

November 2022

SUMMARY

# Joining Forces for Africa: Mid-term review summary

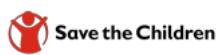
Joining Forces for Africa (JOFA)



JOINING FORCES  
For All Children



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# 0. INTRODUCTION

**Children are still suffering the consequences of the COVID-19 crisis. Violence and abuse have increased since lockdown, threatening children's protection and wellbeing.**

## About JOFA

The Joining Forces Alliance, a collaboration between Child Fund Alliance, Plan International, Save the Children International, SOS Children's Villages International, Terre des Hommes International Federation and World Vision International launched in 2020 the project "Joining Forces for Africa (JOFA) - protection children during the COVID-19 crisis and beyond" in five countries (Senegal, Mali, Ethiopia, Kenya and Uganda) across three years (2020-2023).

Funded by the European Union, the project aims to ensure that children and adolescents experience reduced levels of violence, abuse, exploitation, and neglect.

2022 marks the half-way of the project. To evaluate the performance of JOFA, this report monitors the status of the project to make programmatic modifications and reinforce implementation.

This summary consolidates those findings to inform the JOFA project team and draw clear and actionable recommendations for the remaining year of implementation and future projects.

The midterm review assesses the relevance, coherence and synergies, effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability of the project beyond the lifecycle, monitoring, evaluation and accountability, and learning.

## JOFA Objectives

- Strengthen national and local protection and response systems.
- Improve protection in resilient families, communities, and institutions in the context of COVID-19 and during recovery phase.
- Increase capacity and agency of children to prevent and respond to violence against them during COVID-19 crisis and recovery phase.
- Increase learning and sharing of knowledge and best practice related to child protection approaches.

## Key facts

- **Duration:** 06.08.2020-05.08.2023
- **Budget** 10,000,000 € EU Funding  
771,458 € consortium members
- **Countries:** Ethiopia, Kenya, Mali, Senegal, Uganda.
- **Direct beneficiaries:**  
718,000 child beneficiaries  
3,000 service providers  
23,000 parents and caregivers



# 1. RELEVANCE

Overall, the project was found relevant. Its design was based on a global framework of action which was developed based on best practices and evidence-based approaches which had been tested in other contexts.

At the design phase and throughout implementation, the project managed to adapt to the needs and specificities of each context, and it seems that there was rather limited tension between the need to standardize the approach and the need to contextualize it.

Most stakeholders consulted considered the project relevant to the needs and context. However, in some cases, community members understandably prioritize basic needs- food, income, water, and sanitation- over child protection needs and concerns.

Adding a component on income and economic strengthening, or a social protection component would address these concerns and reduce external factors that increase child protection risks in target communities.



In Mali most key informants considered the project as relevant but some reactions indicate that communities often lacked access to basic goods and services such as water or food. As such, communities and local authorities had to prioritise survival over the objectives of the project.



Similarly, in Ethiopia, some of the community members shared their views that the community has other higher priority needs over child protection. For example the food shortage in their area would be considered a greater priority need within the community;



In Senegal, the evaluators noted the absence of economic support for vulnerable parents. Without measures to restore their purchasing power after the damage caused by the pandemic, they are struggling to take good care of their children.



# 2. COHERENCE AND SYNERGIES

The project was found to be coherent with strategies and objectives of other actors working towards child protection across the

five countries. It has also operated within internationally credible frameworks of child protection policy.



In Uganda accountability forums such as a children's parliaments let young people express their frustrations to duty bearers. Children presented poems, drama, and stories to air their concerns and interacted with local authorities via debates.



In Mali, JOFA examines the content of the policy documents and plans for the justice, education and health sector to ensure that child protection is taken into account and further plans for strategic advocacy are being developed.

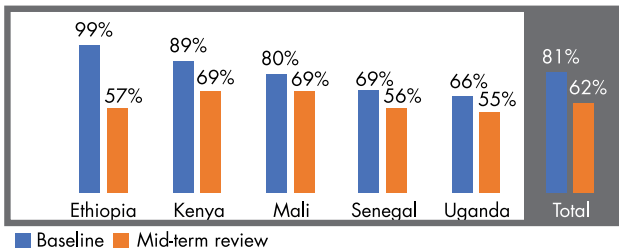
### 3. EFFECTIVENESS

Despite numerous challenges, the project has made good progress at midterm towards the achievement of its intended outcomes. The MTR highlights reduction in the occurrence of violence in the targeted areas and other notable achievements in outcome indicators.

Going forward, project teams in each country will have to pay particular attention to the potential negative effects and particularly the ostracism and resistance expressed against some peer educators and other members of the communities showing good involvement in the project.

#### Impact

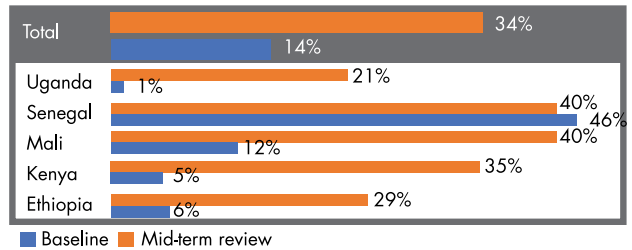
% of children aged 10-17 years who experienced any physical punishment and/or psychological aggression by guardians in the past month



Significant reductions in physical punishment and psychological aggression have already been made across all countries.

#### Improve protection in families and communities

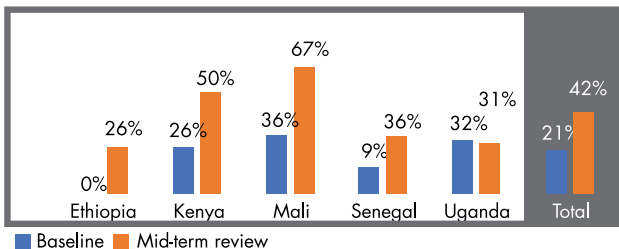
% of children aged 10-17 who report their parents and guardians understood their problems and worries most of the time



Improvements in relationships between children and parents with further work to be done in Senegal, which started from a high value.

#### Strengthen protection and response systems

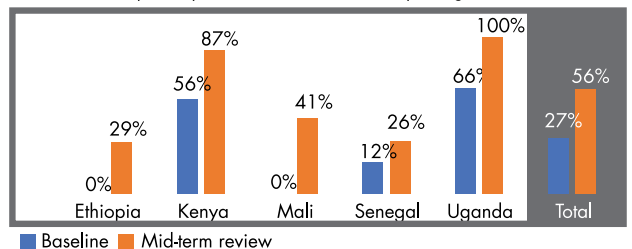
% of child protection actors who report feeling self-confidence in their skills and knowledge to respond to child protection risks



Overall increased confidence of child protection actors, with turn-over of key actors in Uganda hindering progress.

#### Capacity of children against violence

% of children who state that they are confident to report a protection violation to a reporting structure



Improvements on children's confidence to report a protection violation, with further improvements required in Senegal, Ethiopia and Mali.

#### Increase learning and sharing of knowledge and best practice for child protection approaches



Between 2021 and 2022, the JOFA project produced a document with the learnings of several meetings, workshops and webinars on the impact of child participation on child protection programming. These learning series were the outcome of the work produced after a [exhaustive study on child protection risks](#) in Mali, Senegal, Uganda, Kenya, and Ethiopia during the COVID-19 pandemic in 2021.

## 4. EFFICIENCY

The project has put strong governance mechanisms in place, which are able to provide support to the implementation of activities and to develop effective mitigation strategies when outputs are not delivered in a timely manner. This has allowed the project to manage time and resources efficiently. Other factors such as the working relationship among Joining Forces members and with government entities

have also been identified as having a positive influence on the efficiency of the project. Working as a consortium is adding value to the work done. Nonetheless, in some countries, contextual factors, internal procedures, and staff turnover negatively affected the way the project has been implemented. At global level, coordinating such a big number of agencies also brings its own challenges



In Kenya, discussions with consortium partners showed that implementers have varying approaches in reaching the community and children beneficiaries which could lead to a lack of coherence and coordination in the implementation of the project.

## 5. SUSTAINABILITY

Ultimately, the involvement of stakeholders (community structures, administrative authorities and services, resource persons, community members including children and young people) in the implementation of the project is an assurance of ownership, which is one of the elements necessary for sustainability.

Thus, having strengthened their capacities, the project has created an environment conducive to the sustainability of its achievements. However, the development of a transition plan and strategies aiming mobilising financial resources and setting out roles and responsibilities among project stakeholders is necessary.



Children in all target areas of Senegal have benefited from capacity building activities around budget advocacy.

## 6. MONITORING, EVALUATION & ACCOUNTABILITY

Overall, the project had developed a comprehensive monitoring, evaluation and accountability system which allows for adequate tracking of results and identification of lessons learnt, feedback and recommendations to make timely adjustments. However, the downside of the system is its complexity and the level of capacity building, sensitization and harmonization effort necessary to ensure that it is adequately

and consistently implemented in all countries. The accountability mechanisms in place are accessible, including for children, due to the multiple options available. Nonetheless, some mechanisms based on direct communication seem to be preferred and should be prioritized especially for children and in areas where sharing feedback and complaints is less culturally appropriate.



In Mali, the feedback mechanisms established at the end of year 1 include posters placed in public places with telephone numbers for people to call per zone, as well as suggestion boxes to gather feedback on the project.

## 7. LEARNING

Through a solid learning strategy, process and agenda developed from the onset of the project, JOFA has been able to collect valuable lessons and made extensive efforts to share the knowledge of the project with other actors

working towards child protection. Efforts will also further intensify in the remaining year of the project to ensure that lessons learnt are documented and are widely accessible through international platforms.



A learning exchange conducted between country teams in Kenya and Uganda in April 2022 highlighted a number of important lessons such as the importance of completing the full positive parenting curriculum, the role of parents as peer recruiters, or the need to improve gender balance.

### Management response

#### Gender and Inclusion

In response to findings from the mid-term review that in many cases we are reaching more girls than boys, and girls are more confident and knowledgeable on child protection risks in many of our target areas- we will commit to better engage boys in project activities and to address gender equality and negative gender norms in our programming with children and adolescents.

We will also increase our engagement of fathers and male caregivers in positive parenting sessions, and address gender equality and negative gender norms in community-based activities.

Project teams have also committed to further integrate children with disabilities into ongoing project activities and to increase their capacity to do so through engagement with specialized agencies in target areas.

#### Focus on quality and under-performing KPIs

As the project teams have already met most targets for output indicators, the focus for year three will be on quality project implementation and on reaching outcome and impact level indicator targets, focussing on under-performing indicators such as the ability of child protection actors to correctly identify the key steps in referring cases, the capacity of parents to manage stress and the capacity of children to identify ways to protect themselves from violence.

#### Sustainability

The final, and most important focus for year three will be to develop and implement comprehensive sustainability plans, aimed at sustaining the positive changes made at all levels – institutional, community-wide and individual. This will include advocacy at national level to influence the level of support to local child protection systems from national governments and their partners.

### Lessons for future child protection responses

The JOFA project provides an excellent model for future child protection interventions, making the most of the experience and evidence based best practice of six global child rights organizations to make sustainable changes to individuals, communities and institutions.

Through putting in practice internationally credible frameworks for child protection practice, such as the INPSIRE strategies, the project has provided a comprehensive response to child protection risks exacerbated

by the COVID-19 pandemic. However, one lesson learned for future interventions is the importance of income, economic strengthening and social protection for vulnerable families, as part of a comprehensive child protection response.

Families need support to address their basic needs, in order to be able to make sustainable changes in their lives for the protection and full development of their children, and future interventions must incorporate adequate support in this area.





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