

March 2023

LEARNING BRIEF

JOFA TECHNICAL
APPROACHES SERIES



JOINING FORCES
For All Children



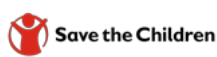
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Child Friendly Accountability as a common technical approach for the JOFA project

Joining Forces for Africa (JOFA)



ChildFund
Alliance



BACKGROUND

The Joining Forces Alliance is a collaboration between the six biggest child focused agencies: Child Fund Alliance, Plan International, Save the Children International, SOS Children’s Villages International, Terre des Hommes International Federation, and World Vision International.

About JOFA

The project “Joining Forces for Africa (JOFA)-protecting children during the COVID-19 crisis and beyond” is implemented in five countries (Senegal, Mali, Ethiopia, Kenya and Uganda) across three years (August 2020-2023), supported by a €10 million grant from the EU.

The overall objective of the JOFA project is Children and adolescents experience reduced levels of violence, abuse, exploitation and neglect. It has four specific objectives

Technical Approaches and Methodologies in the JOFA Project

The JOFA project aims to use evidence informed child protection approaches and methodologies, building on the collective experience of the consortium members.

After an extensive review and consultation process, three common technical approaches have been chosen for scale-up amongst several countries and Joining Forces partners.

1. **Parenting without Violence**

Save the Children

2. **Child Friendly Accountability**

Childfund

3. **TeamUp**

Save the Children, War Child Holland and UNICEF Netherlands

The JOFA project team has conducted a learning series on technical approaches, starting in April 2022 and culminating in an external sharing workshop in March 2023.

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:**
438,000 child beneficiaries
3,000 service providers
23,000 parents and caregivers



The learning series aimed to learn from the process of adopting common technical approaches for scale up, and to exchange, share and analyse implementation challenges, solutions, good practices.

It is hoped that the learning series will also generate opportunities to further scale up these approaches with Joining Forces agencies and others, and explore opportunities for further research and learning on the approaches.

The learning series has consisted of the following stages:

Learning series stages

1 Country level Internal Learning- Peer reviews - qualitative research/ monitoring process.

2 Exchanges between two or more JOFA countries, to explore the common learning questions.

3 Three learning review workshops with JOFA country teams - specific to each technical approach.

4 Webinar- to present the findings of our learning series to an external audience of global child protection stakeholders.

This learning brief captures the essential outcomes of this learning series process.

ABOUT CHILD FRIENDLY ACCOUNTABILITY

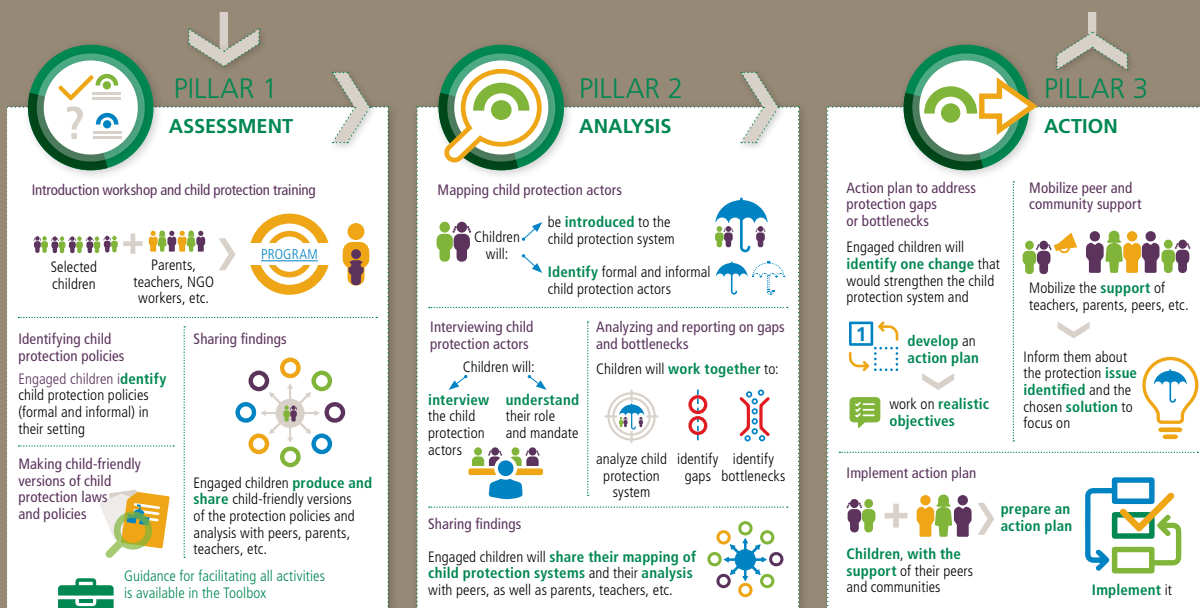
Child-Friendly Accountability (CFA) is grounded on the belief that it is possible to reduce violence against children, in part by holding leaders accountable for their obligations to protect children. To support children’s meaningful participation in the effort to hold duty bearers to account and improve local and national child protection systems, CFA empowers children, enables children’s meaningful participation, helps children build knowledge, supports children in challenging negative social norms, enables children to engage with duty bearers, empowers children to take direct action to address protection

gaps, and promotes joint action and scale-up of community-based action.

CFA focuses on monitoring the effectiveness and accountability of child protection systems. It is not about monitoring individual cases of violence.

The main direct participants are adolescents between 13 and 17 years old and the methodology is designed to be applied with both in-school and out-of-school children.

The CFA methodology is based around 3 pillars.



Note: Public information campaigns run throughout the project.

SELECTION OF CHILD FRIENDLY ACCOUNTABILITY (CFA) AS A COMMON TECHNICAL APPROACH FOR THE JOFA PROJECT

Child Friendly Accountability was presented by global Joining Forces partners at the start of the project as a possible common technical approach, alongside other approaches related to Child participation and life skills.

In subsequent country level technical approaches workshops, country teams selected the technical approaches they would scale and adopt amongst all partners within one country.

The country teams in Mali, Uganda, Ethiopia and Kenya all selected Child Friendly Accountability as their preferred approach, using a set of objective criteria with which to assess available approaches. In Mali and Uganda, the full CFA approach was adopted, utilizing the Childfund manual, and staff were trained on the use

of the manual. In Ethiopia and Kenya, whilst the Childfund manual was made available to partners, it was not adopted holistically by all partners and its implementation was piecemeal at the outset.

In Senegal, the team chose the Peace Road approach to life skills, as the Country Lead-World Vision- had the capacity to support with materials and training.

The fact that CFA was chosen in 4/5 of the target countries demonstrates that NGO staff from diverse organizations will agree on choosing the most appropriate, evidence-informed approach if given objective criteria with which to choose the approach, and presented with available options to assess.

PROGRAM INCEPTION PLANNING

Whilst JOFA country teams did not conduct formative research specific to child friendly accountability, child protection needs assessments were conducted in all countries. The outcomes of these needs assessments informed decisions on programming.

In many cases, implementing agencies did not plan and budget for all three pillars of the approach as a whole, but focussed only on one pillar, such as knowledge building amongst children on child rights and child protection, and analysis of child protection issues in their community.

Each part of the approach is important, and for future interventions, implementing agencies should plan for all three pillars:

Three pillars for future interventions

Pillar 1: Assessment, focused on knowledge building and fostering understanding.

Pillar 2: Analysis and accountability, centred on mapping and analysing the performance of the protection system.

Pillar 3: Action for social mobilization, advocacy and corrective action on gaps and bottlenecks identified by the children.

MONITORING, EVALUATION AND RESEARCH

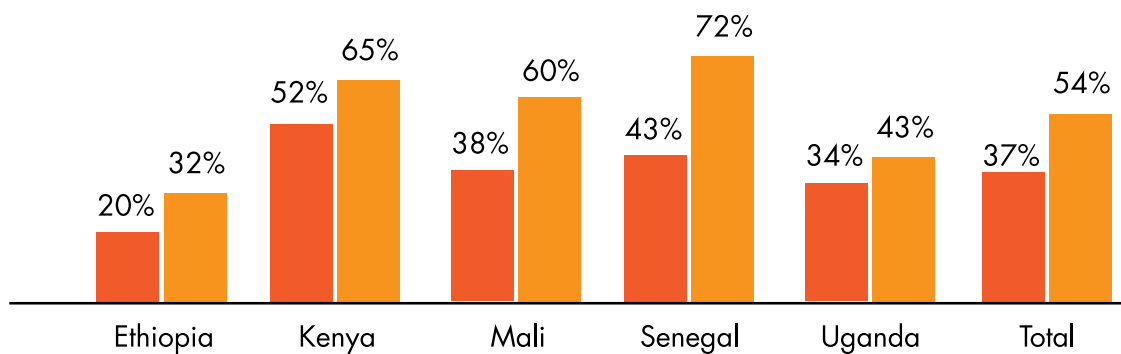
The JOFA project logframe has incorporated from project inception (i.e baseline) recommended M&E tools related to the CFA approach, and the technical approaches learning series included additional implementation research elements which have provided extra input to the MERL process.

JOFA Country teams have engaged over 26,225 children in social accountability activities so far.

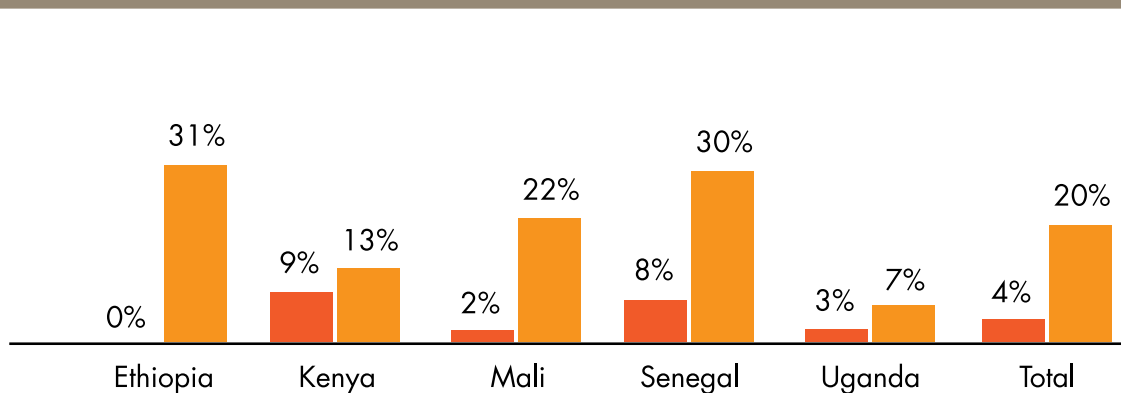
Results achieved at mid-term show very good progress in key indicators:

CFA Progress

% members of peer-based networks who demonstrate adequate knowledge of child protection and child-friendly accountability approaches



% of targeted children who report that their views are sought and incorporated into the decision making of regional or national government



■ Base line ■ Mid-term review

ADAPTATION OF CFA GUIDELINES

Whilst the team in Uganda benefited from having existing CFA guidelines and materials that had been adapted specifically for the

country context, this was not the case in other countries, where material had to be adapted and contextualized during implementation.

INITIAL TRAINING OF STAFF

The Uganda and Mali country team implemented well planned, structured initial training for project staff and facilitators, with all implementing agencies involved.

In the Kenya team did not hold any joint staff training, and each agency took the CFA guidelines and interpreted them as they saw fit, holding in-house trainings or planning sessions individually. Indeed, TdH in Nairobi used a different but similar approach- “Plan Z” – which came with its own set of guidelines and training materials.

Similarly in Ethiopia, no joint staff training took place and each agency took the existing guidelines and adapted and adopted it as they saw fit. This presented challenges in consistency of implementation method and fidelity to the core elements of the approach. After reviewing implementation as part of the technical approaches learning series- this issue was identified and efforts were made to strengthen implementation in all three pillars of the CFA approach.

IMPLEMENTATION

Issues related to implementation were assessed and analysed during the peer review process, exchanges between partners and between

country teams, and at the learning review workshop. The following analysis framework was used for this assessment:

Child Friendly Accountability- Analysis Framework

- A** Implementation challenges
- B** Facilitator training and quality
- C** Representation, Gender and Inclusion
- D** Child Friendly environment/ materials
- E** Engagement with duty bearers
- F** Positive Stories of Change
- G** Logistical considerations & location:
- H** Feedback and referral processes

A. IMPLEMENTATION CHALLENGES

SCHOOL AND COMMUNITY SUPPORT

Where CFA is implemented in schools, support from school leadership and from other teachers in the school is important for effective functioning of the activities and sustainability. Equally, it is important to have the support of

parents, which is crucial throughout the process to encourage genuine child participation, and as they may be required from the beginning to give permission for their children to participate in the CFA activities.



JOINING FORCES TO END VIOLENCE AGAINST CHILDREN IN KENYA

ChildFund PLAN International Save the Children UNICEF World Vision



St. Anthony North Health Campus
Castura Health.

PROSTAR

JOYAL

ACAKO

Engagement and preparatory activities with teachers, school leadership, parents and

community leaders are therefore essential at the early stages of implementation.

FACILITATOR RECRUITMENT

The CFA guidelines contain suggested ratios for facilitators per child- it is important to try to maintain these ratios for effective functioning of the activities, whilst balancing the high demand for the activities.

Community volunteers can be recruited as assistants in the animation of the child clubs in order to cope with the shortage of qualified instructors and improve facilitator/ child ratios.

For sustainability of children's groups, it is necessary to plan for the inevitable rotation of children as they get older.

This is also an opportunity to focus on fewer, older children in initial cohorts, anticipating the possibility of younger children becoming involved as the older children "age- out" of the activity.

B. FACILITATOR TRAINING AND QUALITY

TRAINING AND ONGOING SUPPORT

Initial training (most commonly of 3 days duration) is important and was generally good amongst JOFA teams- however ongoing training and support is required. Some level of supervision was provided in most cases, but facilitators and project staff stressed the need for refresher trainings or intense hands-on support from the project staff.

Refresher trainings for existing and new facilitators should be planned in advance, with involvement of school leadership to plan for sustainability of the CFA activities beyond the project lifespan.

The CFA approach is complex - facilitators need time to understand the approach and ongoing training and coaching. One proposed good practice is to form a "community of practice" or mutual support platform for facilitators, which could be done on WhatsApp or something similar.

Training materials: Across many project sites facilitators said they did not have enough training materials or facilitator guides, and they requested further life skills guides by age group.

COUNSELLING & PSYCHOLOGICAL FIRST AID SKILLS

The biggest concern for teachers/ facilitators was their lack of skills/ ability to provide individualized counselling to children that come to them with trauma and serious concerns. Indeed, there was one severe case reported of violence against a child participant of a life skills program and the teachers felt that if they had more capacity to provide counselling this may have been prevented.

The question of counselling and psychological first aid (PFA) skills for facilitators of CFA

and life skills activities should be carefully considered.

As a first step, clear referral pathways for children in need of individualized and/ or specialized psycho-social support should be identified and shared with all facilitators, so that children can get the appropriate support needed.

PFA training for facilitators should then be reviewed and implemented where needed.

C. REPRESENTATION, GENDER AND INCLUSION

INCLUSION

In principle, all children at school are able to join in CFA activities, however in practice there are various barriers for some children to join. Some children who may be excluded from participation in CFA groups are:

- **Children who display “bad” behaviour or violence towards their peers.**
- **Children using drugs and/ or alcohol**
- **Children who have many household responsibilities.**
- **Children whose parents do not allow them to attend.**

There are also children who do not want to attend because they are shy or their peers influence them not to attend. Girls who get

pregnant, poorer children with poor uniforms may be ashamed to attend.

There were also cases mentioned where children in the above categories, and children at high risk of violence were actively recruited or encouraged to join the CFA activities by their peers or by the facilitators/ teachers, as well as one story of how ethnic minority children were encouraged to join in the CFA activities.

In Ethiopia, Eastern Hararghe intervention areas, the schools accommodate both IDP children and host community children.

In these schools, both IDP and host community students were participating in the CFA sessions together.

OUT OF SCHOOL CHILDREN

For the most part, out of school children were not able to participate in CFA activities in the Joining Forces for Africa project. Implementing agencies should consider ways to effectively

engage out of school children in CFA activities.

One example which could be a good entry point was through local football clubs.

CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES

There was minimal involvement of children with disabilities in CFA activities. The mapping of associations and organizations of people with disabilities and their involvement in project activities increased the participation of children (girls and boys) with disabilities in the implementation of the approach in Mali, and should be done as part of future projects at the outset.

In Kenya and Ethiopia, some children were selected to represent their school or district in a Children’s Assembly or Children’s parliament. In these cases, participation was more limited as children had to be selected as representatives. In this case, it was highlighted that a clear and transparent selection process, effectively communicated to all children involved in CFA activities is essential.

GENDER

In most locations equal participation by boys and girls was reported, with some respondents suggesting that girls were more confident to speak out and in some cases there were more girls than boys participating, such as in Kenya.

level of girl participation.

Lower CFA session participation among girls was associated with cultural influences on girls at the community and family levels.

In Ethiopia, however, 55% of CFA activity participants were boys, indicating a lower

Lower girls school enrolment also had some influence on this rate of female participation.

GOOD PRACTICES FOR INCLUSION

A good example to build on is to support children to engage their peers, particularly those at most risk of violence or other rights violations, to ensure equity in participation and avoid exclusion of certain groups.

Implementing agencies should plan multiple cohorts in the same community to include vulnerable groups in the second or third cohort.

D. CHILD FRIENDLY ENVIRONMENT/ MATERIALS

MATERIALS

In many project sites the facilitators said that they did not have sufficient materials to support CFA and life skills activities. In particular, facilitators requested further materials that deal with SRHR, Menstruation, and STIs. Teachers also asked for child friendly materials on the national laws and policies related to child rights.

Facilitators who received training were given handouts, nevertheless, the majority of them expressed that the materials/handouts provided after the training are relatively complicated to read and understand clearly.

In Ethiopia, icebreakers and small recreational activities were carried out to relax the participants. However, the training modules given to the organizations needed to be translated into national languages. This was true in most counties where communication materials must be adapted and translated into local languages.

Some facilitators were able to adapt the materials per their local settings and rolled out the approach themselves, whilst others would need further support.

Implementing agencies came up with various ways to make the materials and content

more child friendly. "Image boxes" were developed as a visual tool for facilitators, and local community materials and creative methods (puppetry and theatre) were used to contextualize complex concepts on Violence Against Children for the children.

Creative methods were used to break down complex ideas and concepts for children such as through skits, fun activities or readings at home (mini-library) in order to facilitate understanding.

It is important to consider the need to adapt the contents of the modules to both the culture and the age of the children. Implementers are encouraged to develop user friendly/simplified/short versions of the tools to cater for facilitators or community workers, and to develop or separate tools for the different actors within the approach.

In addition to child-friendly, creative materials and methods of explaining the complex ideas, it is important to include entertaining activities to attract and retain participants: An adaptation of the modules to include sports and manual activities (making key rings and bracelets from recycled materials, painting), could be considered to maintain interest and motivation.

CHILD FRIENDLY ENVIRONMENT

The analysis of issues requires long hours to allow children to understand complex issues and to express themselves freely. There is also

the risk of peer influence- especially in the area of prioritisation of issues. To resolve this, the following is recommended:



1. Create a Safe Space

For children to share freely e.g. exclusion of teachers from the process of issues identification and analysis, emphasize to children the confidentiality.

2. Establish process rules

Children set up rules to follow during the process of analysis and accountability e.g. no sharing information outside their meeting room unless agreed, respect of the findings.

3. Exchanges with other schools

Allows children to share with those in another school information that they otherwise would not have shared with their fellow pupils in the same school.

4. Assign different Roles

Children are able to identify their strengths through taking up different roles in the process e.g. moderators, gatekeepers, timekeepers, secretaries, public speakers, chairpersons.

E. ENGAGEMENT W/ DUTY BEARERS

MATERIALS

To allow for meaningful engagement between children and duty bearers, careful planning and preparation is required.

Implementing agencies had to adjust work plan to increase the duration and number of sessions with children to adequately prepare them for interactions with duty bearers. Government officials and other duty bearers, including teachers, also needed more time to prepare for interactions with children and to be ready to listen and fully engage in dialogue with the children's groups.

Authentic dialogue and accountability sessions between children and duty bearers takes time and should not be rushed.

Existing norms within the community related to the role of children in society are not conducive to authentic child participation and involvement in decision making- changing these norms and perceptions of duty bearers takes time. Even once duty bearers accept the participation of children, listen to their concerns and commit to address them, following up on these commitments to ensure they are actually implemented was difficult.

Activities to gain the support of other actors in this process are crucial.

Integrating children and their groups into community-based child protection structures gives them confidence and legitimacy when interacting with duty bearers, and to sustain participation.

The support of key government departments that oversee child protection and other children's issue can also add legitimacy and these actors can support to convene other duty bearers and service providers from sectors such as health, education and justice. They can also provide technical support and input during awareness raising activities and to back up the issues presented by children.

Raising public awareness through campaigns and open forums can increase the level of public knowledge, support for children's participation and action plans and adds pressure to government and service providers to fulfill commitments.

Children's organizations supported by the project have carried out many awareness-raising activities in communities including

round tables, digital campaigns, televised debates, theatres, door-to-door engagements, sports activities, etc.

Program teams even suggested establishing an impartial oversight mechanism to give feedback on progress, guarantee that the requests made by children are being fulfilled,

and ensure that responsibility is upheld.

Program implementers stressed the need to involve children in planning for the activities, and to assist children to take the lead in most of the activities and get regular feedback from children on their feeling on how the activities are being implemented

G. POSITIVE STORIES OF CHANGE

POSITIVE OUTCOMES OF CFA ACTIVITIES AS REPORTED BY CHILDREN AND FACILITATORS

Children and facilitators have reported many positive impacts of the CFA activities related to the children themselves:

- Children have been able to interact with other children in the community- to get to know their status, and issues.
- They have learnt to cooperate and work well with others, including people they didn't know previously, children from other schools and people from different backgrounds.
- Children have learnt to express themselves, increased their self-confidence and improved communication skills.
- They are coming up with solutions together, through creative thinking.
- Children are learning to lead, to listen and to serve others, whilst in some cases becoming a role model.
- They have come to understand that people actually want to hear the opinion of children.
- Children have an improved understanding of violence against children and child rights.
- They have gained courage to address with parents issues that are effecting them.
- They are now able to engage with people in authority- whereas before they were scared.
- It has enabled children to develop their talents, play games and have fun!
- They have developed better self-control.
- The CFA activities have helped children to overcome challenges and share them with others rather than keeping them to themselves/ inside.

Teachers and facilitators have also noted changes in the school and community as a result of the CFA activities:

In schools:

- The introduction of children rights clubs has brought a reduction of the level of abuse/ violence like caning of children in schools.
- Introduction of CRC have made school a very conducive environment for children- even better than home for some children since teachers have learnt to listen more to the children and offer support and advice instead of beating children.
- Students have become empowered to talk to other teachers, to change their discipline methods.
- Children talk about their rights with others in the school yard, spread the knowledge and information.



H. LOGISTICAL CONSIDERATIONS & LOCATION

Most groups reported good locations and minimal issues with timing of CFA activities. Some groups were meeting outside which presented issues when it rained.

Most child rights clubs meet in schools during term time, which means there were sometimes distractions or clashes with other activities,

however, there are few better alternatives, so careful planning and scheduling with teachers and school administrators is needed to ensure smooth running of activities.

Activities held during school holidays or the weekend were the often most convenient for the children.

I. FEEDBACK AND REFERRAL PROCESSES

There were no significant issues reported in regards to feedback and referral processes. The project has set up clear feedback mechanisms in all locations and also established referral

pathways in all target locations, whilst training relevant stakeholders on both the feedback mechanism and referral pathways.



Next steps

After successful implementation of CFA in the JOFA project, Joining Forces agencies will look to further scale up the approach in new projects and programs. Anyone wishing to learn more about the approach or apply it in their context can contact Faith Nimineh at Childfund:

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Save the Children



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