



Joining Forces for Africa - Newsletter

Welcome to the second edition of the Joining Forces for Africa (JOFA) Project newsletter! In this edition we will be providing a brief **update on progress** made by the JOFA project teams in the five target countries, including information on setting-up the Monitoring, Evaluation, Research and Learning **(MERL) framework**, conducting the **baseline survey** and the formation of **safeguarding** committees.

We will also share some news on the project **learning agenda** which has been further refined and structured around key issues. Looking forward, we provide insights into the Social Behaviour Change Campaign (Uganda) and the Media engagement strategy related to COVID-19 and child protection risks that is being prepared in Kenya.

Update

From January to March 2021 (Q3), all five country teams reported steady progress against the four project objectives, with some variation between countries and between implementing agencies within each country.

Significant progress was made regarding **strengthening national and local protection and response systems**. Identification, reporting and referral mechanisms were strengthened and adapted to respond to COVID-19 across the five countries. Training and support to child protection service providers was also provided across all five countries. Support to child help lines and alternative care providers was conducted in Kenya, Uganda and Senegal, with concrete plans in place in Mali and Ethiopia.



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Progress was made in terms of **improving protection in resilient families, communities and institutions** in the context of COVID-19 and during recovery phase. In Mali, large scale community dialogues have been undertaken and child led campaigns have begun in Ethiopia, whilst radio programs were implemented in Kenya and in Senegal. Parents have been engaged in preparation for structured positive parenting programs in Ethiopia, Kenya, Senegal and Uganda with preparations in place in Mali. Community based child protection mechanisms (CBCPM) have been supported in all five countries, however, work is required to define common minimum standards for CBCPMs in each country. Some community groups have been supported with training on psychological first aid in Ethiopia, Kenya, Mali and Uganda, with further training and support planned.



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The progress on **increasing the capacity and agency of children to prevent and respond to violence against them** during COVID-19 crisis and recovery phase has been slower than anticipated mainly due to difficulties reaching child clubs when schools are closed. Engagement of children in life skills and psychosocial support activities was reported

The consolidated
JOFA Needs
Assessment
Report will be
published in July
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across all five countries, but not by all implementing agencies- as was the case with engagement of children in advocacy dialogues and decision-making processes. More work on sharing good practice and exchange of experience to encourage uptake of these important activities by all partners will be conducted in the following months.

In regard to **increased learning and sharing of knowledge and best practice related to child protection approaches**- the baseline surveys were completed in 4 out of 5 countries (to be completed in Mali) and the MERL Frameworks and Output trackers have been developed in all countries. The series of technical approaches and methodologies workshops were concluded in 4/5 countries (to be completed in Senegal) and country teams started to implement their chosen common technical approaches and methodologies.

Country teams continue to strengthen their established coordination mechanisms and steering committees at country level involving all six Joining Forces Agencies in each country. In addition to the existing country management units and steering committees, technical groups have been active in Kenya and Uganda.

Safeguarding

In each implementing country, the **formation of country level safeguarding technical committees** with staff from **all six agencies** was concluded. The country level safeguarding technical committees are working on a joint self-assessment process and risk assessments for activities conducted together as a consortium, as well as a longer-term action plan to support each other and learn about best practice in safeguarding.

Set-up of MERL framework

A robust monitoring system is key to allow country teams to capture information in a systematic way. As a first step of the **JOFA MERL frameworks development** crucial aspects for all the countries such as the indicator definitions and specifications, the data sources, the sampling approaches, and the different types of disaggregation have been established in a participatory process which allowed the contributions from global and country level stakeholders. Currently country teams are working on the completion of the country specific pieces of their MERL framework which include MERL activity plan and budget, dissemination plan and roles and responsibilities.

In addition, the **JOFA Output Tracker**, has been designed to support effective MERL data management. Trainings for its use have been completed in all the countries. Now, the countries are in the testing phase of the system.

Baseline study

The JOFA Project baseline survey, conducted in the five countries during the period January to April 2021, gathered data from children, parents and child protection actors. It recorded the views of these participants on **experiences of violence, awareness of child protection risks** (including those associated with COVID-19), **awareness of how to report these, efficacy of response mechanisms, and responsiveness of caregivers.**

The results present a mixed picture, in several ways. Parents appear to be under particular pressure: in Senegal and Uganda, no parents or caregivers said they felt able to provide protective environments for their children, and manage their own stress levels. Only 12.6 per cent of Kenyan caregivers affirmed that they could. At most, just over a fifth of parents in Kenya said that they knew what the main child protection risks were associated with COVID-19; only 1.8 per cent in Uganda, and 12.7 per cent in Senegal.

This **lack of awareness in parents seems reflected back in children's impressions**: very few children said that their parents understood their worries and problems – 14.6 per cent of children in Senegal agreed that they did, but only 2.1 per cent in Kenya and 1.1 per cent in Uganda. The numbers of children who could identify child protection risks and how to get help were more encouraging: a little over 48 per cent in Senegal, 22.6 per cent in Uganda, and almost 18 per cent in Kenya affirmed that they could do this. The percentage of children feeling confident about reporting a protection violation to a reporting structure was more positive still: almost 63 per cent in Uganda felt confident on this, as did 62 per cent in Senegal, and 55.8 per cent in Kenya. Confidence levels varied among formal and informal child protection actors about having the skills and knowledge to handle risks in the pandemic: almost 60 per cent in Kenya expressed confidence about this, as did almost 44 per cent in Uganda but only 24.5 per cent in Senegal.

Learning Agenda

To leverage the lessons learned in the different implementing contexts, a learning agenda is set to serve as a foundation for effective learning. The initiative intends to make learning processes tangible and visualizes how learning outcomes may inform and justify quality programming and influencing at different levels of the project. The JOFA Learning Agenda was further refined, and three priority learning areas were defined:

1. The impact of child participation on the effectiveness of child protection programming.

In Ethiopia, the country team documented key learnings from ongoing project implementation, recognizing that young adults are an important resource in supporting the child protection work and ensuring the children's participation and benefits from the project. The participation of girls and women in different community-based child protection structures was helpful to reduce the specific child protection concerns of girls. In Mali, the active participation of children in the project launch as members of the organising committee and in charge of presenting the results of the needs assessment was a great success. In Senegal, a network of 150 child leaders, 30 per commune, is being formed and will include peer support, implementation of an awareness-raising action plan, facilitation of virtual discussion groups between children and monitoring of the use of feedback tools by children.

2. The implementation of common technical approaches and methodologies across different countries and contexts.

In Kenya, through discussion of common technical approaches, the need to develop standards for assessing the effectiveness of Community Based Child Protection Structures was identified. The JF Kenya team realized that whilst all agencies are embracing Community Based Child Protection approaches, there are no common standards being used to assess the structures. In Mali, the technical workshop on approaches and methodologies, allowed Plan and Educo to review plans for supporting the national child help line and to postpone its financial contribution to the process until the ongoing preparations and feasibility assessments are completed by UNICEF and Plan. In Uganda, a training of trainers (ToT) on Psycho-social Support and Psychological First Aid and on Parenting without Violence was conducted. There was great emphasis in ensuring all partners learn from existing knowledge and child protection expertise within the consortium.

If you want to find-out more about the project, visit the [Joining Forces website](#), where you'll find all key information about the project.

3. Effective collaboration within the consortium for greater impact.

In Kenya, the team noted the importance of partnership and networking in case management so that cases are dealt with after conferencing and the way forward reached for the best interest of the child. Working with government departments, other INGOs and local CBOs in a network is important to ensure adequate response. A coordinated approach towards child protection system strengthening was also noted as important in Kenya during the CSOs and county authority accountability forum held with the four alliance members present in Busia county. Public accountability forums can be used to promote allocation of budgets towards ending violence against children. On a technical level, the Mali team has joined the national revision of the case management system underway, led by UNICEF, TdH and the Government of Mali. For the quality of services, the harmonised national case management modules that will result from this process will be used for the training of members of the institutional case management networks.

Opportunities for engagement

If you have any interest in exploring opportunities for collaboration with the JOFA project on academic studies, on complimentary programming or on learning and sharing, don't hesitate to contact the project manager Andy Hill andy.hill@plan-international.org

Outlook

In **Uganda**, Joining Forces is embarking on a country wide **social behaviour change campaign aimed at ending physical violence against children** at home and in schools. The campaign will seek to show parents and teachers across the country that it is possible to discipline children without resorting to violence. This campaign is essential in a country where three out of four people have experienced violence in their childhood. The campaign will use child participation, social behaviour change common approaches and innovative tactics as catalysts for behaviour change. By using approaches like Parenting Without Violence and Positive Discipline, the campaign will seek to start conversations on physical violence that include children. These honest conversations coupled with tactics like Theatre for Development will make parents and teachers confront the realities and effects of physical violence on children.

In **Kenya**, the country team is developing a **Child Focused and Child Friendly Child Protection Media Strategy**. Since the first case of COVID-19 in Kenya, the media picked up information from the Government of Kenya's press releases and disseminated it to the public through TV, Radio, Newspaper and Social Media platforms. However, most of the COVID-19 prevention and response messages have not been child focused and were targeted at the adult population. Against the above background, existing guidelines for engagement with children by the mainstream media houses in Kenya will be reviewed and gaps identified. Successes and challenges on how children have been engaged through various forms of Media on COVID-19 prevention and response and on related Child Protection concerns will be pointed out. Information will be gathered on how children in Kenya would like to be involved and engaged through the Media in order to ensure that issues that concern them are highlighted to the public and Government authorities, while at the same time ensuring that their safety and security is guaranteed.

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