

# Involvement of child-led networks in Senegal

During the JOFA project launch in Diourbel, Senegal, in December 2020, children had the opportunity to express themselves and share their experiences of violence and abuse. The children called for attention to the protection of children during this pandemic, especially as their parents have economic difficulties in meeting their needs and are stressed which can cause a violent behaviour towards children. It was impressive to see children speaking publicly with a lot of self-confidence and to have children of the Diourbel region represented.

The children followed the project presentations attentively and were enthusiastic to participate in child-led activities. The children's networks committed to carry out actions in the field of awareness raising and capacity building of peer networks and children in general. Additionally, they made recommendations to ask the authorities (Prefects and Heads of Service) to develop more preventive actions and responses to the risks of violence against children.

Within the JOFA project children and adults were brought together in focus groups to develop communication content for awareness raising on violence in the Covid-19 and post-Covid-19 periods. 30 children and 15 adults participated in focus groups to develop key messages for behavioural change in favour of child protection in order to mitigate the risks and negative impact of Covid-19 on the rights of the child. These messages were disseminated by children, parents and frontline actors through social networks and community media in the seven communes of Dakar.

Child-led networks have a key role in the JOFA project. On the one hand they provide a space where network members are enabled to exchange experiences (or gather information) in terms of violence, abuse, neglect, exploitation. Negative experiences and potential solutions (actions taken, difficulties encountered, lessons learnt) can be shared. On the other hand, children's networks serve as advocacy platform towards authorities and communities.

Establishing a dialogue with adults, child protection committees, local authorities, communities and raising awareness on the protection issues faced by children is crucial. This interaction aims to bring about actions and behaviours for better protection of children.

Child participation is a crucial component of the JOFA project. During the launch event it became apparent that child-led networks are essential to provide a space for children to express themselves, to contribute to the resolution of the protection issues they face. In addition, they should carry out children's advocacy, making children's voices heard and facilitating the inclusion of their views in decisions taken by parents, communities, local and national authorities. Organising awareness-raising and capacity-building sessions for children on issues such as self-protection, reporting, referral pathways, leadership, citizenship, children's rights, etc. is closely linked to the children's networks.



**JOINING FORCES**  
*For All Children*



This project is co-funded by  
the European Union