

September 2024

PUBLICATION Joining Forces for Africa: Acting to end child labour (JOFA-ACTE)

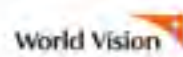
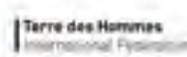
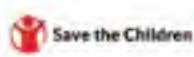


JOINING FORCES
For All Children

Learning Agenda Planning



Co-funded by the European Union



About JOFA ACTE

Within the framework of the JOFA-ACTE project that aims at contributing to the reduction of child labor targeting its worst forms in four Sub-Saharan African countries Mali, Burkina Faso, Madagascar and Malawi in line with the Sustainable Development Goals by 2025 - Target 8.7, 6 key partner child organisations have come together to lead on the implementation of this project.

This partnership is based on the positive experience of collaboration between the Joining Forces Alliance (JFA) and DG INTPA during a former project in 5 Sub-Saharan African countries.

The six NGO members of this JFA alliance decided to assign the role of lead applicant for this project to World Vision

Germany, the other NGO members of the consortium are: "Terre des Hommes", "SOS Children's Village", "Save the Children International", "World Vision International", "Plan International" and "Educo Spain".

Based on their extensive experience, cooperation and support to the local civil society, expertise and effective presence in the country, members of the consortium guarantee a community anchorage in the areas most affected by child labor, especially its worst forms, accompanied by a comprehensive analysis of the issues, an interaction with the institutional level and an advocacy and learning strategy at the national and international level, thanks to their reputation and the support of JFA.

The learning agenda

The collective learning agenda contributes to the achievement of the third project objective around ensuring that actions are undertaken by state and non-state actors to prevent and reduce WFCL through better coordination, effectiveness, visibility and transparency. More specifically, the objective on the **capitalization, learning, and sharing of knowledge and best practices related to the approaches increases for better protection of target children in the four project countries (R.3.3)**. Under this outcome, specific activities will be undertaken to collect, document and share the knowledge gained from the project. Guidance and tools for collecting good practice studies and ensuring that children's contributions are sought and encouraged in the learning process will be drawn from the JOFA project and synergies will be sought. Similar learning exchanges on a country-specific basis could take place depending on other projects/initiatives and their learning dissemination plans.

The activities in this output are designed to maximize the learning and leverage of the Joining Forces Alliance, both in-country and at the regional level. Building on the Joining Forces for Africa project implemented to strengthen child protection systems at the time of Covid 19, this action will draw on the collective expertise of agencies and the richness of exchanges with other regions/countries to collect the most relevant lessons, and to develop, share, and validate the lessons from that project. This knowledge will be used collectively to raise the issue of child labor at the national and regional level. As the data show, the nature and processes of the worst forms of child labor (particularly in the agricultural and mining sectors) are rapidly changing in a rapidly changing global economic environment. Thus, a real-time learning approach allows for information sharing and responsive action. This learning agenda will be informed by the learnings accumulated from the previous projects of the Joining Forces Alliance and build on the



engagement with partners and stakeholders globally. In addition, the exposure of concrete initiatives undertaken by the four target countries can positively strengthen the work of advocates in the national policy space.

To date, the work conducted by the Joining Forces Alliance contributing to regional learning on child protection has been well received. This EU-funded project will therefore contribute to making children's voices heard and deepen our collective understanding of the worst forms of child labor and what can be done about it. The EU is seen as a key partner in this regard.

Main objectives

The aim of the learning agenda is twofold:

- a. Deepening our knowledge and understanding of thematic areas related to the prevalence of child labour in the context of the four implementing Sub-Saharan African countries to facilitate the process of knowledge production and create spaces for building tools for advocacy.
- b. Facilitate a learning exchanges around child protection approaches, methods and tools in engagement with relevant stakeholder, including children, parents, families, educators, local authorities, etc.

In terms of leveraging learning, our consortium has the opportunity to:

a. Enhance credibility and recognition:

1. Showcasing our successful strategies and outcomes **will elevate our reputation** in the child protection sector.
2. We can position ourselves as thought leaders, **setting benchmarks** for others to follow.

b. **Policy Influence at EU level:** Our insights have the potential to inform policy-making processes, driving systemic changes that benefit children on a larger scale. By sharing our learnings, we can advocate for evidence-based policies and practices.





Expected outputs of the learning agenda

- A **documentation** in both digital and audiovisual forms of scalable child protection approaches, tools and methods based on implementation experience.
- Learning briefs that compile comprehensive **reports** and **case studies** detailing our methodologies, challenges, and successes.
- Utilising **various platforms** (conferences, publications, social media) to share our findings with a wider audience.
- **Policy briefs** based on the consortium's research findings, best practices, engagement, and recommendation. Those briefs would be targeting national governments and politicians, EU policymakers, think tanks, researchers, etc.

Thematic areas

In a series of webinars and/or learning meetings, the following thematic areas are suggested as thematic areas to deepen and produce knowledge around:

Thematic Area	Focus	Areas of inquiry
Social Protection Policies	The aim is to assess social protection policies in reducing child labour. Poverty, low child-specific spending, and COVID-19 have worsened the issue. Current systems often overlook informal labour, requiring a more holistic approach. The discussion aims to explore synergies with other sectors and projects to improve protection and reduce child labour.	<p>What are the current social protection policies targeting child labour, and how effective are they?</p> <p>What are the barriers to accessing social protection programs for vulnerable families?</p>
Education and Social Mobility	The idea is to explore the role of education in promoting social mobility and reducing child labour. It examines structural inequalities, limited access to quality education, and alternative models like non-formal education. Flexible schooling and combining work with education are discussed as strategies for child labour reduction, especially in marginalized areas.	<p>What are the main barriers preventing children from attending and completing school in your context?</p> <p>How can education systems be improved to better serve at-risk children and families? Who are the key stakeholders?</p> <p>What role should CSOs play in establishing adaptive and responsive models to facilitate the access of education for school children?</p>
Mental Healthcare and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS) for Children and Families based on Psychosocial support implementation across the four contexts	The area of inquiry seeks to assess the availability and effectiveness of mental healthcare and psychosocial support (MHPSS) for children affected by child labour. Child labour often causes trauma and mental health issues, yet these needs have been historically overlooked. The session will explore MHPSS models, challenges, and recommendations from various Global South contexts to enhance interventions.	<p>How accessible are MHPSS services in the target countries, and what are the gaps?</p> <p>What models have worked in your contexts and what are the challenges for more holistic approaches on MHPSS?</p>
Climate Change, Agriculture, and Child Labour	The focus is to examine climate change's impact on agricultural practices and its link to child labour in rural communities. With over 70% of child labour in agriculture, climate shocks exacerbate food insecurity and income loss, increasing child labour risks. The discussion aims to inform policy recommendations and identify research gaps for future interventions.	<p>How is climate change affecting agricultural livelihoods in the target countries?</p> <p>What is the relationship between climate-induced agricultural changes and the prevalence of child labour?</p> <p>How can climate adaptation strategies help reduce child labour in these regions?</p>
Assessment of Child Protection Models	By examining the various child protection models adopted by consortium members to safeguard children from abuse and exploitation. By sharing successful experiences and addressing shortcomings, the session aims to inform potential model adoption, evaluate government responses, and enhance multisectoral interventions that support children's well-being and family stability.	<p>What models have been adopted within this project or other similar projects for the protection of children and what is our assessment of the implementation of these models?</p> <p>How are national governments and relevant stakeholders engaging with these models?</p>

1. Social Protection Policies

Objective

The aim is to understand the effectiveness and gaps in existing social protection policies in reducing child labour in the target countries.

Background information

In our internal reflection session, we would like to look closely at the question of social protection and case management through the lens of synergies. Putting in place inclusive and adaptable social protection systems are key to reducing and eliminating child labour. The pervasiveness of poverty meant that there is an insufficient social protection coverage, given the fact that the implementation of social protection system is aligned with income levels. According to the ILO/UNICEF, child-specific social protection spending is too low, which has direct implications on child labour. COVID-19 has exacerbated the situation for families and children where support for families in low-income countries was limited. This was evident in all our working contexts where millions of children were confronting child labour in the absence of viable economic alternatives for the families.

Despite the promises of social protection, it remains unclear the extent to which social protection will reduce child labour. Implementation of social protection mechanisms for the benefit of children and families need to be holistic, in the sense that they incorporate education and healthcare services, along with child-specific needs. As such, the needs of children cannot be separated from the wellbeing, stability and resilience of the family. This is particularly relevant since the existing social protection mechanisms have focused on employment protection schemes, excluding informal and precarious forms of labour that are widespread in our working contexts. While it is shown that social protection schemes can in some cases allow for cash benefits to support children's education, this cash can also be utilised for other areas deemed necessary by the family, like raising cattle or farming, which can in turn contribute to child labour.

Against this background and given your long-standing experiences, we are interested in kicking-off our discussions by building on your contextual knowledge and experience. The aim of the discussion is to find areas of synergies with other projects implemented by partners/ members of the JF alliance/ funded by the EU and synergies with other players in other sectors, especially non-traditional ones (media, cultural, religious, private sector, etc.). More specifically, we would kindly ask you to share 7-minute impulses responding to our two main questions around the issue of social protection in particular case management based on findings from our project, your organisation's tools and approaches, and overall observations on trends and policies in your contexts.

By looking at social protection and case management in relation to child labour, feel free to refer to any or several of those mechanisms: Cash Transfer Programs, Child and Family Support Services, Health and Nutrition Programs, Education Access and Support, Social Insurance Programs, Child Protection Services, Housing and Shelter Programs, Mental Health and Psychosocial Support, Protection mechanisms from Child Labour and Disaster Response and Emergency Assistance.



Key Questions

What are the current social protection policies targeting child labour, and how effective are they?

What are the barriers to accessing social protection programs for vulnerable families?

Learning Activity

Internal webinar with members of the consortium

Expected Outcomes

Learning brief

Videos with main presentations

Potentially, a policy brief depending on the interest and engagement of the consortium members.

2. Education and Social Mobility

Objective

Explore the role of education in promoting social mobility and reducing child labour in the target regions.

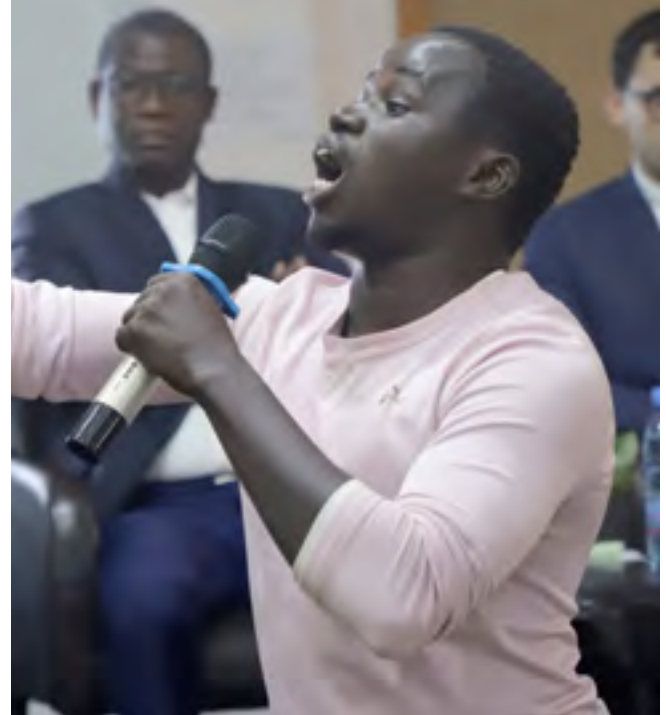
Background information

The aim of this webinar is to explore the relationship between education, child labour, and social mobility in our working contexts. By asking whether education remains the pathway to upward social mobility, we look at structural inequalities, the lack of access to quality education and models for alternative education. While the importance of education cannot be undermined, do schools today remain the means for social mobility or should we be also looking at alternative educational models?

Some studies argue that there is a need for a holistic approach to education that incorporates schooling in conjunction with children's participation in forms of labour. Through combining work and school attendance, this gradual policy towards child labour could be necessary in the context of subsistence economies of the LDCs, whereby the initial interventions aim at making the combination of work and school attendance possible rather than eliminating immediately child labour. This is achieved through a flexible school system that acknowledges the peak demand seasons where agricultural labour is necessary.

Additionally, in areas where access to formal education is hampered, non-formal education can often play a key role in meeting the needs to children in marginalised regions that are underserved. The non-traditional forms of education can often complement the formal educational system allowing children access to education where they would otherwise be excluded or to assist former child labourers to arrive at the same level as their peers who were part of formal education.

The adaptability and complementary is adopted in response to the fact that, in reality, the experiences of children in attaining education are often non-linear or continuous and require dynamic responses. Between combining working and school education, dropping out and reintegration, and offering flexible schooling arrangements or offering alternatives to formal education, we are keen on exchanging and learning on what has worked in our contexts and ways in which some models have been adopted to respond to the more complex realities of our work. In our exchange, it would also be important to assign closer attention to gender disparities, where girls are often in a disadvantaged position and face greater barriers to accessing education.



Key Questions

What are the main barriers preventing children from attending and completing school in your context?

How can education systems be improved to better serve at-risk children and families? Who are the key stakeholders?

What role should CSOs play in establishing adaptive and responsive models to facilitate the access of education for school children?

Learning Activity

Webinar with members of the consortium and partners

Expected Outcomes

A learning brief that offers a detailed understanding of the barriers to education for vulnerable children and potentially, documents the development of scalable education models that can be implemented in similar contexts. Bottom-up strategic recommendations for enhancing educational programs and policies will also be part of the brief.

3. Mental Healthcare and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS) for Children and Families

Objective

Assess the availability and effectiveness of mental healthcare and psychosocial support (MHPSS) for children and families affected by child labour.



Background information

Experiences of child labour are often harsh, violent and at times traumatic for children, who are uprooted from the safe environments, deprived from play and nurture and in some cases face sexual exploitations. Attention is often assigned to physical harms of child labour, but until recent years, mental health needs were unaddressed.

Studies in other parts of the Global South have adopted a holistic approach to the analysis of child wellbeing by accounting for levels of happiness, hope, emotional wellbeing, self-efficacy, fear and stress to determine the differences between working and nonworking siblings. Though this approach, they document a robust, large and negative association between child labour and most measures of psychosocial wellbeing.

Other studies have looked at the long-term implications of child labour on mental health where they have low self-confidence, the likelihood to engage in at-risk behaviours, and endure anxiety or depression disorders. Realities of precarity and intergenerational poverty become part of the psyche and shape perceptions of hope and the future for many children and their families.

Civil Society and NGO interventions have in recent years developed not just an awareness, but also tools and models to incorporate MHPSS as part of their interventions on eradicating child labour.

Those are often adopted in response to needs assessment in the working contexts and based on existing structures of support within the healthcare system. The aim of this

webinar is to learn more about MHPSS models that have been adopted in other contexts of the Global South in engaging with child labourers.

The consortium members will also reflect on the models and approaches they have adopted in their contexts, where lessons learnt can be documented, exchange on challenges where other members have suggestions and put forward recommendations for future projects.

Key Questions

How accessible are MHPSS services in the target countries, and what are the gaps?

What models have worked in your contexts and what are the challenges for more holistic approaches on MHPSS?

Learning Activity

Webinar with external speakers and members of the consortium.

Expected Outcomes

A mapping of already existing MHPSS interventions planned as part of this project.

A learning brief with lessons learnt, existing challenges, and recommendations for scaling up MHPSS services in affected areas.

4. Climate Change, Agriculture, and Child Labour

Objective

Examine the impact of climate change on agricultural practices and its link to child labour in rural communities.

Background information

Our working contexts have oscillated between flooding and dry seasons, witnessed tropical cyclones, and experienced changes in rainfall patterns, this has had an impact on migration, food security, and disruptions in the main means of subsistence for families, namely agriculture. According to the ILO, over 70% of child labour occurs in the agricultural sector, which is also the same sector that is most vulnerable to shocks resulting directly from climate change. Therefore, it is important to deepen our understanding of impacts of climatic shocks and child labour to improve our programmatic interventions and our responsiveness to rapidly changing realities. Particularly, when looking at climate change as a pull factor for child labour in the agricultural sector in the four countries. In this context, it is also imperative to assess the impact of social protection policies that are in place to absorb this shock for children and families.

The Food and Agriculture Organisation of the UN, short-term climatic shocks and long-term effects of climate change can potentially lead to increases in child labour. During slow onset droughts and heat waves, for example, a greater amount of water evaporates, leaving less for agriculture, drinking, hygiene and industry. At the household level, this can lead to a loss of income, food insecurity and malnutrition. Those realities further exacerbate the already precarious situations of families in poorer households.

Therefore, the aim of this webinar is to assess the extent to which climate change as a pull factor for climate change has been incorporated into our programming, examine some of the assessments conducted in some contexts within this project for example in Malawi, and produce both policy implications and recommendations to national governments, the EU and international civil society organisations that work on climate change. Those interventions will be driven from our working contexts and be used to inform more global discussions on climate change and child labour.

Additionally, and given the rapidly changing realities, there are many research gaps that we can identify as members of a consortium with extensive field experience and based on our close collaboration with local partners. Therefore, we can utilise this learning exchange as an opportunity to put forward recommendations for future research to be undertaken by researchers within the framework of future projects.



Key Questions

How is climate change affecting agricultural livelihoods in the target countries?

What is the relationship between climate-induced agricultural changes and the prevalence of child labour?

How can climate adaptation strategies help reduce child labour in these regions?

Learning Activity

A webinar with external speakers and members of the consortium.

Expected Outcomes

A learning brief with recommendations and videos from the interventions that can be circulated widely.

5. Assessment of Child Protection Models

Objective

Examine the adopted child protection models used by organisations that are members of the consortium.



Background information

In our work, we adopt different child protection models based on previous experiences that have proven successful or we test new models that have worked in other contexts. These models aim at safeguarding children from abuse, exploitation, violence, and neglect.

Different organisations have also led the implementation of different models that are either rooted in international frameworks or are community-based within the framework of this project, such as the SCREAM model of the ILO. These models are key to protect boys and girls, provide wellbeing support and strengthen families, respond to specific needs that are facing children like trafficking, displacement or exploitation, and facilitate multisectoral interventions.

The aim of this learning activity is to inform ourselves of the models that have worked as part of this project for potential adoption in our contexts of this project, exchange on the shortcomings of existing models and mitigation plans and assess the engagement or response of national

Key Questions

What models have been adopted within this project or other similar projects for the protection of children and what is our assessment of the implementation of these models?

How are national governments and relevant stakeholders engaging with these models?

Learning Activity

A webinar with members of the consortium and partners.

Expected Outcomes

A learning brief with documentation of the different models and recommendations.

Videos from the interventions that can be widely circulated.



Funded by
the European Union



JOINING FORCES

For All Children

This publication was produced with the financial support of the European Union. Its contents are the sole responsibility of Joining Forces and do not necessarily reflect the views of the European Union.

