



1. OVERVIEW OF WACA JOINING FORCES INITIATIVE (JFI)

The situation of the rights of children, girls and boys in all their diversity and the prevalence of gender-based violence, remains worrying around the world. In view of these challenges, in 2017, six (06) of the largest child-focused agencies set up the Joining force Initiative; Child Fund Alliance, Plan International, Save the Children International, SOS Children's Villages International, Terre des Hommes International and World Vision International. The aim is to unite efforts to accelerate change in order to guarantee children their rights and put an end to violence against them.

While being part of the global initiative and in view of the challenges in West and Central Africa, the regional group of Joining Forces was set up, under the impetus of the Regional Directors (RDs) of five (05) Agencies: Plan International, Save the Children International, SOS Children's Village International, Terre des Hommes International and World Vision International.

WACA's Joining Force objectives flow from those at the global level by focusing on regional realities highlighted in the following objective.

2. KEY OBJECTIVE FOR FY21-22

Promote dialogue, policy formulation and implementation with regional institutions, governments, donors and partners in order to increase funding strategies and policies related to children's rights in West and Central Africa

Specifically;

Intensify protection initiatives, particularly the fight against forms of violence, with emphasis on gender-based violence including harmful practices, in order to improve the living conditions of children with a focus on crisis area via;







- ➔ Promote Increased access to inclusive and safe quality education for all children.
- ➔ Create platforms for an Increased participation, empowerment and resilience of children and young people
- ➔ Strengthen protective measures within families, schools and formal and community systems.
- ➔ Advocate for the respect of the rights of internally displaced children, including unaccompanied children, children differently abled and separated children

3. COORDINATION

The coordination of Joining Force WACA is on a rotational basis and is currently under the leadership of Plan International until December 2021 when it will be handed over to World Vision, Children's Villages, and Save the Children subsequently

- ➔ The JF has developed a one-year action planning, including digital campaign on Safe School Declaration with UNICEF, that is jointly implemented by the agencies under the leadership of Plan International focusing on six priority areas. Leads have been designated for each component of the focus areas so as to ensure collective management of the initiatives. Each Lead is in charge of monitoring the implementation of the focus area, documenting and producing the periodic report.

4. SOME ACHIEVEMENTS FOR QUARTER 1

FOCUS	PROGRESS
<p>Positioning and platform</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Adoption of 2 policy documents by ECOWAS on Sexual and Gender Based Violence and Sexual Harassment Policy in Workplace and Education Institutions. Plan International, Ford Foundation and UN women provided technical support in this process. "West African girls' Manifesto on ending harmful traditional practices"; a Call to Action (CtA) to government and other stakeholders to the African Girls summit Niger (16th November to 18th November 2022, in collaboration with the Joining Forces WACA. This followed a consultation attended by more than 60 girls aged 15-24 years, across West and Central Africa.
<p>Leverage and influence</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sahel girls Open Advocacy Letter; a Call to Action for the implementation of the SSD guidelines by governments and other power holders by the JF WACA. The was engaged as part of the advocacy actions for the Abuja Safe School Declaration Conference October 2021. Distribution of the Open Letter was done in-person to key stakeholders at the Abuja conference, as well as via the different social media platforms of the different agencies, including GCPEA (Global Partnership to Protection Education from Attack), and Joining Forces Africa (JOFA) in their respective social media platforms. The open letter is expected to inform various stakeholder actions towards a gender responsive implementation of the SSD guidelines.
<p>Connection and Reach</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The JF and UNICEF finalized a concept note to launch a campaign in December dubbed "safe schools in the Sahel" to be implemented in 6 countries namely, Niger, Burkina Faso, Mali, Chad, Cameroun, and Nigeria.
<p>Innovation and scaling up</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The JF WACA have been able to pull resources from their respective agencies to support the organization of the 3rd African Girl summit (AGS) in Niger. The Niger JF was established and provided funds for the organization of the AGS. Furthermore, the Regional group is supporting the establishment of Joining Forces initiative in Burkina Faso, Niger, Sierra Leone leverage collective advocacy efforts This will be in addition to the active Joining Forces initiatives in Mali and Senegal
<p>Safeguarding</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> An action plan has been put in place to set up a regional backup network / coalition of Joining Forces Agencies that would meet twice a year to learn and share experiences and lessons learned.
<p>Collaboration</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> RDs meetings is held on a monthly basis, with focus amongst others around following up key agreed actions, intelligence (including security) sharing and exploration of opportunities for joint interventions. The RD team also reviews and approved, action plans, reports and advocacy products submitted by the technical team. The technical team meeting is more frequent depending on key events at hand and ranges from weekly to biweekly and bimonthly meetings. Meetings are mostly focused on implementing the action plan, including monitoring of progress, preparation for key events, including production of various advocacy products towards such events, agree on processes for girls and children engagement with clear distribution of responsibilities etc.

5. CHALLENGES

- There is no specific source of funding for the implementation of the JFI engagements; financing of initiatives currently depends on individual contributions from the various agencies, which may not necessary be sufficient via a vis commitment in place.
- There is need for continuous actions from Plan International to press for the adoption of gender transformative approach in the implementation of the JF initiatives, which is not necessarily a key focus for some of the agencies.
- Inconsistent participation by some members of the technical team owing to timing constraints between regular job and JF related activities.

6. PERSPECTIVES FOR THE NEXT QUARTER

- Lunch of the digital campaign on Safe School Declaration
- Implementation of revised action plan of the JFI for the next 6 months
- Complete rollout of the Safe School Advocacy campaign.
- Implementation of Joint Advocacy action in view of the AU organized African Girls Summit in consultation with girls (15-24 years) for the issuance of Girls Manifesto with strong recommendation to decision making regarding the theme of the event: *“Culture, Human Rights and Accountability – Accelerating End to Harmful Practices”*
- Joint planning towards upcoming children's event, including the international day of Children November 20th , 16- day activism against GBV and Day of the African Child, June 16th.