

June 2023

LEARNING BRIEF



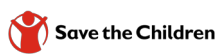
JOINING FORCES
For All Children



Co-funded by
the European Union

Collaboration

Joining Forces for Africa (JOFA)



BACKGROUND

The “Joining Forces for Africa (JOFA)- protecting children during the COVID-19 crisis and beyond” is the first major project implemented by the Joining Forces Alliance. Implemented in five countries (Senegal, Mali, Ethiopia, Kenya and Uganda) across three years (August 2020-2023), the €10 million EU funded project aims to reduce levels of violence, abuse, exploitation and neglect among children and adolescents. It has four specific objectives:

Learning agenda

The JOFA project has a learning agenda which is designed to support knowledge management within the project to help solve implementation problems, and to increase the overall effectiveness and the quality of the project’s achievements on the ground. The learning agenda is explicitly linked to the specific objective 4 and has three defined learning areas:

- The impact of child participation on the effectiveness of child protection programming.
- Implementation of common technical approaches and methodologies across different countries and contexts.
- **Effective collaboration** within the consortium for greater impact

A “learning series” has been implemented for each area, with this learning brief specifically addressing collaboration.

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.

Collaboration and Joining Forces

- **The Collaborative Advantage framework** has been used by the Joining Forces Alliance to help define the added value of working together. Of the 11 collaboration mechanisms identified in the Framework, 7 have been identified as being most relevant to our Alliance:



The JOFA project has prioritized Scale, Shared learning, Standards and Critical Mass. We also explored the mechanism of Synergies.

COLLABORATION AND JOINING FORCES

The Collaborative Advantage framework has been used by the Joining Forces Alliance to help define the added value of working together. Of the 11 collaboration mechanisms identified in the Framework, 4 have been successfully applied within the JOFA project: Scale, Shared learning, Standards and Critical Mass.

JOFA Collaboration Mechanisms

- **Shared Learning** through the project having a specific objective based around learning and a defined Learning Agenda,
- **Scale** through the application of common technical approaches
- **Standards** through the setting of common agreed Guidelines, Standards and Templates in the project MoU and
- **Critical Mass** the national level work on Advocacy as part of project activities.

We also explored the collaboration mechanism of Synergies, but found that this was less relevant given the fact that all six agencies had a similar programmatic focus on child rights and prevention of violence against children.

The successful application of these collaboration mechanisms to generate added value was possible due to the commitment of senior leadership of all involved agencies to the Joining Forces Alliance.

Other important factors influential in the success of collaboration are:

- Attitudes and behaviours that reinforce understanding, respect and trust; and openness to learn.
- Clear, thorough structures, plans & strategies with regular reflection and review.
- Allocation of adequate time and resources (financial and human).



COLLABORATION MECHANISMS- LESSON LEARNT

Shared Learning

The project has a specific objective focused on shared learning, with budgeted systematic and regular learning activities and expected results.

This enabled teams to acquire new skills and knowledge and to overcome common implementation challenges and improve programming.

Comparing results and progress across multiple partners enhances transparency and mutual accountability.

Through application of the Learning agenda, the JOFA project team produced many learning products, such as regular [country level case studies](#), [learning briefs](#) and [thematic reviews](#).

The shared learning actions have introduced a culture of learning and knowledge sharing in the JOFA project team which is spreading within agencies and with other projects and programs as demonstrated in the [Application of the Project's Learning Agenda](#).

A strong project M&E system that produced useful, credible data to be used in shared learning events created legitimacy and stimulus for further action and improvements.



Scale

The collaboration mechanisms of Scale was implemented in the JOFA project through the introduction of common technical approaches implemented by multiple partners across different countries and contexts, and the learning series on technical approaches.

The learning series was focused on three specific, evidence informed technical approaches, and a learning brief was produced for each approach: [Parenting without Violence](#), [Child Friendly Accountability](#) and [TeamUp](#)

As a result of the collaboration, Parenting without Violence was scaled up by all partners in Kenya, Ethiopia, Uganda and Mali. A total of 27,097 parents have been reached by 10 implementing partners representing all 6 JF agencies.

Child Friendly Accountability activities were implemented in all countries, reaching 21,994 children, although fidelity to the methodological guidelines was not consistent across all countries.

TeamUp was implemented by all partners in Ethiopia, Uganda and Kenya reaching 26,996 children. 9 implementing partners implemented TeamUp representing all 6 JF agencies.

To achieve “implementation fidelity”, additional capacity and allocation of sufficient budget was required to meet high standards, especially in monitoring and evaluation.

The addition of this capacity enabled production of further evidence on the efficacy of the technical approaches at scale, as well as capacity to reflect on data, adapt and improve implementation.

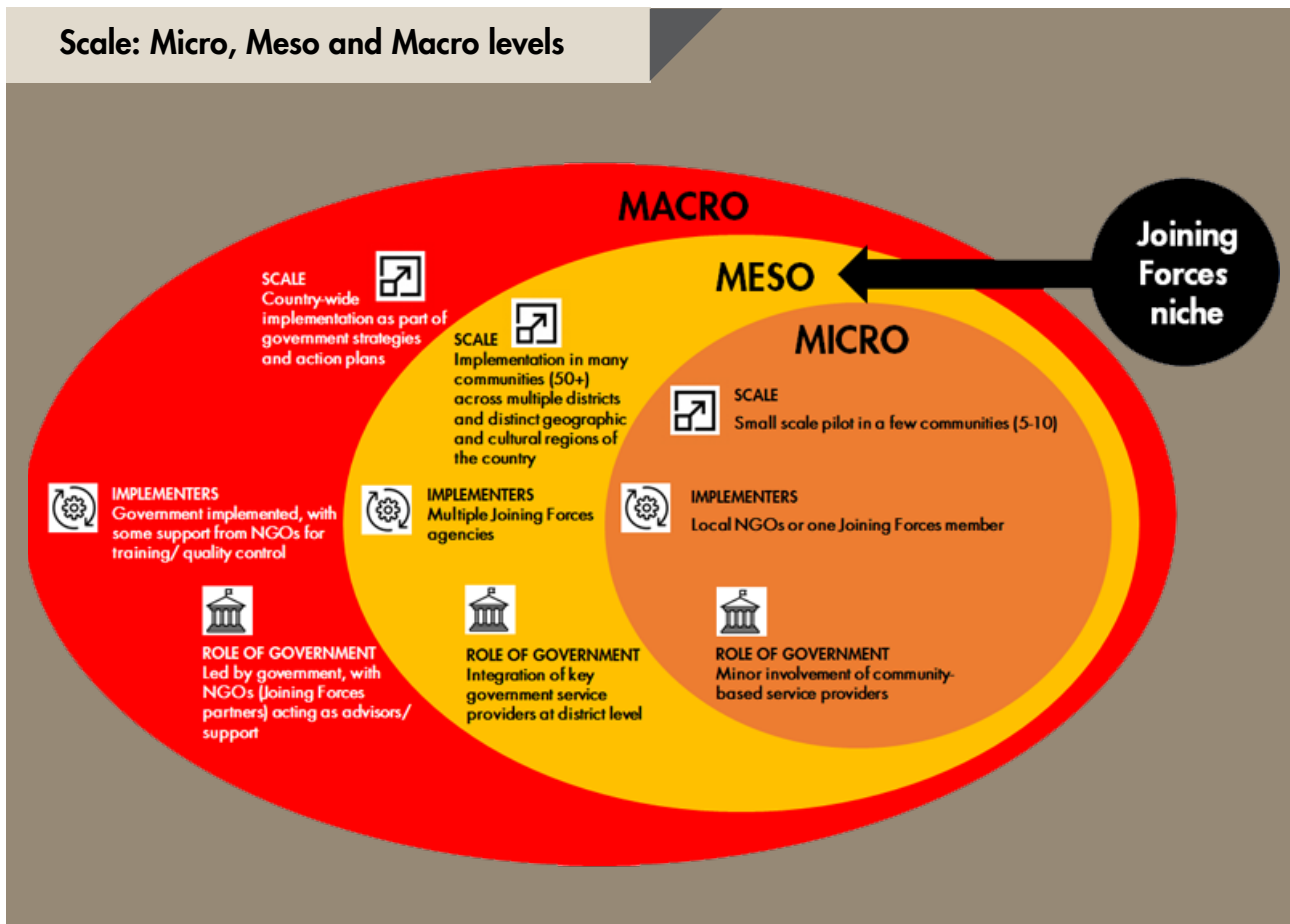
Continuous peer and joint reviews, reflection, learning, feedback, exchange visits, and their documentation promoted learning for adaptation and scalability.

Government backing is important to achieve larger (vertical) scale. In defining our position

vis a vis the government in achieving scale in evidence-informed approaches, Joining Forces country platforms are able to demonstrate scale at the “meso” level.

Through operating at this Meso level, Joining Forces country platforms can work through larger scale implementation challenges and issues of integration into government systems before technical approaches are taken to Macro level.

Local government and community buy-in and support for the technical approaches across various regions at the “Meso” level is useful for presenting a case to national government for integration into national action plans and strategies for vertical scale.



Standards

The application of common Standards to create collective legitimacy and common knowledge was achieved in the JOFA project through application of the agreed Guidelines, Standards and Templates outlined in the project MoU.

The guidelines, standards and templates developed and used responded to the key categories such as Safeguarding, M&E, Communication and Coordination, Financial Standards, Project Cycle Management, Reporting, Human resources and Contract compliance.

The JOFA project put in place a large suite of standards and guidelines drawn from the six participating agencies. By applying the highest standards from all six agencies, quality in programming and project cycle management was achieved.

The project applied an adaptive management approach, with the ability to change standards/guidelines etc. when necessary. When communicated clearly and effectively, this approach has been successful and enabled us

to adapt to changes in context and performance issues.

High standards in monitoring and evaluation were the most difficult standards to reach across the alliance, but can be achieved with adequate allocation of human and financial resources.

Communication and visibility guidelines and protocols are essential in a collaboration such as the Joining Forces Alliance, where participating agencies already have strong brands and existing communications and visibility strategies



Critical Mass

The JOFA project teams and Joining Forces country platforms in implementing countries combined, aligned and coordinated resources to create the critical mass needed to influence laws and policies related to child protection through the development and implementation of joint advocacy plans and actions.

By working together as six agencies strategically, building on the strengths and skills of each organization, partners have been able to secure commitments from governments, donors and other stakeholders for child protection and the prevention of violence against children. Strategic media engagement and a clear communications

and visibility plan as demonstrated in the [Joint national level advocacy to change or approve laws and policies](#)

Joining Forces country teams worked hard to define the “niche” of the Joining Forces platform in country in regards to advocacy, especially in relation to existing networks and working groups. Support to, and collaboration with existing groups was, and remains an essential component of Joining Forces country platform strategies.

Meaningful participation of children in advocacy actions was also a strong consideration for all country platform advocacy plans/ strategies (including child-led advocacy) and contributed to their success.

Recommendations for other collaborations

The collaborative advantage framework is a very useful tool for defining “added value” or collaborative advantage and should be used by other consortium, alliances or collaborations to help define the reason for working together.

The mechanism of Shared Learning is critical and most likely essential for all collaborations as it informs the ongoing reflection and improvement of all other collaboration mechanisms.

Institutional commitment to any collaboration is an essential influencing factor that must be considered throughout the collaborative process.

Exploring concepts such as synergies, complementarity and defining the “niche” of any collaboration is essential to avoid duplication or conflict with other actors.



Save the Children