

Joining Forces for Africa (JOFA)

Protecting Children from Violence during
the COVID-19 crisis and beyond



“Due to COVID-19, my parents are unable to get casual jobs that previously gave them income. It saddens me to see them suffer and struggle to provide for the family.”

Ruth, 9, Kenya

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JOINING FORCES

For All Children



This project is co-funded by
the European Union

“The **JOFA Project** is a three year, **€10m multi-country response** to the **child protection needs** and concerns exacerbated by the global COVID-19 pandemic. Implemented in **Kenya, Uganda, Ethiopia, Mali and Senegal**, the project has been designed to respond rapidly to the global COVID-19 pandemic emergency and seeks to address the immediate protection needs of children, whilst working longer term to support the strengthening of child protection systems and building resilience of children, their families and communities”.

ChildFund
Alliance

PLAN
INTERNATIONAL

 **Save the Children**

 **SOS CHILDREN'S VILLAGES**
INTERNATIONAL

Terre des Hommes
International Federation

World Vision

Protecting children from violence during COVID-19 and beyond

Children are the hidden victims of the health crisis caused by COVID-19, facing threats to their wellbeing and protection as a result of the increased risks of violence and abuse.

With funding from the European Union, the three year project 'Joining Forces for Africa (JOFA) - Protecting Children from Violence during the COVID-19 crisis and beyond' will strengthen local and national child protection systems while working with families, communities and institutions to raise awareness and improve capacity to protect children. Joining Forces supports children's right to be heard on their needs and hopes for recovery and response plans and will promote child-led initiatives and campaigns.

Objectives

Although the negative impacts of COVID-19 are being felt by children and their families across the world, the experience is not uniform. Existing inequalities are being worsened. The most marginalised and deprived children are being hit the hardest. In the selected project target countries, the pre-existing child protection needs are severe, COVID-19 infection is present and already impacting children's protection.

The overall objective of this project is that children and adolescents experience reduced levels of violence, abuse, exploitation and neglect. A complex crisis such as the current COVID-19 pandemic calls for joined efforts to mitigate the negative effects, especially on children in vulnerable environments. The JOFA project seeks to address the immediate protection needs of children whilst regularly assessing the evolving situation and adapting implementation to the changing contexts and needs.

The unique collaboration of the Joining Forces agencies can achieve greater impact to strengthen government and

community capacity to protect children from violence during COVID-19. Across all five countries, the JOFA project contributes to the key objectives of the Joining Forces initiative, to secure children's rights and end violence against them.

Key facts

- **Duration:** 06/08/2020 – 05/08/2023
- **Budget:** 10,000,000 € - EU funding
771,486 € - consortium members
- **Target Countries:** Ethiopia, Kenya, Mali, Senegal, Uganda
- **Direct beneficiaries:**
 - 718,000 child beneficiaries
 - 3,000 service providers
 - 23,000 parents and caregivers

Where children are most in need

This action is implemented in five African countries: Ethiopia, Kenya, Mali, Senegal and Uganda, selected based on a high risk of negative impacts due to the COVID-19 crisis as well as high needs for child protection.

Children benefiting from and participating in the project live in refugee camps and host communities, in urban informal settlements, conflict affected areas, poor rural communities or in transit border areas. For these children, the closure of schools and the loss of their and their families' livelihoods is increasing the risk of physical and sexual violence and exploitation.

The implementation approach for this project has been designed to respond to the needs of children in a holistic way and is built on evidence based best practices in the child protection sector. The project adopts a child protection system strengthening approach, which recognizes that a range of people, processes, laws, institutions, capacities and behaviours are involved in protecting children.

Strengthening child protection services

The project will work with child protection services to increase their capacity to respond to increasing needs in times of COVID 19. Some of the activities that are planned include:

- Working with identification, reporting, referral and response mechanisms to increase their capacity and effectiveness
- Capacity building for child protection services to provide psychosocial support and to adapt approaches to respond in the crisis.
- Support to child help lines to increase their capacity and promote awareness within communities
- Advocacy conducted with national and local governments to ensure that the social service workforce is protected and prioritised throughout the COVID-19 response and recovery.

Improving protection in resilient families, communities and institutions

Communities and families are a key target group of the project through:

- Activities such as structured positive parenting programs and psychosocial support for children and families
- Capacity-building of community leaders and community-based child protection mechanisms to effectively identify, report and refer cases of violence against children and to provide psychological first aid
- Activities to create awareness on child protection risks and available services through communication of key messages in the wider community, and through schools and education institutions

Listening to children and supporting their agency and capacity to prevent and respond to violence

As the situation changes rapidly so do children's needs. For this reason, listening to children and involving them in identifying problems and solutions is a pillar of the project.

- JOFA works with existing child clubs and child participation platforms to support child led initiatives and advocacy campaigns and to support children's participation in decision making processes
- Children will participate in life skills and psychosocial support programs and sensitizing campaigns whereby they will become more resilient and learn to identify and make use of existing support services.

Increased learning and sharing of knowledge and best practice related to child protection approaches

- The project will capitalize on the collective experience and expertise of the Joining Forces Alliance, whilst emphasizing learning and sharing throughout implementation. Sharing knowledge and experience of child protection approaches and methodologies that are: evidence-based, innovative and adapted to the COVID-19 context
- Good practice approaches and methodologies to be incorporated into project implementation with consortium members supporting each other with guidelines, materials, training
- Robust monitoring and evaluation systems, incorporating child participation, child friendly feedback and complaints mechanisms and regular "pause and reflect" to adapt and respond to learning and the changing context

Participate in upcoming learning events

- Online events to share project learning
- Discussions on project focus areas such as Child Participation, Gender and Inclusion and Nexus programming

Structure of JOFA

The JOFA project is implemented by a consortium of Joining Forces member agencies in Europe, the US and in the five implementing countries, led by Plan International Germany. In all target countries, two to three Joining Forces members are responsible for the implementation of the project. Amongst these agencies, in each country, one country-level lead organization has been selected to coordinate the implementation.

Project Countries



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- Sharing case studies, learning briefs, voices of children

If you would like to know more about JOFA and take part in learning initiatives, please contact:

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About Joining Forces

Joining Forces is an alliance of the six largest international NGOs (ChildFund Alliance, Plan International, Save the Children International, SOS Children's Villages International, Terre des Hommes International Federation, and World Vision International) working with and for children to secure their rights and end violence against children.

More information about Joining Forces: <https://joining-forces.org/>



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