



LEGACY BRIEFS

Joining Forces for Food Security & Child Protection in Emergencies



Introduction

In February 2026, colleagues from the Joining Forces for Food Security and Child Protection in Emergencies (JF-FS&CPiE) project gathered in Dar es Salaam for the Global Learning Workshop under the theme “Looking Back while Moving Forward: Learnings & Legacy from JF-FS&CPiE.” Project managers, child protection specialists, and the global project management team, including technical specialists, came together to reflect on more than 3.5 years of implementation, reconnect across teams and countries, and celebrate the achievements, mutual learnings, and impact of the project. During the five days, participants explored not only what the project achieved, but also what it will leave behind for future programming and partnerships through interactive sessions and discussions.

At the centre of these discussions was the concept of legacy. In simple terms, legacy is what continues to exist, influence, or function after the project ends — in people, organisations, partnerships, and systems. Legacy is not just what we delivered, but what keeps living on because we worked together. Most importantly, legacy is the change that stays.

An initial key reflection was the “Past Roadmap” exercise, where participants collectively revisited the project journey over the preceding 3.5 years. The session highlighted important lessons on adaptation, collaboration, and coordination and laid the foundation for the development of the legacy briefs.

Eight thematic areas were identified for the legacy briefs. Through SWOT analyses, teams reflected on strengths, opportunities, weaknesses, and threats related to project

implementation, while identifying best practices, challenges, lessons learned, and recommendations for future programming. Building on these discussions, the teams drafted practical legacy learning briefs, capturing actionable and forward-looking insights on:

- What worked well
- What did not work
- Key lessons and forward-looking recommendations
- Field examples & quotes

The draft briefs were reviewed by peer groups and presented in plenary sessions for collective feedback and validation, strengthening collective ownership and learning. The result is a set of eight legacy briefs, consolidated into a global legacy report, that reflect the shared experiences, expertise, practical learnings and perspectives of colleagues across the consortium.

The objective of this legacy report is to preserve the learning generated throughout the JF-FS&CPiE project and to support future programming, coordination, and collaboration efforts. They are intended not only as a record of what was achieved, but as a practical resource for teams, organisations, and partners seeking to build on these experiences in future humanitarian and development work.

Kiani Raets.

Global Project Manager JF&FS CPiE

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Project Management



What worked well?

Mechanisms:

- The Global Coordination Team is dedicated exclusively to the project and is always available to provide support when needed.
- Ongoing support is provided to Implementing Partners through regular training sessions, refresher courses, and one-on-one support.
- Various committees are in place, each with a specific mandate and decision-making procedures outlined in their Terms of Reference. These include the Consortium Steering Committee, the Project Management Steering Committee, and the Technical Project Committee, which all meet regularly. Additionally, there are Monthly Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability, and Learning meetings and Quarterly Communications Meetings, bringing together relevant colleagues.
- Early planning at the global level is critical. Having a timeline that covers the entire project duration, with key events, milestones, and deadlines in place from the very start, is helpful. This allows for detailed and timely planning at the Implementing Partner level.
- A Global Learning Workshop, which brings key staff together for in-person exchanges and learning opportunities, has proven highly effective for strengthening capacity, improving project quality, motivating staff, and ensuring alignment across teams.
- It is essential to have a single, centralized platform for information sharing and knowledge management (e.g., SharePoint), where all project information and documents can be uploaded and easily accessed by all team members.
- Well-established communication lines and regulated email protocols between different groups of colleagues are essential for maintaining efficiency and accountability.
- Institutional ownership is increased through comprehensive coordination among stakeholders at all levels, including government agencies. Stakeholders should be involved when relevant throughout the project's activities, including during the implementation of specific activities and training sessions.
- Staff retention and knowledge management should be prioritized. To prevent the loss of valuable knowledge when staff leave, it is important to ensure comprehensive knowledge management. In this particular case, it was extremely valuable to have learnings from the first project phase feed into the second phase, improving project dynamics and implementation.
- Despite the global structure of the project (e.g., a global logical framework with activities standardized for all partners), there is flexibility at the Implementing Partner/local level, allowing for adaptations based on the specific context.



Tools, frameworks, processes:

- A Detailed Implementation Plan is a useful tool, especially the risk assessment and management plan, which is meant for internal Project Management purposes and does not need to be submitted or controlled at the global level.
- Activity lists serve as the key tool for ongoing monitoring on a quarterly basis. The checklist, which supports the proper use of the activity list, along with streamlined tools for data collection—including Post-Distribution Monitoring tools—are essential for unified data collection and analysis across the consortium.
- All Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability, and Learning (MEAL) tools are standardized across the entire consortium, including for baseline, midterm, and endline assessments.
- A standardized narrative template, with clear reporting procedures and timelines, is essential for collecting similar information from all partners in a timely manner. The importance of adhering to these templates and agreed-upon processes should be communicated clearly to new staff.
- The first Global Learning Workshop resulted in four Minimum Standards—Gender & Inclusion, Safeguarding and Protection from Sexual Harassment, Exploitation, and Abuse (PSHEA), Communication and Visibility, and Child-Friendly Feedback Mechanisms. This workshop brought all partners together to align on these priorities, streamline processes, and set timelines, marking an important turning point and innovation within the consortium. It is critical to allocate budget for these Minimum Standards during the project design phase to ensure they receive adequate attention during implementation.
- Action plans, supported by relevant templates, were introduced to monitor key transversal areas such as safeguarding, gender and inclusion, and environmental considerations.
- Joint learning visits conducted in-country have been highly valuable for fostering learning, exchange, and strengthening collaboration among teams, which in turn improves project implementation.

Innovation

- The joint learning experiences, including related visits, that have emerged from this consortium should be used beyond the current project to benefit future initiatives.
- Staff wellbeing should be a central focus throughout the entire project and should be integrated into every project cycle phase.
- The integration of Child Protection and Food Security is a major pillar of this project, emphasizing the importance of intersectoral approaches.
- Strengthened integration among partners in-country has led to improved collaboration and coordination, which has contributed to valuable learning and better project implementation. This was one of the key opportunities provided by the consortium structure.
- The socio-ecological model, which was prioritized during the design phase, has proven effective in practice.
- Although the project's environmental considerations were relatively limited, they were well-received by governments and donors. However, there is a need to allocate budget for environmental actions during the design phase to ensure their successful implementation.

What didn't work well?

- Communication between the different layers and teams within the project can be challenging. Strengthened and standardized communication between consortium-level project managers and in-country project managers is essential, with communication methods adapted to needs and context, such as monthly update calls or joint country-level updates involving both partners and consortium-level managers.
- Environmental action plans were introduced after the project design phase, which meant they were not budgeted for and limited the ability to strengthen this component. It is therefore essential to allocate budget for environmental actions and any cross-cutting themes during the design phase.
- Joint learning visits involving project management and technical staff should be organized across different countries within the consortium. However, due to limited budget and time, this was not possible, highlighting the need for better planning and resource allocation.
- It is recommended to increase joint advocacy efforts both at country level and at higher levels, including engagement with the Joining Forces platform or secretariat.
- In countries where a Joining Forces platform exists, there is an opportunity to improve communication between project staff and the country-level platform. Project managers should participate in regular meetings to strengthen coordination and information sharing.
- The integration of Child Protection and Food Security remains challenging; however, it also presents opportunities for learning and capacity strengthening among partners.
- Bureaucracy and slow approval processes in some countries can create delays and should be addressed through early planning and better organization.
- Country office-level approval procedures, such as procurement processes, are not always adapted to humanitarian contexts. They are often designed for development settings and involve slower processes, which can be challenging for emergency projects. These procedures should be reviewed and adjusted accordingly.
- The quality of donor reporting varies between partners, even after significant capacity strengthening and the introduction of standardized tools and processes.
- Staff turnover and the long adaptation and onboarding period required due to the complexity of the project present ongoing challenges.
- It would be beneficial to include a contingency budget line in all projects, given the humanitarian and emergency nature of the work, which often requires last-minute changes and flexibility.
- It is essential to meaningfully involve all local partners, ensuring that their capacity strengthening needs are addressed and that their equal participation in the project is fully supported.

Recommendations

1. A minimum standard for consortium project management should be developed, including a strong coordination structure composed of a global coordination team and project committees. This should also include standardized tools, templates, and processes, such as clear communication procedures, knowledge management systems, and detailed planning from the very beginning of the project.
2. Knowledge management procedures, including proper documentation and secure document storage, are essential to prevent the loss of important information in cases of staff turnover.
3. Staff retention should be prioritized, including a strong focus on staff care and wellbeing.
4. Country office-level approval procedures, such as procurement processes, should be adapted to humanitarian contexts to enable faster action, as they are often currently designed for development projects. In addition, disaster preparedness and anticipatory action should be strengthened, and contingency budget lines should be included in all humanitarian project budgets.
5. The value of mutual learning and joint capacity strengthening within a consortium is significant. Working together in this way strengthens the capacity of all individual partners and improves the overall quality of project implementation.
6. Country-level joint coordination, through regular meetings and joint learning visits, is essential and should begin from the first day of the project. Bringing staff together in person at the start of the project is particularly important for improving collaboration and coordination.
7. Budget should be allocated for environmental and climate-related actions, as well as for gender and inclusion, safeguarding, communication and visibility, and all minimum standards. These elements should be planned and included during the project design phase.
8. An intersectoral and integrated approach should be applied whenever possible, such as integrating Child Protection and Food Security, to improve the overall effectiveness and impact of the project.



Field Examples & Voices



“Effective project management in a consortium setting requires more than just structures and tools; it depends on clear coordination, strong communication, and shared ownership across all partners. From the outset, investing in joint planning, standardized processes, and knowledge management systems allows teams to work more efficiently and adapt to challenges as they arise. Our experience shows that when partners learn from each other, coordinate closely at country level, and are supported by flexible systems adapted to humanitarian contexts, the overall quality and impact of implementation is significantly strengthened.”

Global Project Manager, Plan International.



Finance & Compliance



What worked well?

- Strong planning, structure, and financial forecasting
 - The programme used a clear financial structure, supported by long-term planning. Regular cashflow forecasts were conducted to anticipate upcoming financial needs. This approach ensured that funds were used in a predictable and organised manner.
 - It reduced the risk of liquidity problems by identifying potential funding gaps early. It also supported timely decision-making and ensured that spending was aligned with the donor's disbursement deadlines.
 - Pre-defined funding request mechanism
 - Funding requests were scheduled in advance rather than being submitted on an ad hoc basis. Requests were aligned with forecasted expenditure and expected implementation timelines.
 - This allowed funds to be transferred smoothly across consortium partners. It reduced delays in implementation by ensuring that partners received funding on time. It also supported compliance with donor timelines and reporting requirements.
 - Regular expenditure monitoring and burn rate tracking
 - Expenditure was monitored regularly through monthly or routine financial updates. Spending levels were compared against planned budgets to track the burn rate.
 - This helped identify early signs of under-spending or over-spending. Corrective action could then be taken before deadlines were reached. This reduced the risk of funds remaining unused at the end of the project period.
 - Flexibility through Memorandum of Understanding clauses
 - The Memorandum of Understanding included a clause allowing budget reallocation between consortium members. This created flexibility to shift resources based on changing needs and implementation realities.
 - It ensured that funding could be redirected to partners who were able to spend it effectively. This supported efficient resource allocation and helped ensure full use of the available budget.
 - Centralised communication with the donor
 - One designated focal point was responsible for communication with the donor. This ensured that all donor communication was coordinated and consistent.
 - It reduced the risk of conflicting messages or misunderstandings between consortium members and the donor. It also improved the speed and efficiency of approvals, feedback, and clarifications.
 - Proactive approvals for pre-financing
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- The consortium requested donor approval in advance to allow pre-financing between funding tranches.
- Finance and compliance topics were included as part of regular coordination meetings.
- This made it possible to continue project activities while waiting for the next disbursement. It reduced the risk of implementation delays linked to funding gaps. This ensured continuity and avoided interruptions to programme delivery.
- This strengthened shared accountability across consortium partners. It ensured that all partners had a clear understanding of donor financial rules and requirements. It reduced compliance risks by addressing challenges early and improving internal coordination.
- Controlled approach to budget modifications
- Managed over-expenditure strategy for full utilisation
- The consortium limited budget modifications to one major revision during the two-year project period.
- The consortium agreed to allow controlled over-expenditure within a defined and approved threshold.
- This reduced administrative workload for both partners and the donor. It helped maintain financial stability and avoid frequent changes to the budget structure. It also ensured that spending remained aligned with approved objectives and planned activities.
- This approach helped reduce the risk of under-spending caused by exchange rate fluctuations or implementation delays. It ensured that donor funds were used as fully as possible while still remaining within acceptable financial limits. This supported maximum utilisation of the budget and reduced the likelihood of returning unspent funds.
- Integration of finance and compliance in coordination platforms

What didn't worked well?

- Delayed initiation of budget modification
- The budget modification process was launched late in the project implementation period.
- Although the submission in October had been planned, the timing created operational challenges. The late submission did not allow enough time for the donor to review and approve the proposed changes.
- This limited the ability of partners to adjust implementation plans before key spending deadlines. As a result, the budget modification process created delays and reduced flexibility during the final phase of implementation.
- Escalation of organisation-specific policy questions to the Global Coordination Team
- Some questions related to internal organisational policies were raised with the Global Coordination Team.
- This led to delays because the guidance provided was not always aligned with the individual rules and frameworks of each organisation.
- In several cases, the Global Coordination Team could not provide a clear decision and advised partners to consult their own internal policies instead.
- This resulted in inconsistent guidance across consortium members. It also slowed decision-making and reduced efficiency in resolving operational and compliance-related issues.



Recommendations

- 1. Strengthen Structured Financial Coordination Mechanisms:** The consortium should assess the need for regular consortium-wide finance meetings, for example on a quarterly basis, including participation from donor-aligned finance representatives such as German finance focal points, in order to strengthen alignment, identify issues early, and ensure consistent interpretation of donor requirements.
- 2. Adopt Risk-Based Oversight and Follow-Up Mechanisms:** The consortium should institutionalize a risk-based approach to internal audit follow-up by prioritizing implementing partners with significant findings for targeted spot checks and enhanced monitoring to strengthen accountability and compliance.
- 3. Ensure Adequate Resourcing of Finance Functions:** The consortium should ensure adequate resourcing of finance functions by fully budgeting key finance personnel, potentially up to a 100% allocation, to provide sufficient capacity for financial management and reporting as well as cross-functional activities such as peer internal compliance reviews and partner capacity strengthening.
- 4. Plan for Post-Project Financial Reporting and Close-Out Requirements:** The consortium should include provisions in consortium agreements, such as Memorandums of Understanding, to secure funding for Global Coordination Team roles beyond the project implementation period in order to ensure adequate support for final reporting and project closure processes.
- 5. Incorporate Start-Up Delays into Budget Planning:** The consortium should recognize and proactively account for implementation delays during the first year by adjusting the annual budget split and expenditure projections to ensure realistic spending rates, reduce the risk of early under-spending, and avoid excessive pressure to accelerate spending in later periods.
- 6. Maintain Clear and Balanced Communication Channels:** The consortium should promote direct and transparent communication between global finance functions and implementing partner finance teams while maintaining clear accountability lines with donor-facing entities such as German consortium members to avoid misalignment and ensure compliance.
- 7. Standardize Internal Processes for Donor Approval Requests:** The consortium should develop and adopt standardized internal templates and checklists for changes requiring donor approval, including budget reallocations, creation of new budget lines, and updates to beneficiary numbers, in order to streamline internal review processes and reduce delays prior to submission to the donor.
- 8. Integrate Contingency Planning into Budget Planning:** The consortium should integrate contingency planning into budget planning by including, where permitted by donor regulations, a centrally managed contingency budget at Global Coordination Team level to provide flexibility for responding to unforeseen needs without requiring frequent formal budget modifications.

Field Examples & Voices



In Ethiopia, the devaluation of the Ethiopian Birr in September 2024 led to a sharp increase in market prices and the cancellation of several supplier contracts, creating significant implementation challenges. In response, the Implementing Partner initiated a budget modification and leveraged savings from other budget lines to reallocate resources towards priority interventions. This enabled implementing partners to scale up the number of beneficiaries receiving cash voucher assistance, aligning with increased needs on the ground and responding to government priorities.

Field example from Ethiopia.

“The willingness of partners to reallocate budgets at the end of the phase 1 reflects a strong spirit of collaboration and commitment to achieving collective results.”

Global Finance Coordinator, Plan International



MEAL



What worked well?

- A strong team facilitated effective coordination at both global and national levels.
- Regular meetings enabled the global MEAL team to identify challenges faced by national MEAL teams, find solutions, improve MEAL processes, and ensure real-time monitoring of project progress and indicators.
- Effective monitoring tools, particularly the Activity List, significantly facilitated the drafting of narrative reports. The tool clearly highlights activities that were not implemented.
- A shared communication channel where documents were posted and accessible to all partners strengthened coordination and transparency. However, it required consistent updates and alignment to ensure all teams progressed at the same pace.
- Strong coordination among consortium members at country level, with tools adapted to the local context, contributed to the successful implementation of baseline studies and provided clear operational guidance.
- Frequent monitoring activities, such as post-distribution monitoring (PDM) and other tools, supported the identification and analysis of vulnerability criteria.
- Global-level coordination and reflection workshops allowed discussions on analysed and non-analysed activities, the Gender Marker, and MEAL findings. Staff, project participants, and community members actively participated in these workshops.
- Feedback mechanisms were a critical component for information sharing and accountability. These mechanisms were adapted to the local context, including the establishment of complaints and feedback committees.
- Different feedback channels, each with its strengths and limitations, were tested with communities to identify the most effective approaches.
- Collected data was properly analysed and used to adjust activities in line with project participants' needs.
- Examples: inclusion of (dignity) kits for boys and not only girls; adaptation of dignity and hygiene kits based on participants' needs; use of PDM results to measure post-distribution satisfaction and address complaints; integration of children's feedback regarding the lack of snacks in CFSs, which was addressed in Phase 2 of the project.
- The involvement of external consulting firms in conducting evaluations ensured impartiality and reduced bias. The global consultant coordinated the recruitment of consultancy firms in close collaboration with the MEAL teams of partner organizations.

What didn't worked well?

- High staff mobility and turnover negatively affected continuity and made the onboarding process challenging.
- High mobility of project participants limited their availability and made it difficult to conduct planned PDMs and endline assessments.



Recommendations



1. Maintain, where possible, a stable team throughout the project cycle to ensure continuity, quality of implementation, and stronger ownership of MEAL tools. Make sure MEAL colleagues have a level of effort that is high enough/sufficient for the project.
2. Build on existing tools and continuously improve the Activity List (AL) by adapting it to unaddressed needs and lessons learned during implementation.
3. Leverage good practices and lessons learned from previous projects by replicating effective systems already in place and reactivating regular monthly MEAL meetings.
4. Organize more meetings and/or workshops to share good practices across the consortium, fostering collective learning and harmonized approaches.
5. Encourage each partner organization to systematically document good practices to support knowledge sharing and replication in future programming.
6. Develop and deploy structured tools for enumerator training to strengthen data collection quality and ensure methodological consistency.
7. Maintain and strengthen collaboration with Gender and Inclusion teams, particularly to better integrate equity considerations and adapt interventions (e.g. adjustments to dignity kits).

Field Examples & Voices



“In Central African Republic, Child-Friendly Safe Spaces teams organize focus group discussions where children provide feedback on the materials they receive, allowing them to be adapted and modified.”

Child Protection Specialist, Plan International, Central African Republic.

“Monitoring is as important as the actual implementation of activities.”

Project Manager, Terre des Hommes, Burkina Faso.





Child Protection, Child Participation & Child-Friendly Feedback Mechanisms



What worked well?

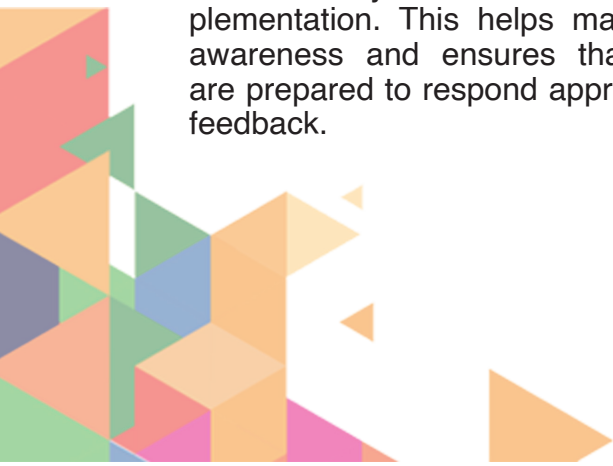
- The designation of Child-Friendly Feedback Mechanism focal points from Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability, and Learning staff for each Implementing Partner strengthened feedback accountability and children's participation because it enabled systematic tracking, analysis, and use of feedback to inform program improvements and ensure actions were implemented in a timely manner.
- Capacity building and structured information sharing during Technical Project Committee meetings enhanced community awareness and improved the quality of responses, as Implementing Partners gained a clearer understanding of how to engage with feedback mechanisms and child participation processes.
- The development and use of Child-Friendly Feedback Mechanism scorecard tools helped identify gaps and improve performance because they provided structured benchmarks to assess accessibility, responsiveness, and inclusiveness of feedback systems, which contributed to improvements in both Child-Friendly Feedback Mechanisms and Child Protection.
- Mobile and outreach strategies implemented by Implementing Partners proved essential for reaching children in remote areas and those with limited mobility, thereby increasing the inclusivity of Child-Friendly Feedback Mechanisms and participation mechanisms.
- The establishment of diverse and accessible Child-Friendly Feedback Mechanisms encouraged the reporting of concerns and feedback, which improved access to support for affected individuals.
- The establishment of safe participation platforms, such as child clubs, forums, and children's parliaments, strengthened children's ability to actively participate, express their views, advocate, and engage with stakeholders, which enhanced their agency and visibility.
- The application and alignment of minimum standards for child participation helped ensure that child participation and Child-Friendly Feedback Mechanisms were embedded across all aspects of project implementation within the consortium.
- The continuous provision of technical support to local Implementing Partners contributed to sustainable improvements in their Child-Friendly Feedback Mechanisms and child participation systems and practices.

What didn't work well?

- The lack of a Child-Friendly Feedback Mechanism tracking system from some Implementing Partners contributed to inconsistent follow-up and weak monitoring of feedback, which reduced the effectiveness of the feedback mechanisms. As reported issues were not always addressed on time, this undermined trust and participation in the process.
- The established Child-Friendly Feedback Mechanisms across all the Implementing Partners limited the inclusion of children with disabilities. The gaps were mainly seen in the accessibility and inclusivity of both the feedback mechanisms and participation strategies, preventing full engagement of all children.
- Although multiple Child-Friendly Feedback Mechanisms were set up, community awareness, understanding, and trust in these mechanisms developed gradually. This led to initially low levels of feedback from children and the community, as well as limited use of the platforms in the early stages.
- Cultural norms, gender dynamics, and stigma around child protection issues in some communities limited open dialogue and participation, particularly for girls and marginalized children. These factors made it more challenging for them to safely share feedback and engage in Child-Friendly Feedback Mechanisms and child participation processes.
- The lack of dedicated Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability, and Learning focal points for Child-Friendly Feedback Mechanism and Child Protection processes in some Implementing Partners weakened accountability and learning. As a result, feedback data was not systematically collected, analyzed, or used to inform decision-making and program adaptations.
- The development and dissemination of the Child-Friendly Feedback Mechanism scorecard were delayed, meaning that opportunities to identify gaps, standardize feedback quality, and guide timely improvements in the feedback mechanisms and child participation systems were not fully realized during the initial phases of implementation, especially with local partners.
- In several project locations, Child Friendly Feedback Mechanisms were initially underutilized due to limited awareness, weak follow-up, and unclear accountability structures, resulting in low child participation and inconsistent use of feedback. To address this, CFFM scorecards were mainstreamed into feedback processes, focal points were designated to track accountability as a result, child participation increased the quality and use of feedback improved.

Recommendations

1. Integrate Child-Friendly Feedback Mechanism scorecard tools from the start of program implementation, with planned periodic reviews (baseline, midline, and endline), to assess performance, identify gaps, and adapt feedback channels based on children's preferences and accessibility needs.
2. Design and implement diverse and inclusive Child-Friendly Feedback Mechanism approaches, ensuring that children with disabilities and other marginalized groups can safely and meaningfully participate and provide feedback.
3. Entrust the management of Child-Friendly Feedback Mechanisms to local partners from the outset of implementation, ensuring they are equipped to maintain these mechanisms and Child Protection systems independently after the support from Implementing Partners ends.
4. Strengthen and formalize child participation structures and platforms, such as children's parliaments, school-based committees, and camp-based focal points, to enhance sustainability and ensure long-term ownership.
5. Continuous capacity strengthening through regular training, refresher sessions, and technical support is necessary for effective Child Protection and Child-Friendly Feedback Mechanism implementation. This helps maintain staff awareness and ensures that partners are prepared to respond appropriately to feedback.
6. Develop a coordinated system or dashboard for documenting and tracking feedback, making it easier to monitor and respond to the input provided by children and communities.
7. Use minimum standards, as they help shape, align, and strengthen the Child Protection and Child-Friendly Feedback Mechanism components of the program.
8. Integrating Child Participation and Child-Friendly Feedback Mechanism requirements during the design and proposal phase, by including dedicated budget lines for establishment, clear logical framework indicators, and well-defined roles and responsibilities, ensures that these systems are fully embedded and consistently implemented throughout the program.
9. Designate specific focal points for Child-Friendly Feedback Mechanism and Child Participation within partner organizations to support institutional ownership and accountability. This ensures that child feedback mechanisms and participation processes are properly coordinated, prioritized, and sustained.



Field Examples & Voices

“Feedback mechanism should be strengthened through local capacities like government stakeholders”

Child Protection Specialist, Plan International, Bangladesh.

“Child participation structures have been a major success; however, they must be institutionalized within government systems to ensure sustainability.”

Child Protection Specialist, Save the Children, South Sudan.





Safeguarding & PSHEA



What worked well?

- Early agreement on safeguarding roles and responsibilities among consortium partners was helpful in ensuring smooth and coordinated implementation.
- Partner self-assessments and safeguarding risk assessments were valuable tools for identifying gaps and informing targeted capacity-strengthening action plans.
- Embedding safeguarding at the project design stage, such as including dedicated budget allocation and safeguarding indicators in the logframe, helped ensure safeguarding was prioritized throughout implementation.
- Dedicated safeguarding budgets ensured timely and appropriate responses to safeguarding and SHEA incidents including support for victims and survivors when cases were reported.
- Including safeguarding indicators in project monitoring frameworks ensured accountability and made it easier to track safeguarding implementation.
- The application of safeguarding minimum standards helped ensure that safeguarding was embedded across all aspects of project implementation within the consortium.
- Close collaboration with MEAL improved the monitoring of safeguarding practices and ensured safeguarding considerations were integrated into routine monitoring activities.
- Appointing safeguarding focal points strengthened ownership and ensured safeguarding and PSHEA were prioritized.
- Regular capacity strengthening through trainings and refresher sessions helped partners maintain awareness of their safeguarding responsibilities and improves preparedness to respond to safeguarding and SHEA incidents.
- Establishing diverse and accessible CFFMs encouraged reporting of safeguarding concerns and improved access to support for affected individuals.
- Engaging and strengthening community structures to champion safeguarding and PSHEA increased community acceptance and encouraged reporting of cases.
- Providing ongoing technical support to local implementing partners contributed to sustainable improvements in their safeguarding systems and practices.
- Mainstreaming safeguarding and PSHEA across project activities helped raise awareness among stakeholders and project participants.

What didn't worked well?

- Delayed clarity on safeguarding roles and responsibilities among some partners at the beginning of the project created initial coordination challenges and required additional time to align expectations.
- While partner self-assessments and risk assessments were conducted, some partners initially lacked the capacity to fully implement the recommended actions, which slowed progress in addressing identified safeguarding gaps.
- Limited familiarity with safeguarding minimum standards among some partners meant that additional time and resources were required to ensure consistent understanding and application across the consortium.
- Although safeguarding was integrated into the project design, some partners initially struggled to implement safeguarding activities within their existing program structures.
- Coordination between safeguarding and MEAL functions was not always systematic at the start, which sometimes resulted in missed opportunities to monitor safeguarding implementation during routine MEAL activities.
- Some safeguarding focal points had competing responsibilities, which limited the time they could dedicate to fully champion safeguarding and PSHEA activities.
- Staff turnover among partners occasionally affected safeguarding continuity and required repeated orientation and training for new staff members.
- While multiple CFFMs were established, community awareness and trust in these mechanisms took time to develop, and reporting levels were initially low.
- Cultural sensitivities and stigma around safeguarding and SHEA issues in some communities made open discussions and reporting more challenging.
- Local implementing partners required sustained technical support to strengthen their safeguarding systems, and progress varied depending on their institutional capacity
- Despite efforts to mainstream safeguarding across activities, some program teams initially perceived safeguarding as an additional requirement rather than an integrated program responsibility, which affected early implementation.

Recommendations

1. Embedding safeguarding requirements at the proposal stage, including budget allocation, indicators in the log-frame, and clear roles and responsibilities helps ensure safeguarding is systematically implemented throughout the project lifecycle.
2. Initial safeguarding self-assessments and risk assessments are critical for identifying capacity gaps because they provide a strong foundation for developing targeted capacity-strengthening plans tailored to the needs of consortium and implementing partners.
3. Assigning safeguarding focal points within consortium and implementing partners helps institutionalize safeguarding and ensures that safeguarding and PSHEA are prioritized.
4. Continuous capacity strengthening (regular trainings, refresher sessions, and technical support) is necessary for effective safeguarding implementation. It helps maintain staff awareness and ensure that partners are prepared to respond appropriately to safeguarding and SHEA incidents.
5. Integrating safeguarding considerations into routine MEAL monitoring activities improves safeguarding oversight and helps track safeguarding implementation.
6. Accessible and diverse complaint and feedback mechanisms encourage reporting, increase accessibility for project participants and supports timely reporting and response to safeguarding concerns.
7. Strengthening community structures and empowering them to promote safeguarding and PSHEA improves community acceptance and increases reporting of safeguarding cases.
8. To ensure sustainability, capacity development/strengthening of local implementing partners requires ongoing guidance and mentoring.
9. Safeguarding should be championed as a cross-cutting responsibility within program implementation and mainstreamed across all programme activities instead of being seen as an additional requirement/responsibility.



Field Examples & Voices



“Over time, safeguarding became a standing agenda item in our meetings, which helped integrate it into our everyday work rather than seeing it as an additional task.”

Project Coordinator, BITA, Bangladesh.

“The regular trainings and refresher sessions helped reinforce our understanding of safeguarding and made staff more confident in how to respond if incidents occurred.”

Project Manager, SOS Children’s Villages, Central African Republic.

“Agreeing on safeguarding roles and responsibilities early in the project helped partners understand what was expected and made coordination much easier.”

Programme Manager, ChildFund, Germany.



Gender & Inclusion



What worked well?

- The early establishment of G&I Minimum Standards enabled internal reflections and strengthened commitment; and were pivotal to setting joint standards and strengthening gender and inclusion within the consortia, as well as within programme design and implementation.
- Introducing a Gender Inclusion Action Plan to operationalize the Minimum Standards, follow up on findings and recommendations from the Rapid Gender Analysis and the Gender Transformative Marker improved integration of and accountability to Gender & Inclusion.
- Combining the Rapid Gender Analysis and the Child Protection Risk Assessment strengthened the identification of specific vulnerabilities and the provision of targeted support.
- The integration of G&I into the reporting template increased the visibility, reflection and learning around G&I which resulted in enhanced project implementation and improved outcomes.
- The use of the socio-economic model as a base of project design supported the integration and mainstreaming of G&I into the project design and implementation.
- Applying the different tools and processes improved the consortia's understanding of diversity, inclusion and discrimination.
- All these agreements, tools and activities nourished a sense of ownership and togetherness in the consortium around Gender & Inclusion – this resulted into a joint commitment, rather than a donor requirement.



What didn't worked well?



- Despite the requirement of related budget in the G&I Minimum Standard, the budget allocation was often either forgotten, or insufficient.
- G&I was not systematically integrated into the project design in phase 1, resulting in the requirement for extensive capacity building.
- Some project teams did not have G&I Focal Points or dedicated G&I staff to support and ensure that G&I was continuously addressed throughout the project cycle, despite clear guidance in the G&I Minimum Standards
- There were no G&I indicators or outputs in the logical framework, which may have led to reduced accountability.
- Data on G&I was collected, however, not always analysed comprehensively and used to better inform project adaptations.
- The project duration is too short to shift gender norms and observe longer term changes regarding G&I.
- Gender based violence (GBV) is elevated across all project locations and remains difficult to report for both survivors and case managers, as GBV reporting processes and services providers often are weak and inadequate. In addition, online GBV is becoming more prevalent and project staff and partners need more guidance and support to tackle these new phenomena.
- Improvements and achievements have been made throughout the project regarding the inclusion of persons with disabilities and other marginalised groups, however, overall inclusion remains weak.
- Some topics were not foreseen in the design and in the planning stage of the project, such as Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights, which arose from working with parents and young people. As a result, staff were not adequately prepared to handle related questions and feedback from programme participants.

Recommendations

1. Establish G&I Minimum Standards from design stage onwards to ensure joint agreement and commitment from all organisations on processes and tools, as well dedicated budget. In addition, each organisation is encouraged to conduct an internal Gender Audit internally.
2. Conduct a Rapid Gender Analysis which can be combined with a Child Protection Risk Analysis, as early as possible, and use findings to ensure targeted, gender sensitive and inclusive design and implementation to improve outcomes for all programme participants
3. Apply the Gender Transformative Marker at design, midterm and end to strengthen the intervention and develop a Gender and Inclusion Action Plan for follow up and accountability.
4. Ensure G&I staff as well as G&I Focal Persons are included in the design and development of the logframe, and that there is a dedicated budget for staff costs and G&I trainings.
5. Ensure the M&E framework is gender sensitive and inclusive and ensure it embeds G&I indicators, outputs, and outcomes, where feasible.
6. Working with boys and men for gender equality and against violence against women, girls and children as is a powerful strategy, including targeted interventions such as boys'/men's/ father clubs, specific messaging and communication etc.
7. Working with Faith Leaders as well as working with volunteers from the community is a key strategy to raise awareness, get buy-in and support on G&I topics and enable behaviour change and shifting harmful gender norms.
8. To strengthen disability inclusion, consider cross-learning with other projects as well as working with local partners and more specifically organisations of persons with disabilities.
9. Integrating interventions which support and strengthen programme participants livelihoods and economic opportunities such as income generating activities, saving clubs etc. with a focus on adolescent girls, (young) women/ mothers and families is pivotal for empowerment and agency and also benefits child protection.



Field Examples & Voices



“Supporting mothers of children with disabilities with assistive devices, other forms of assistance, and seed funding for income-generating activities has enabled them to better provide for their children and improve the wellbeing of the whole household. In one project area, adolescent girls were at risk of migration due to insecurity and limited livelihood options; through the project, we provided training, sewing machines and materials so they could produce reusable sanitary pads for their communities and beyond.”

Child Protection Specialist, ChildFund, Ethiopia.

“We can see how parents value and support their daughters more than before or at the beginning of the project. We provided parenting sessions on relevant topics as well as supporting their immediate needs through saving clubs and Income Generating Activities and now we can see more girls in education and less child marriages.”

Programme Manager, Terre des Hommes, Burkina Faso.



Communication & Visibility



What worked well?

- Children's participation in communication processes. Children have actively participated in communication processes becoming agents of analysis, dialogue, and change. Through participatory communication approaches, children have identify challenges affecting their communities, research alternatives, discuss possible solutions, and contribute to the implementation of concrete actions. Their involvement strengthens both ownership and sustainability of project outcomes. For example, participation in community radio initiatives enabled children to improve their understanding of food security and child protection issues. By discussing these topics publicly and collectively, children developed stronger awareness, confidence, and communication skills while also influencing their peers, families, and wider communities. Communication for Development and participatory communication methodologies have also contributed to a deeper understanding of the links between child protection and food security. These approaches created spaces where children could express their experiences, concerns, and priorities, helping communities recognize how food insecurity can increase protection risks and how protective environments can strengthen resilience and wellbeing.

- Case studies as tools for learning and facilitation. Case studies have proven to be effective educational and facilitation tools within communities. By documenting real experiences and practical examples, they help translate project methodologies and technical approaches into understandable and relatable narratives. Through case studies, project staff can showcase behavior change

journeys, examples of good practices, and evidence of how different methodologies generate tangible impacts in people's lives. These stories make abstract concepts more accessible and allow communities to visualize concrete pathways for change.

- Coordination between global and local communication teams. Strong coordination between global and local communication and visibility teams has ensured consistency, coherence, and complementarity across communication activities and channels. Collaboration between both levels has strengthened the overall visibility of the project while allowing communication products to remain context-sensitive and locally relevant. For example, coordinated social media campaigns and regular website updates helped direct audiences toward project publications, news, case stories, and key messages. This alignment between global messaging and local implementation increased outreach, reinforced project identity, and amplified the visibility of project achievements across different audiences.

- Communication tools and capacity strengthening. The existence of communication tools — including guidelines, templates, communication models, and strategic frameworks — together with regular facilitation and capacity-building activities on communication and visibility topics, has significantly strengthened knowledge transfer within the project. These resources have helped standardize communication practices, improve the quality and consistency of outputs, and reduce communication gaps caused by staff turnover or rotation.



What didn't work well?

- Overreliance on informative, top-down awareness-raising methodologies. One of the key limitations identified in the project was the predominance of awareness-raising methodologies based on vertical and informative approaches. In many cases, communication activities focused primarily on transmitting information and measuring outputs through quantitative KPIs, such as the number of participants reached, sessions conducted, or materials distributed. This highlighted the need for more horizontal, participatory, and dialogue-based communication methodologies that prioritize interaction, co-creation, and long-term engagement over one-way information delivery.

- Limited communication capacity at country level. Another important challenge was the absence of dedicated communication staff at country level in several project contexts. Without specialized communication focal points embedded within local implementation teams, communication activities were often managed as secondary responsibilities by technical or programme staff already carrying multiple operational tasks.

This limited the ability to produce regular, high-quality, and context-adapted communication outputs, while also reducing opportunities for documentation, storytelling, visibility, and community engagement. The lack of local communication expertise also affected the consistency of messaging and the systematic integration of communication into programme implementation.

Gaps in communication competencies among field staff. The project also identified important gaps in communication competencies among field-level colleagues. While programme teams demonstrated strong technical expertise in child protection and

food security, many staff members had limited training or experience in communication methodologies, facilitation techniques, participatory approaches, storytelling, or visibility practices. The experience demonstrated the importance of investing not only in communication products and strategies, but also in continuous capacity building for field teams, ensuring that communication is understood as a transversal programme function rather than an isolated visibility component.

Information approach versus communication approach. A broader lesson learned was the tendency to prioritize an information approach instead of a communication approach. In practice, many activities focused on delivering messages, materials, or recommendations without sufficiently creating spaces for listening, feedback, participation, and collective problem-solving. This distinction proved particularly important in sensitive areas such as child protection and food security, where sustainable change depends not only on access to information but also on trust, dialogue, local ownership, and social dynamics. The project highlighted the need to strengthen communication models that facilitate exchange, participation, and community-led adaptation rather than focusing exclusively on message dissemination.

- Marketing logic versus a transversal communication framework. Another limitation was the tendency, at times, to apply communication through a marketing-oriented lens focused mainly on visibility, branding, campaigns, and external dissemination. While these dimensions are important for donor visibility and public outreach, they do not fully respond to the broader communication needs of complex programmes.

Recommendations



1. Create a network of children for better communication and dissemination
2. Having a Communication Focal Point. If this is not possible, hire a consultant.
3. The Communication Focal Point must be embedded into the Project team and in contact with the Global Communication Point.
4. Improve communication processes and skills for the project team.
5. Ensure knowledge transfer (guidelines, tools, strategy) due to the high staff rotation.
6. Follow the Participatory Communication Strategy and ensure children and communities have power to participate.
7. Ensure good communication at country level with (Embassies, Organizations, Media) so they can have a realistic vision about the country context and the project status.
8. Plan communication before implementation. Integrate Communication specialists at project planning and design.
9. Plan communication as a 360° strategy: marketing, branding and visibility, external and internal communication, communication for development, and participatory communication must be planned consistently.

Field Examples & Voices



Community radio that uses participatory communication methodology is a very powerful tool that can be harnessed to promote community development, foster social inclusion, and amplify diverse voices within our local communities in CAR”

Child Protection Specialist, Plan International, Central African Republic.

Children drama that uses participatory communication methodology fosters confidence, empathy, and lifelong skills by turning young performers into a supportive, creative family that shines under the spotlight. These productions empower youth by validating their voices and teaching them that their stories matter

Project Manager, World Vision, Bangladesh.



CP-FS Integration



What worked well?

Integrating food security within child protection activities

- Embedding food security and nutrition components within existing child protection activities proved to be an effective entry point for integration.
- Child-friendly spaces, life-skills groups, and parenting sessions were used as platforms to:
 - Raise awareness on food security and nutrition.
 - Identify vulnerable households.
 - Link families to cash or food support programmes.
- Using established child protection structures allowed programmes to reach children and caregivers efficiently while simultaneously addressing child protection risks and food insecurity.
- Examples include:
 - Integrated community awareness messaging combining food security, nutrition, and child protection was successfully implemented in contexts such as the Central African Republic, where they organised cooking demonstrations for caregivers attending Child-Friendly Spaces, promoting nutrition awareness.
 - Integrated life-skills modules for adolescents incorporating food security topics were piloted in Bangladesh.

- These approaches ensured that food security concerns were addressed through existing trusted community platforms.

Linking nutrition and food security support with case management

- Several programmes successfully linked child protection case management to food security activities.

Examples include:

- Provision of agricultural inputs and livelihood support kits for caregivers of vulnerable children.
- Mother-to-mother support groups combined with kitchen gardening in South Sudan, strengthening caregiver capacity and improving household food access.
- Strong coordination between child protection case management and food security actors enabled referrals for:
 - Food kits.
 - Livelihood activities.
 - Income-generating opportunities for caregivers.
- This helped address underlying drivers of protection risks affecting children.

Strengthening referral pathways

- Mapping services and strengthening referral pathways between child protection and food security actors significantly improved holistic support for vulnerable families.

- Key practices included:

- Updating and sharing referral pathways to include both child protection and food security services.

- Developing child-friendly referral pathway versions in some contexts.

- Conducting joint service mapping exercises with food security actors.

- In Burkina Faso, partners developed cartography and mapping tools to strengthen referrals between child protection and food security services across Joining Forces members.

- Regular service mapping exercises conducted jointly with food security partners also strengthened inter-agency collaboration and improved access to support for vulnerable households.

Cash assistance supporting protection outcomes

- Cash assistance linked to food security objectives proved particularly effective in reducing protection risks.

- Examples include:

- Cash-for-food interventions reaching more than 600 households in Bangladesh, linked to child protection objectives.

- Use of post-distribution monitoring and evaluations, notably in Ethiopia, to assess the impact of integrated approaches.

- Evidence from programme monitoring indicates that cash assistance helped families:

- Meet basic food needs.

- Reduce household stress.

- Avoid harmful coping mechanisms such as child labour or child marriage.

Development of programmatic tools

- The project supported the development and finalisation of practical guidance for integrated programming, including the Integrated Child Protection–Food Security Programming Toolbox with the Clusters and key stakeholders.

- This toolbox supports humanitarian actors to:

- Design protection-sensitive food security programmes.

- Strengthen cross-sector referral systems.

- Improve coordination between child protection and food security actors.

- Dissemination sessions were organised to promote the use of these tools among practitioners across multiple contexts.

Strong inter-agency and cross-sector collaboration

- Inter-agency collaboration was a key success factor of the project.
- Partners actively participated in coordination mechanisms, including Child Protection and Food Security clusters, for example in Ethiopia.
- Collaboration enabled:
 - Joint field visits.
 - Technical exchanges.
 - Joint training for child protection and food security staff.
 - Organisation of country-level workshops and development of Child Protection-Food Security action plans.
- These initiatives strengthened mutual understanding between sectors and helped move from parallel programming towards more coordinated responses.

Collaboration with government stakeholders

- Engagement with government actors strengthened programme implementation and sustainability.
 - Examples include:
 - Parenting sessions for vulnerable caregivers integrated with nutrition messaging in Ethiopia, implemented with government support.
 - Government participation in capacity-strengthening activities and technical workshops.
 - Government engagement helped ensure stronger ownership and alignment with national systems.
- ## Building evidence: food crises as child protection crises
- Programme implementation and learning have contributed to a growing evidence base demonstrating that food insecurity is a key driver of child protection risks.
 - This relationship has been particularly documented in contexts such as Ethiopia, where food insecurity significantly increases risks of child labour, child marriage, and school dropout.

What didn't work well?

Limited scale of food security interventions

- In several contexts, food security interventions remained smaller in scale compared to child protection activities.

- Challenges included:

- Limited funding for food security components.

- Insufficient resources for livelihood or income-generating activities.

- Inflation reducing the effectiveness of support provided.

- As a result, food security support often reached only caregivers of highly vulnerable children rather than addressing broader household needs.

- Short-term food security interventions also limited sustainability, as programmes often focused on small food assistance components rather than longer-term livelihood strategies.

Capacity gaps

- Differences in technical expertise between child protection and food security actors sometimes limited effective integration.

- Challenges included:

- Limited food security expertise among some consortium members.

- Imbalance between child protection and food security technical capacities.

- Perception among some external partners that child protection actors are not legitimate food security actors.

- Strengthening cross-sector training and technical exchanges is essential to address these gaps.

Operational challenges in crisis contexts

- Security constraints, displacement, and access limitations affected programme implementation in several contexts.

- These factors sometimes disrupted activities or reduced the ability to deliver support consistently.

- Flexible programming approaches and strong collaboration with local actors were essential to maintain support to affected communities.

Limited monitoring of integrated outcomes

- Monitoring systems did not always capture the full relationship between food security interventions and child protection outcomes.



- Challenges included:
 - Limited post-distribution monitoring.
 - Insufficient human resource capacity to analyse integrated results.
 - Lack of systematic indicators linking child protection and food security outcomes.
- Strengthening monitoring frameworks will be essential to better demonstrate the impact of integrated programming.

Limited systematic documentation

- While many strong examples and case stories exist, documentation of the linkages between child protection and food security programming has been limited.
- More systematic documentation is needed to capture evidence, lessons learned, and effective models.

Staff turnover in coordination structures

- High turnover within cluster coordination structures affected continuity and institutional memory.
- This sometimes slowed progress on child protection and food security integration initiatives and action plans.

Limited inter-agency collaboration at scale

- Integration efforts sometimes depended heavily on external food security partners.
- Challenges included:
 - Funding cuts affecting partner engagement.
 - Limited willingness of some food security actors to collaborate.
 - Delayed rollout of integration tools.

Difference between nutrition and food security sectors

- Food security and nutrition programming often operate through separate coordination systems.
- This structural separation can create operational challenges for integrated programming and coordination.

Recommendations

1. Recognise food insecurity as a driver of child protection risks
2. Food insecurity should be systematically analysed during needs assessments and integrated into programme design from the outset.
3. Design protection-sensitive food security programmes
4. Food security interventions should include child-centred approaches, safe targeting mechanisms, and strong referral pathways.
5. Strengthen cross-sector collaboration
6. Joint planning, training, and operational coordination between CP and FS actors should be prioritised.
7. Invest in evidence and documentation
8. Stronger documentation and analysis of integrated programming are needed to strengthen advocacy and learning.
9. Promote joint capacity-building initiatives
10. Short orientations and joint training sessions on CP and FS integration should be conducted for staff and partners.
11. Integrate minimum mainstreaming requirements
12. For example, food security staff involved in distributions should receive training on basic child protection risks and safe referral mechanisms.
13. Develop systematic monitoring frameworks
14. Monitoring systems should track the linkages between CP and FS outcomes, including measuring the impact of integrated interventions.
15. Leverage consortium strengths
16. Joining Forces members involved in large food security or nutrition programmes can help embed CP integration within broader initiatives.
17. Scale successful tools and approaches
18. The Child Protection and Food Security Toolbox and other contextualised tools such as referral mapping and service cartography should be expanded to national and inter-agency levels.
19. Strengthen cluster-level integration
20. Targeted initiatives such as including a joint indicator or conducting joint analysis between CP and FS clusters can improve coordination and operational collaboration.

Field Examples & Voices

Amina, a 14-year-old girl, lived in a community facing severe food insecurity. Her family's home had been damaged, and the household struggled to secure enough food.

An older man offered to repair the roof and provide food if Amina agreed to marry him.

Through participation in a Child-Friendly Space, Amina had learned about her rights and felt safe enough to speak to programme staff.

The Child Protection team supported the family, while the programme also provided cash assistance and nutrition support to stabilise the household.

With the immediate financial pressure reduced, the family no longer felt compelled to accept the marriage proposal. Amina remained in school and stayed safe.

This example illustrates how combining food security support with child protection services can reduce harmful coping strategies and enable families to make safer choices for their children

Field example from Central African Republic.





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