</td>
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Plan Ireland strives to be a recognised, effective organisation, with diverse, predictable and growing income streams supporting the delivery of quality, sustainable programmes for children and youth, with a focus on those most marginalised.

**Primary Objectives**

- Support the delivery of high quality, child-centred development and humanitarian assistance programmes overseas
- Grow annual income from €7.5m to €12m by a combination of organic growth & revenue from new sources

**Secondary Objectives**

- Increase awareness of Plan Ireland and support for its work among the Irish public
- Diversify income streams and ensure a more sustainable income base
  - Focus on retention of existing donors
  - 65% of Fundraising income unrestricted
  - Two new Institutional donors per annum
  - Sponsorship attrition at 18.5%, communications up 3.5% by 2016

**Enablers**

- Develop greater depth of skills and knowledge with a specific focus on leadership, management and technical skills
- Improve management systems and processes
  - Systems audit completed & recommendations implemented
  - Global Assurance audit & external audits completed successfully
  - Quarterly reviews of Strategic Plan

Programmes have increasing conformity to DAC criteria year on year:
- 80% of activities, budget spend & outcomes achieved annually by 2016
- Grant acquisition success rate of 33%

Ten annual public events, & reach 5,000 children & adults through Dev. Ed.
- Media coverage increases 8% per annum
- Donor & Government policies & positions show an increase in focus on child rights

Training & development plan in place & executed
- Budget & training days target established
- Staff engagement survey bi-annually

Grant Income of €9m
- Regular Giving of €2.25m
- Fundraising Income of €750k

65% of Fundraising income unrestricted

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