

# Enhanced Handling of Child Protection Cases in Ethiopia

The protection of children has not been a priority in Mao-Komo Special Woreda before the implementation of the JOFA project. Different types of abuse, exploitation and violence increased after the outbreak of COVID-19 due to the lack of supervision by parents and the weakness of government-concerned sectors in awareness raising campaigns. Child labour, early marriage, FGM and other forms of sexual abuse are common in the woreda. Cases have not been reported to concerned government service providers since there is no strong structure at Kebele level to prevent and respond to such kinds of child protection problems. Perpetrators, even after confessing to the crime at the police station, have been released on the promised that they would not commit the same crime again.

The formal structures and the ambition to improve the protection of children are in place, but there is a lack of capacity in terms of budget to make the government entities and staff work effectively and efficiently in a child-friendly manner to ensure clients can easily access collaborative support and services.

The JOFA project has supported the government, especially the Women, Youth & Children Affairs Office (WYCA), to develop the necessary case management guidelines, complaints and feedback management procedures and skills to protect women and children and their families from violence, abuse, neglect and exploitation. This is done through multidisciplinary training of government and key stakeholders at various levels.

The technical capacity was built through a training with the various formal and informal child protection service providers on Case Management activities: identification, reporting and referral mechanisms. Government Offices, Child Rights Committees, teachers, health workers, women's associations, child parliament and others have participated in

different capacity building trainings. Through JOFA, different government stakeholders such as police officers, gender officers, social workers, education and health experts, and judges took-part in workshops on handling violence and abuse cases against women and children. This included training on child-friendly interviewing, case identification and investigative techniques in sexual abuse cases and other crimes against children.

The JOFA project solved knowledge gaps regarding case management, primarily in case identification and referral mechanisms in the target woreda. Victims and clients of child protection issues are managed by trained individuals starting from Kebele to woreda level. After the capacity building trainings, reported cases to WYCA, Police, Health and other service providers increased in Mao Komo Special Woreda. The WYCA office has improved its capacity to analyse and handle cases, thanks to the development and use of community-based child protection mechanisms and the government's coordination especially through health and legal institutions.

Between January and March 2021, 28 cases were referred to the concerned child protection service providers. Three adolescent girls aged between 13-17 reported that they have experienced sexual violence. Likewise, 24 adolescent boys have experienced labour abuses and among these, nine children were seduced by brokers and trafficked from rural areas to the nearby town for work. Each month a new case is reported and now staff can be guided by the provided training in how to solve it from previously recorded experiences. The enhanced capacity to settle cases is also a source of pride and satisfaction among WYCA's staff and partners.



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This project is co-funded  
by the European Union