

Joining Forces for Africa (JOFA) Newsletter

Listening to the voices of children



JOINING FORCES
For All Children



Co-funded by
the European Union

March 2022

NEWSLETTER

Q6

**Progress update:
Less restrictions, better progress**
Learning series: Child Participation

ChildFund
Alliance



JOFA Q6 Newsletter

Child participation is an important theme that runs throughout the activities, and is essential to strengthen the resilience of children, enable them to make their voices heard and to improve the quality and coverage of essential child protection services.

Join us and discover how child participation can really make an impact to defend children's rights

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About JOFA

Joining Forces is an alliance formed in 2017 of the six largest child-focused international NGOs – ChildFund Alliance, Plan International, Save the Children International, SOS Children's Villages International, Terre des Hommes International Federation, and World Vision International. Together, they are working with and for children to secure their rights and end violence against children.



Less restrictions, better progress

JOFA PROGRESS UPDATE

There was significant progress in quarter six across all project countries. Activity implementation took up and good progress was made towards the achievement of a large number of output indicator targets



This was facilitated by an improvement in the operating context and a relaxation of restrictions to public gatherings related to COVID-19 across all countries.

Progress was a bit slower in Uganda but is expected to increase significantly in the next quarter due to the re-opening of schools in January 2022.

During this quarter the preparations for the year 2 needs assessment and outcome monitoring process started, with results expected in the following quarter.

These results will contribute with further information to the quality and effectiveness of activities implemented to date and provide important data for reflection and improvement towards the impact and outcome indicator targets of the JOFA project.



The progress on strengthening national and local protection and response systems was very positive in this quarter. The review of referral pathways is going well, with some delays in Uganda that are expected to be resolved in Q7.

Training for the child protection workforce has been effective in increasing knowledge of child protection risks associated with COVID-19 across all countries. Support to



child protection service providers, child help lines and alternative care services is provided as planned. Advocacy activities are increasing in frequency. COVID-19 response plans are being reviewed in all countries, with Uganda and Kenya to finalize and clarify their actions in the following quarter.

Improving protection in resilient families, communities and institutions is going well in particular due to a further increase in implementation of *Parenting without Violence* positive parenting programs resulting in higher numbers of parents who participate in skills sessions.

Trainings for members of community-based child protection mechanisms have been effective in increasing understanding of the impact of COVID-19 on child protection. A good number of teachers and school support staff have been trained on child protection, with further trainings planned for the next quarter in Uganda once schools re-open.

The progress regarding increased capacity and agency of children to prevent and respond to violence against them has improved since the last quarter. The team in Mali successfully implemented the “Child Friendly Accountability” approach and managed to increase the number of children involved in

social accountability mechanisms.

The team in Uganda has plans to scale up “Child Friendly Accountability” activities and is progressing well on reaching children with life skills, peer support and other structured support programs. In Senegal, clear plans are in place to roll out the “Peace Road” life skills program for children and to engage children further in social accountability mechanisms as part of their advocacy strategy.

All country teams have established monitoring mechanisms, although there remain some issues in ensuring proper use of reporting templates for disaggregated data and ensuring data quality.

Country teams also need to review data from Q1-5 to ensure it is all disaggregated to the right level- this may require a kind of “data re-building” exercise.

Feedback and complaints mechanisms have been established across all countries and teams are doing well in providing a timely response. The team in Mali are yet to report on that and will be supported to assess the timeliness of their responses. A full review of all country feedback and complaints mechanisms is underway to ensure they meet minimum standards. It is expected that this will be completed by April 2022.

Listening to the voices of children

CHILD PARTICIPATION

Within the JOFA project, child participation is an important cross cutting theme that runs throughout the activities, and is essential to strengthen the resilience of children, enable them to make their voices heard by decision makers to ensure that their actions respond to children's needs and rights, and to improve the quality and coverage of essential child protection services.

Specific Objective 3 of the JOFA project "Increased capacity and agency of children to prevent and respond to violence against them during COVID-19 crisis and recovery phase" includes activities specifically aimed at increasing children's participation in decision making.

The work packages for Specific Objective 3 are related to life skills training, community-based psycho-social support and peer-based networking in order to support children to become more resilient and reduce their psychological distress. Safe and continued access to peer support and services is addressed in the project



through supervision and support to facilitators and community actors. The assumption is that children's increased knowledge, capacity and peer support will ensure better uptake and demand for quality child protection services, as well as positively reinforcing a violence free home environment.

Activities supporting children's participation in decision making processes using child friendly accountability approaches and building on existing participation mechanisms are included, aiming to increase attention and investment by national and sub-national governments in child protection services and other essential actions to ensure children's needs and rights are addressed during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Children's needs are often overlooked in times of crisis. By bringing to the table the lived experience of children as well as a strengthened

evidence base of their needs and appropriate solutions, decision makers will better respond to children's needs. As children have access to decision makers and the wider public, they will be better able to influence opinions and the direction of resources and services during a time of crisis.

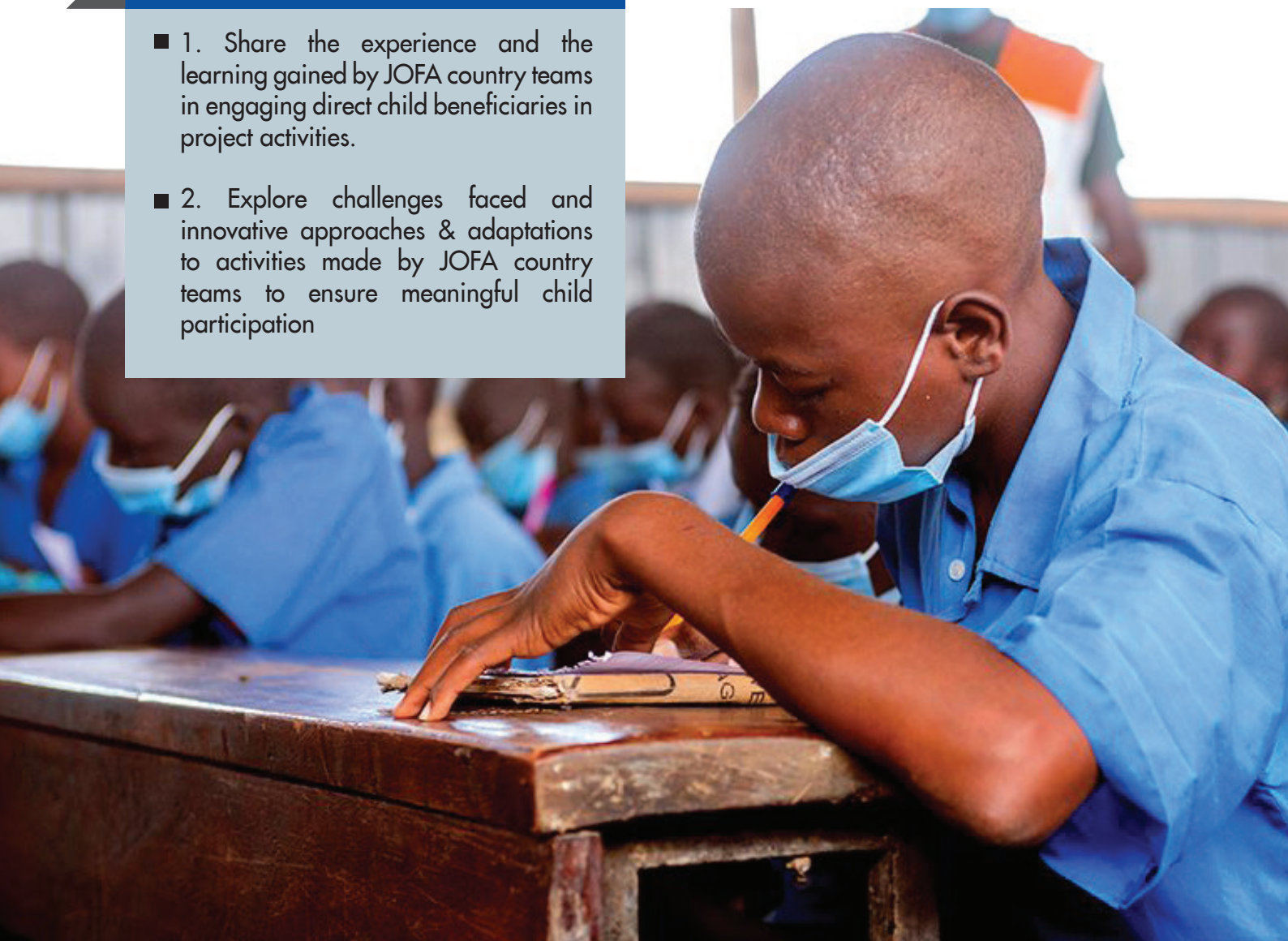
Learning Series on Child Participation

The Joining Forces for Africa project team has developed a plan for a series of meetings, workshops and webinars on the impact of child participation on the effectiveness of child protection programming.

The purpose of this learning series is to contribute towards the improvement of the quality of child participation and the range of engagement methods for direct child beneficiaries in the JOFA project and in the global child protection sector.

Objectives of the learning series

- 1. Share the experience and the learning gained by JOFA country teams in engaging direct child beneficiaries in project activities.
- 2. Explore challenges faced and innovative approaches & adaptations to activities made by JOFA country teams to ensure meaningful child participation



The learning events were conducted on different levels:



The first two steps of the learning series have been conducted in this quarter. Project teams in all implementing countries held local level learning events in most of the supervision areas to discuss the main learning questions related to child participation.

The results were used as an input for the country level workshops. The settings were slightly different in the countries. While in Ethiopia a face-to-face workshop with all team members from implementing partners and children's

representatives was conducted, the team in Mali decided to conduct the main national workshop online. Due to difficulties in ensuring the participation of children in the online event, an additional event was organised in order to include children's representatives and get their views.

During the country level workshops a series of lessons learned was documented by each country. Here are some of the key learnings from each country:

Ethiopia

The JOFA Team in Ethiopia supported members of a child rights club of a school in Gure-Shembola to conduct a census on their locality to identify children who were out of school. In the end the child rights club identified 201 children who were not able to go to school due to various reasons and presented the list to their school's Parent, Teacher, Student Association (PTSA). The PTSA discussed different ways for returning the children to school and acted quickly with the district administration, and one month later 176 children were able to return to school.

Kenya

Children in Kenya have had opportunities to be involved in dialogue sessions with government officials, especially, the child leaders, who took up the role of representing other children through the Kenya Children's Assembly process. Children who form part of the Children's Assembly are usually drawn from specific schools at the community level. Such engagements give them an opportunity to get real time feedback from Government officials on the issues they raise.



Work with the child rights clubs to clearly describe the various reasons children were not attending school, to compare and contrast with other child rights clubs





Whilst sport can be a powerful mobilizer, it can also be a space where gender stereotypes are reinforced, and violence is glorified through competition. Being aware of these risks and managing the gender dynamics and the spirit of the games is crucial to the success of activities using sport to mobilize communities to oppose violence against children.



Ensure a constant follow-up of the commitments made by the Government officials



Put in place appropriate measures to mitigate risks to children during unsupervised door-to-door visits- or ensure appropriate adult mentors support the children.



Mali

In Mali, the JOFA team supported a children's club to organise together with the local community network a football match where adults were playing against young people. Community mobilizers supported the children's club by inviting community and religious leaders, women's groups and community members and by identifying key messages to include in awareness raising materials.

Messages on prevention and response to violence, abuse, exploitation and neglect of children were conveyed before, during half-time and at the end of the match. This communication helped to save 8 young girls from forced early marriage through the testimony reported by the community mobilizers. It also helped to strengthen the bond of cohesion between children.

Senegal

In Senegal home visits were organised where children go door to door to talk with their peers and adults about COVID-19 and how to protect themselves. At the end of the process, parents were more open to behaviour change as it is their own children who talked to them and have committed to popularizing good practices. The children's networks greatly contributed to the adoption of good prevention practices.

Uganda

During the children's Parenting without Violence (PwV) sessions in Bugiri and Busia in Eastern Uganda, the first cohort of children began to identify children in homes that were facing violence and recommending them for participation in future cohorts of the PwV sessions. This has helped the project team to select families for the second cohort that are most in need of these PwV sessions, as opposed to the regular selection method based on willingness to participate, which sometimes resulted in the most vulnerable being left out.

Outlook

The learning series on child protection will continue in the next quarter. There will be a JOFA internal exchange workshop, where each of the five country lessons learned documents are being discussed and analysed, with similarities and interesting, innovative practices to be identified. This will be followed by a global exchange. Joining Forces country teams from Asia, Latin America and Europe will join the JOFA country teams on learning webinars where the lessons learned are further discussed, risks and assumptions are analysed, and concrete actions and commitments will be identified.



Identify the risks associated with children recommending parents for PwV and ensure actions are taken to mitigate any risks identified

Stay tuned for more fresh content from JOFA



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Opportunities for engagement

If you have interest in exploring opportunities for collaboration with the JOFA project on academic studies, on complimentary programming or on learning and sharing, [contact Andy Hill](#).

[Send us your stories](#), inspiring practices, thoughts, and comments.

