

## **Plan Belgium continues the struggle against child sexual abuse**

As a child-focussed development organisation, the NGO Plan Belgium aims at improving, in a structural manner, the circumstances in which children all over the world are living. The foremost issues in this respect are promoting and implementing **children's rights**, as set forth in the International Convention on the Rights of the Child. One of the fields in which Plan Belgium takes action is the **prevention of sexual exploitation of children**. In Cambodia and in Benin, for example, we support projects for the prevention of child trade and/or child prostitution.

Children's rights are the starting point for all our activities. Not only regarding programmes in the South, but also for our activities in the fields of education, raising awareness and advocacy in Belgium. In 2009, Plan Belgium campaigned on the issue of "*violence against children*". As it is, millions of children world-wide are suffering from violence on a daily basis. This is not only a breach of their rights; it also reduces their chances for development. Plan Belgium called on the general public, politicians and policy-makers to **fight against all forms of violence against children**.

**Sexual exploitation of children** is one of the most extreme forms of violence against children. Therefore, Plan Belgium has been an active member of the **Platform against Child Prostitution** for several years. We played an active part in various campaigns of the Platform in order to sensitize public opinion and raise traveller's awareness on Child Prostitution

Plan Belgium, in its own ranks, also takes pride in protecting children against violence and exploitation. Therefore we decided to be the first Belgian NGO ever to sign a protocol agreement with the Federal Police's department for Human Trafficking

Child Protection is also a common theme in Plan Belgium's **internal policy**. All our personnel, staff and volunteers are regularly **informed and educated** about child rights and child protection. In order to guarantee correct and respectful behaviour towards children, we require that all personnel and staff members provide us with an "**extract from the judicial record**" (used to be "certificate of good behaviour"). This way we can make sure that people working with Plan have never been condemned for child abuse, exploitation or negligence. Every visitor to the Plan program-field (Sponsors, partners and guests) also has to sign a **code of conduct**. In addition, we provide several checks to guarantee that the **correspondence** between Sponsors and Plan Children as well as our **own communication** always respect children's rights and do not cause any harm to children.

Hopefully other NGOs will follow the example we have set in promoting and respecting child protection. Thereby, we hope to be able to fight even more efficiently against child exploitation in the future.