



THE JF-CPIE Endline
evaluation of
in-country
interventions during
Phase 1 2022–2024

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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About Joining Forces

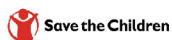


JOINING FORCES
For All Children



Joining Forces is a global alliance formed in 2017 under which the six largest child rights NGOs in Germany – ChildFund, Plan International, Save the Children, SOS Children’s Villages, Terre des Hommes, and World Vision came together to join forces.

Together, they are working with and for children and young people, to secure their rights and to end violence against them.





INTRODUCTION

Millions of children and adolescents around the world live in protracted crises, complex emergencies, and contexts of armed conflict. They face violence, abuse, neglect and exploitation, alongside multi-layered risks exacerbated by these contexts.

The Joining Forces for Child Protection in Emergencies (JF-CPIE) project¹ worked to improve the protection of children and adolescents among refugees, internally displaced people (IDPs) and host communities, living in contexts of crises and emergencies. The project was implemented by the Joining Forces alliance in six countries affected by violence and instability – Bangladesh, Burkina Faso, Central African Republic, Colombia, Ethiopia and South Sudan. The project has impacted the lives of more than 350,000 children.

1. The JF-CPIE project is funded by the German Federal Foreign Office, and Plan International Germany is the lead organisation for overall project management.

THE JF-CPIE PROJECT

What is child protection in emergencies – CPIE?

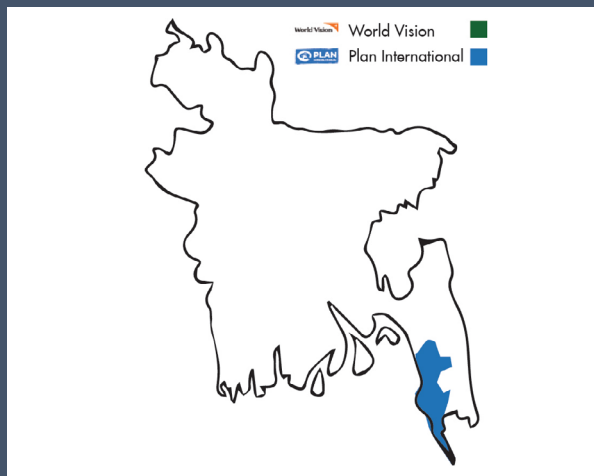
CPIE involves preventing and responding to abuse, neglect, exploitation and violence against children in humanitarian contexts. Child protection risks vary and may change, as they depend on compounding factors, such as age, gender, disability and the humanitarian context.

Child protection interventions ideally need to be multidimensional, addressing the diverse needs of children simultaneously in a comprehensive and holistic manner. They need to be adapted as a specific context evolves. Typical CPIE interventions are awareness raising among caregivers about children’s needs after displacement or separation, as well as case management – which are both vital to promote children’s wellbeing and create a protective environment during a crisis. Interventions can also offer families financial support and enable communities to improve local child protection networks and services.



THE 6 JF-CPIE PROJECT COUNTRIES

Bangladesh

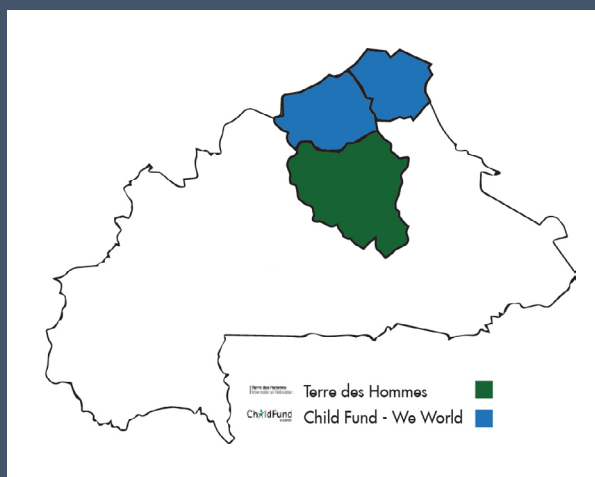


Project locations: Cox's Bazar – refugee camps, host communities

Implementing partners: Plan International and World Vision

Context: Around 1m Rohingya refugees from Myanmar live in camps in Cox's Bazar. Refugees are reportedly attacked and abducted by armed groups in the camps.² Refugees have little protection, partly because their legal status as refugees is not fully recognised. Cyclone Mocha in 2023 affected field teams' visits to project communities. Children of host communities around the camps in Cox's Bazar often face similar child protection risks as Rohingya children.

Burkina Faso

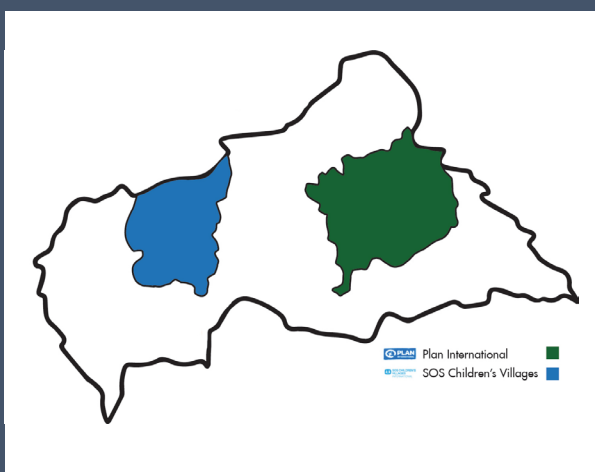


Project locations: Mixed host communities, IDP camps

Implementing partners: ChildFund and Terre des Hommes

Context: Conflict and instability affect this African Sahel region country. Armed groups have been primary drivers of violence and blockades in about 26 cities (incl. Djibo) are severely restricting the movement of affected communities, limiting their access to basic services, partially even prompting warnings of famine.³ Many people are displaced by violence in surrounding areas.

Central African Republic



Project locations: IDP camps, host communities

Implementing partners: Plan International and SOS Children's Villages

Context: Armed groups fight to control raw materials in this landlocked country. One in five civilians is displaced by violent conflict and instability that have been ongoing for a decade. Around 3m people were severely food-insecure in 2023.⁴ Access to basic services like healthcare and sanitation is poor. Some 1.2m children struggle to access education.

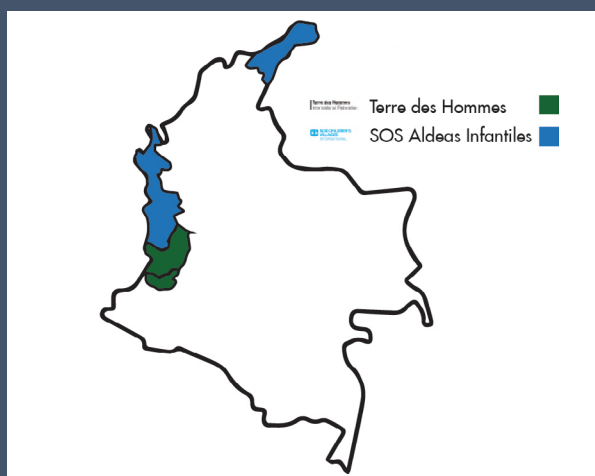
2. Human Rights Watch (2023). "Bangladesh: Spiraling Violence Against Rohingya Refugees", 13 July.

3. FEWS NET, <https://fewsn.net/west-africa/burkina-faso/alert/december-2023>

4. NRC, <https://www.nrc.no/perspectives/2024/whats-happening-in-the-central-african-republic/>

THE 6 JF-CPIE PROJECT COUNTRIES

Colombia

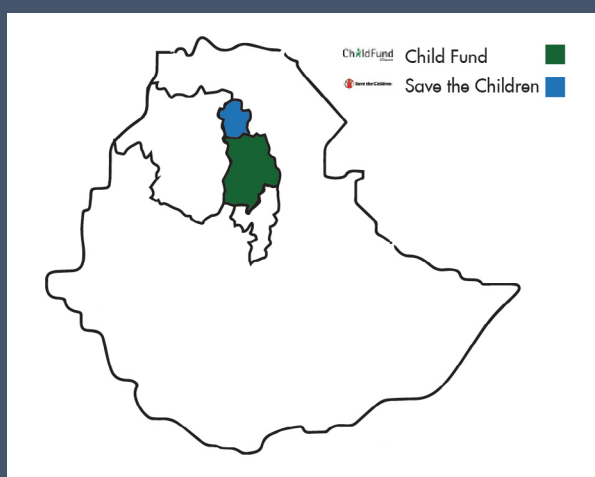


Project locations: Urban and rural areas and settlements, rural indigenous areas

Implementing partners: SOS and Terre des Hommes

Context: Despite a peace agreement in 2016, internal conflict persists. Armed groups fight to control territory and resources and target drug trafficking and illegal mining. Disputes over lucrative coca cultivation and trafficking routes fuels violence, leading to localised clashes, instability and socio-political tensions.

Ethiopia

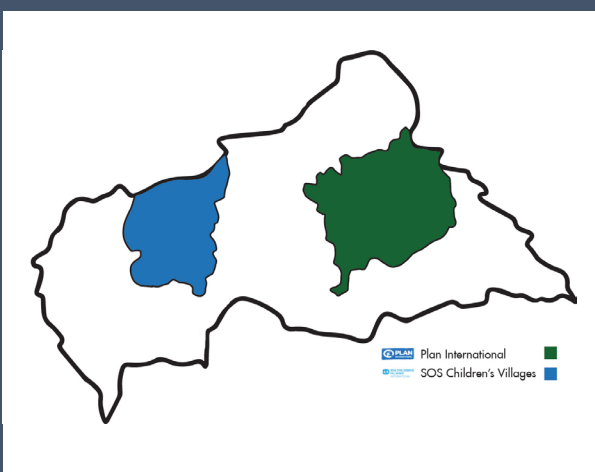


Project locations: IDP sites, IDPs/returnees, host communities

Implementing partners: ChildFund and Save the Children

Context: Armed groups have destabilised the Amhara region for more than a year. Months earlier, a civil war devastated neighbouring Tigray region. Affected communities face extreme hardship as insecurity exacerbates severe drought. Killings and abductions of children and women by armed groups from South Sudan are reported. Flooding also severely affected communities and the ability of field teams to respond.

South Sudan



Project locations: IDP sites, host and mixed communities

Implementing partners: Save the Children and World Vision

Context: Sub-national and intercommunal violence has displaced some 2.2m people within South Sudan and pushed another 2.2m into neighbouring countries. Fighting over control of territories and resources causes many casualties. Multiple shocks, such as flooding, climate vulnerability, displacement and a high cost of living severely impact food security.⁵

5. OCHA (2024). [South Sudan Overview](#) (accessed 24 October 2024)

THE 6 JF-CPIE PROJECT

The JF-CPIE project's outcome was the **improved protection of vulnerable girls, boys, adolescent girls and adolescent boys through access to quality child protection services and support for prevention, mitigation and response to risks.**

To reach this outcome, the project's activities intended to improve:





■ Children's and young people's knowledge of child protection risks and staying safe

■ Caregivers' knowledge of protective, responsive and preventive factors

■ Community members' capacity to deal with child protection risks.

Child protection risks, within the context of this project, are defined as potential threats and harms that children and young people may face during crises such as climate-related hazards, armed conflicts or other humanitarian emergencies. These risks can significantly affect their physical, emotional and psychological wellbeing,⁶ and they vary depending on context, age, gender, and (dis)ability.

At the start of the project, staff and project participants worked together to identify the main child protection risks in their respective communities. These are summarised below:

Project country	Child protection risks identified
 Bangladesh	Abduction, child labour, child marriage, neglect, separation from family, family conflicts, legal status, substance abuse, violence
 Burkina Faso	Child labour, child marriage, FGM, neglect, violence, family conflicts, migration, substance abuse, war
 Central African Republic	FGM, child labour, child marriage, legal status, neglect, adolescent parenthood, family conflict, violence
 Colombia	Child labour, child marriage, migration, family conflicts, neglect, separation from family, substance abuse, adolescent parenthood, war
 Ethiopia	Abduction, child labour, child marriage, cultural practices, neglect, separation from family, substance abuse, trauma, violence
 South Sudan	Abduction, child labour, child marriage, neglect, substance abuse, adolescent parenthood, trauma, violence

6. Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) *Guidelines on Mental Health and Psychosocial Support in Emergency Settings*

To address these child protection risks – and to achieve the project’s overall outcome – the project’s 12 implementing partners implemented a range of activities and supports:

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- With children and young people – awareness-raising sessions, life skills groups, safe spaces, psychosocial support and psychological first aid, distribution of dignity kits
-
- With caregivers and families – parenting sessions, cash and voucher assistance (CVA), non-food items (NFIs), garden start-up kits, food distribution, savings groups
-
- With communities – participatory community mapping exercises, capacity building for child protection groups, financial and material support to child protection groups, supporting local child protection referral pathways, providing case management services
-
- With institutional/societal/humanitarian actors – child protection mainstreaming, participation in coordination groups, establishment of help desks
-
- Global activities – bringing together child protection and food security actors, developing online training on the integration of child protection and food security, data collection to assess linkages between food security and child protection risks



EVALUATING PHASE 1 OF THE JF-CPIE PROJECT

The evaluation examined to what extent the various interventions were impactful in the target communities, under which circumstances, and how they could be improved. It moreover investigated how far approaches addressing gender and inclusion were applied during project implementation.

Four evaluation domains shaped the aspects studied:

Relevance⁷	the extent to which the objectives of a project intervention are meeting participants' requirements and country needs, and those of other stakeholders.
Effectiveness	the extent to which an intervention's objectives were achieved, or are expected to be achieved, considering differentials across participant groups.
Inclusiveness	the extent to which the project applied gender-aware and inclusive approaches, particularly for children with disabilities, and explicitly aimed for results that improve the rights of children and young people, and gender equality.
Implementation	the challenges that may have affected project targets being reached and whether working through a consortium helped or hindered implementation.

DATA COLLECTION

Quantitative data was gathered using surveys of households: 54.7 per cent of respondents were from host communities, 36.4 per cent were IDPs and just under 9 per cent were refugees. The respondents included the household head, a caregiver and a young person, chosen at random if multiple individuals were present. Surveys with community members and service providers targeted facilities such as healthcare centres, schools and local authorities. For the community surveys, three members from each facility were randomly selected. The survey format reflected surveys used at the project baseline.

Qualitative data came from focus group discussions (FGDs) and key informant interviews (KIIs). FGDs typically involved six respondents discussing topics under the guidance of facilitators. KIIs were semi-structured one-to-one interviews with individuals with a good understanding of the JF-CPIE project. Respondents included children and young people, caregivers, community-based child protection group members, community members not participating in the project, JF-CPIE project staff, external child protection experts, and humanitarian actors not involved in child protection.

7. Relevance and Effectiveness derive from the set of six evaluation criteria published by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development's Development Assistance Committee. See: OECD (2021). *Applying Evaluation Criteria Thoughtfully*, Paris: OECD Publishing, <https://doi.org/10.1787/543e84ed-en>.

FINDINGS FROM THE JF-CPIE PROJECT EVALUATION

Relevance: key findings

Child protection needs identified by the project have broadly been relevant.

- The JF-CPIE project is addressing child protection needs that target populations consider to be relevant. Across the 12 implementing partners, no consistent trend emerged from the data, supporting the assumption that child protection risks are context-dependent. Participants raised no additional areas for attention in the project other than the circumstances and needs already addressed.
- There were similarities across countries, as participants identified children's lack of awareness about child protection risks as a significant concern. They also raised gender inequality as a relevant factor in addressing child protection risks, and communities' inadequate responses to these risks.



Budget allocations generally matched perceived child protection needs.

- Budget allocations generally matched participants' perceptions of important target needs, but this alignment varies among the implementing partners, and across different activities. Secondary data was used to identify how much budget each partner allocated to activities for the three target groups (children, caregivers, communities).
- Activities targeting caregivers received the largest share of budget across all partners, closely followed by activities for children and young people. The amount of budget allocated by some partners varied considerably across the three target groups.

The project aligns with government frameworks and humanitarian response plans.

- All implementing partners were actively embedding project activities within governmental frameworks and local humanitarian response plans wherever possible. The project therefore generally aligned with national policy frameworks and local humanitarian response plans, as well as with wider humanitarian sector priorities.
- The project reflected an understanding that barriers to child protection exist at national level, and project activities tried to address those where possible and within the scope of the project. National-level structural barriers include legal status and gaps in government policy on child protection and children's rights.



Effectiveness: key findings



Overall partners show progress on outcome targets.

- Implementing partners achieved at least partial improvement in around two-thirds of the indicators used to track progress. The strongest results were seen in relation to communities, where two-thirds of partners showed a full improvement, as defined by the indicators. Partners were also on track to reach most of their targets for outputs and activities within Phase 1 at the time of data collection. In around two-thirds of cases, partners collectively achieved targets, with about 45 per cent exceeding them. Small discrepancies suggested that some activity targets were not being met⁸: accountability mechanisms, safe spaces, dignity kits, community mapping exercises, support to child protection groups and local child protection referral pathways, and help desks.

8. It is to be noted that data collection took place in March 2024, whereas project activities ran until late June 2024.

Project activities are directly easing barriers to improved child protection.

- According to participants, activities have directly contributed to improvements over the last two years in terms of tackling barriers to child protection. Activities attracting particular praise included provision of safe spaces, life skills groups for children and adolescents, awareness-raising sessions, psychosocial support and psychological first aid, dignity kits and positive parenting groups.
- On financial support, evidence suggested the project was successfully targeting the most vulnerable households. But more tailoring of targeting of vulnerable households, clearer communication and more regular distributions were called for. Data was inconsistent on activities to enhance local child protection services, but implementing partners appeared to make progress on mainstreaming child protection across the humanitarian sector.



“Thanks to the talks organised in safe spaces, the Joining Forces Alliance allowed us to deepen our knowledge of children’s rights.”

– Children’s FGD, ChildFund Burkina Faso

“Dignity kits play a significant role in helping children maintain a positive relationship with their caregivers.”

– Girl, FGD, World Vision Bangladesh



Optimism that project effects will endure – but warnings on poverty and instability.

- Participants expressed a general belief that the project had made a difference for children, caregivers and communities, especially on community awareness and ownership of positive changes. There was optimism that these improvements may continue after the project ends. However, participants noted that changes achieved in one area may not endure without improvements in other areas. Suggestions focused on activities to alleviate poverty, involving schools, or taking a more “holistic” approach.
- Threats to the sustainability of project effects were chiefly seen to be household poverty, insecurity and failure of other humanitarian actors to prioritise child protection. Project participants noted that security and political instability have increasingly hindered collaboration with local organisations and government actors.

“It is true that we have knowledge about children’s rights, but poverty often means that these rights are violated nonetheless”

– Female participant, children’s FGD, ChildFund Burkina Faso

Inclusiveness: key findings



Good inclusion of gender awareness and children's views – less so on disabilities.

- Gender awareness was successfully incorporated into design and implementation. For example, life skills groups for children and adolescents were said to facilitate equal, unhindered access and parity of attendance between genders. Awareness-raising, parenting groups and training sessions for child protection groups were attuned to the needs and perspectives of both genders. Consultation processes included use of gender-sensitive language and interaction. Staff defined objectives with community members, local government and child protection experts from both genders, with a focus on avoiding stereotypes, sexist terms and expressions during implementation. They helped to develop awareness-raising campaigns on gender equality. Yet, staff suggested that gender inequality was still a barrier to some teams' work.

“We actively sought out the perspectives of women leaders, mothers and existing girls' groups within communities to understand their concerns and priorities regarding child protection.”

–Staff member, Save the Children Ethiopia

- Children's views were sought in the assessment process to identify needs. They could easily offer feedback on activities. However, how far they actively engaged in consultative processes was unclear. Some evidence showed inclusion of children's views in monitoring processes – such as enabling girls' feedback on the quality and distribution of dignity kits. However, such monitoring is not systematically carried out by all implementing partners. Nor did there appear to be tools specifically for boys' feedback.

- Fewer than 1 per cent of all participants in the activities were recorded as people with disabilities. Slightly higher rates of participation were seen in the endline survey. Some project staff suggested that special efforts were made to include people with disabilities, but nevertheless the target of supporting 7% of persons with disabilities was not achieved. Other staff noted that their initial planning of the project did not fully consider involving people with disabilities. It is also possible that there was a lack of training for recording the disability status of participants.



All project partners make good efforts to be culturally appropriate.

- Across all six countries, sufficient efforts have been made to make the project culturally appropriate and locally acceptable, both in design and implementation. The project was designed to be culturally adapted to the targeted communities, aligning closely with local cultural norms and practices during implementation. Implementing partners have generally respected local customs, culture and beliefs while maintaining a strong commitment to child protection. Some partners reported difficulties when behaviours based in customs conflicted with child protection priorities.
- Efforts made included use of indigenous or traditional languages in project activities or distributions of dignity kits and food, in garden start-up kits or project information. Traditional authority figures were actively involved to plan, discuss and help implement some activities within communities. Use of local languages helped to bring positive behavioural change for some partners – such as a growing openness to gender equality, particularly on girls attending school, and a willingness to protect boys from harmful forms of child labour.



A positive trend in child rights awareness is seen across the project.

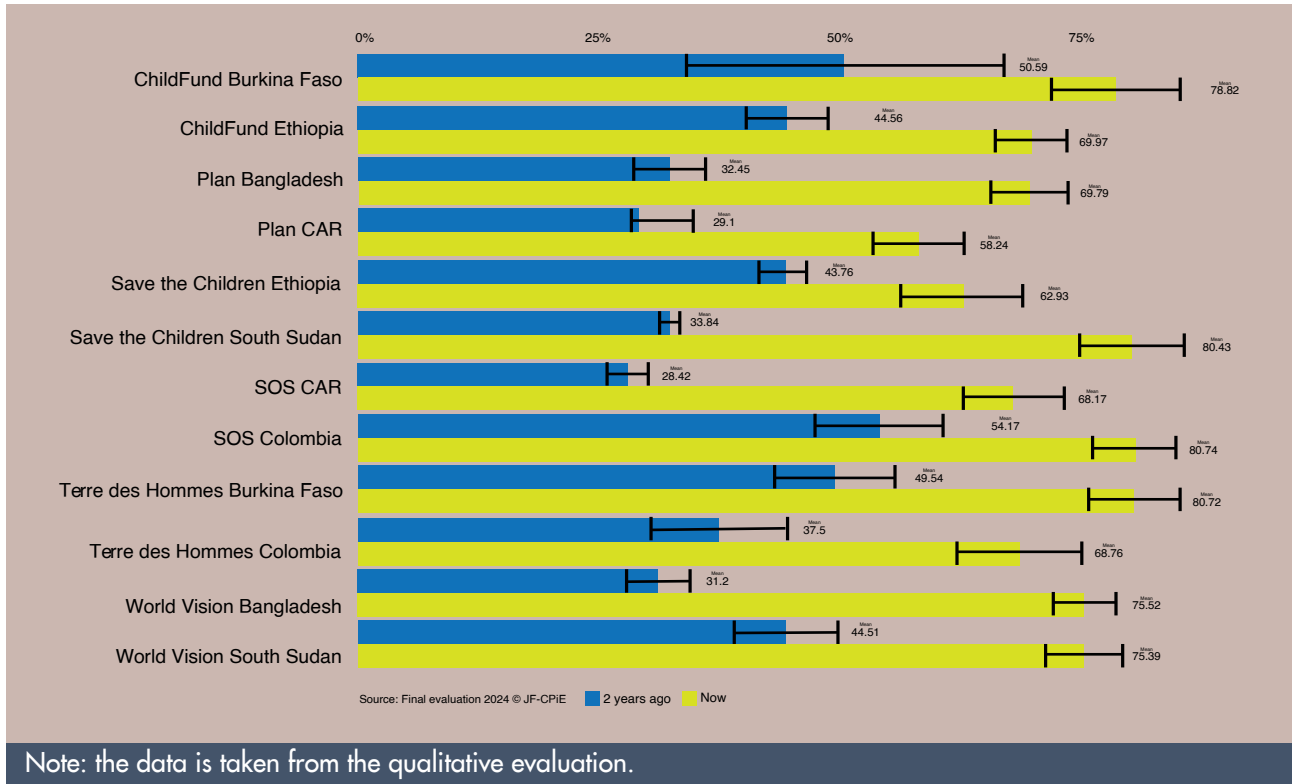
- Awareness of child rights has improved for all implementing partners over the implementation period. Project activities that strengthened household capacity to meet basic needs were strongly associated with helping to improve child rights. Some experts noted that households that struggle to meet basic needs are more likely to face challenges in upholding child rights.
- Life skills, safe spaces and parenting sessions helped to raise awareness of child rights, according to participants. Collaboration with schools, and food deliveries may have contributed to strengthening children's rights to education, health and healthcare. Participants did not frequently raise security concerns or how security may affect awareness of child rights, which could be an area for future research.

Feedback and complaint mechanisms are varied and generally well used.

- The project successfully utilised multiple feedback methods, including face-to-face interactions during community meetings, suggestion boxes, hotlines and digital platforms. Face-to-face mechanisms were generally the easiest method for participants to use.
- Concern was raised that people may avoid expressing negative opinions in case this jeopardised the assistance they receive, or they may feel a need to conform which could affect their responses. Project staff noted that feedback mechanisms must address these concerns and be more accessible.



Figure: Proportion of community members who are aware of child rights



Implementation: key findings



Challenges relate to community needs, resource levels and project delivery.

- Determining the needs of communities was difficult, especially regarding the quantity – and to some extent the quality – of services and support required. Some staff said that funds were too limited to fully respond to communities' needs – seriously so, for case management services, and partly so for dignity kits, CVA and NFI support. Others said that high community expectations were a challenge.
- Almost all project staff found it hard to accurately determine the resources required to meet community needs, and the costs of these – especially in volatile contexts and with the inflation severely impacting all project countries. Examples included higher than expected costs for setting up and running feedback and accountability mechanisms, and insufficient budget for team vehicles to travel to communities.
- A broad range of delivery challenges was identified. Poor infrastructure and instability, typical of crisis contexts, caused communication, coordination and logistical problems. Attempts to ensure accountability sometimes met with tensions.

Working in the consortium has helped project implementation.

- Several benefits from consortium-working were identified: increased bargaining power and scale; sharing knowledge and expertise; networking; collaborative working. In-country partners with strong connections to target communities offered valuable local insights and knowledge, acting as a “bridge” to enhance global strategies.
- The Global Coordination Team was praised for its vital role in strengthening implementation. It set project-wide standards, such as on M&E, data collection, training tools, and strict deadlines and budgets. It streamlined implementation, including through regular partner-specific and consortium-wide calls.
- Few downsides were mentioned, although some said that consortiums add complexity to processes and activities, which increased already high workloads for partners.



“A project of this magnitude becomes viable only through a consortium.”

– Staff member, Terre des Hommes Colombia

“The Global Coordination Team established common standards and quality improvement frameworks for consortium members, leading to overall improvements in programming across their organisations.”

– Staff member, ChildFund Ethiopia



CONCLUDING INSIGHTS

The endline evaluation of the JF-CPIE project shows that child and adolescent protection has improved significantly over the past two years

Barriers and challenges that have historically affected children’s development, wellbeing and vulnerability to protection risks have eased. These positive changes are evident not only among children but also among their caregivers and within wider communities.

Based on in-depth interviews with children, caregivers, project staff and external child protection experts, the evaluation offered further insights:

-
- Increased awareness of child protection risks – children and caregivers are more knowledgeable about locally relevant child protection issues.
-
- Improved caregiver capacity – caregivers are better equipped to meet their children’s basic needs and foster improved relationships.
-
- Heightened gender awareness – community members have greater awareness of gender equality and the distinct needs of girls and boys.
-
- Strengthened community response – communities are better positioned to prevent and respond to child protection risks.
-
- Positive changes across diverse child protection needs – project activities have contributed significantly to these improvements.

As the JF-CPIE project moves into Phase 2, there are some areas for improvement. Addressing national-level gaps and engaging in national-level advocacy will sharpen the project’s relevance. Sustainability will be improved with continuous learning and adaptation – not least because risks can shift as circumstances change. Participation levels of children with disabilities need to rise and be better tracked. Ongoing reflection and accurate monitoring data will strengthen implementation. The recommendations address these and other areas, with action points ahead for the project.



RECOMMENDATIONS

Relevance

- Strengthen national-level child protection advocacy.
- National-level child protection needs should be integrated into the project framework.
- Implementing partners are encouraged to boost their policy advocacy capacities.
- Enhance community engagement and gender equality work.
- More efforts are needed to assess community perceptions of project relevance.
- Income-generating activities should accompany initiatives aimed at shifting attitudes towards gender equality.

Effectiveness

- Strengthen project activities for sustainable impact.
- Activities that support households in meeting basic needs should be enhanced.
- Psychosocial support services should align with the mental health needs of target communities.
- Schools could be empowered to sustain increased awareness of child protection-related topics.



Inclusiveness

- Strengthen the project focus on people with disabilities.
- The project should improve how it reaches people with disabilities and how it measures their inclusion.
- Address possible social desirability bias.
- Active measures should address social desirability bias during data collection.
- Enhance the integration of children's views.
- Dedicated measures in project planning and preparation may help achieve this.
- Share approaches on cultural appropriateness.
- Implementing partners should be enabled to share experiences and suggestions on handling cultural appropriateness.

Implementation

- Enhance child protection project operations and learning.
- Project teams should prioritise safety and security in their operational countries.
- The project should embrace “institutionalised learning” – the systematic integration of processes and mechanisms for continuous learning and improvement.
- Monitoring capacities must be strengthened in future project phases.
- The project should pivot from reporting chiefly on successes to highlight first challenges faced and areas to improve.
- The consortium should consider incentives that encourage innovation and the documentation of successful practices.



JOINING FORCES
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