



## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

# GLOBAL EVALUATION REPORT

## Joining Forces for Food Security & Child Protection in Emergencies

Bangladesh | Burkina Faso | Central African Republic | Ethiopia | South Sudan



# JF-FS&CPiE

|                            |                                                                                      |
|----------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
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| <b>Consortium Lead:</b>    | Plan International Deutschland e.V.                                                  |
| <b>Consortium Members:</b> | ChildFund, Terre des Hommes, SOS Children's Village, Save the Children, World Vision |
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| <b>Report Type:</b>        | Final Evaluation and Endline                                                         |
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This independent final and endline evaluation assesses the Joining Forces for Food Security and Child Protection in Emergencies project against the OECD-DAC criteria of relevance and coherence, effectiveness, efficiency and coordination, sustainability, together with gender equality and inclusion and child participation. It uses a **mixed-methods, before–after design**, comparing endline indicators with baseline and explaining the movement through participants' own accounts. Because the project had no control group and baseline and endline drew on independent (not panel) samples, the evaluation makes contribution rather than attribution claims, and reads indicator change against three lenses: programmatic design, measurement/survey design, and the external context.

## Overall assessment

The project was **very effective on its protection, knowledge and awareness objectives, and structurally constrained on its food-security objective**. It demonstrably contributed to building children's, caregivers' and communities' knowledge, shifting gender norms, reducing concrete protection risks such as child marriage and child labour, and improving children's psychosocial wellbeing. The evaluation found that the integrated approach generated strong protection, knowledge awareness outcomes. At the same time, persistent food insecurity reflects the severity of humanitarian needs and highlights the importance of combining awareness and protection activities with more sustained food security livelihood and basic needs support in future integrated programmes. These findings are consistent with the wider evidence base on integrated Child Protection and Food Security programming, which demonstrates that food insecurity is a key driver of child protection risks and that intentionally integrated, multi-layered approaches generate stronger outcomes than standalone sectoral interventions.

## Rating by criterion

The table below displays an overall rating of the project's performance against each criterion based on the evaluator's own judgement.

| Criterion                 | Rating          | Main rationale                                                                                        |
|---------------------------|-----------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Relevance & coherence     | Strong          | Highly relevant, integration concept validated; food security under-scoped (no livelihoods).          |
| Effectiveness             | Moderate–Strong | Strong on knowledge, protection and wellbeing; food-security/practice outcomes flat or negative.      |
| Efficiency & coordination | Moderate        | Strong external coordination and duplication-avoidance; value-for-money unquantified (no cost data).  |
| Sustainability            | Moderate        | Social/behavioural gains durable; economic and institutional foundations fragile.                     |
| Gender & inclusion        | Moderate–Strong | Strong norm change; girls' agency* and male engagement unfinished; girls under-served in South Sudan. |
| Child participation       | Moderate        | Broad consultation but shallow influence; strong tools under-used for real decision-making.           |
| Impact                    | Moderate–Strong | Real on protection risk and wellbeing; none on the hunger root cause; bounded by scale.               |

\*"Agency" here refers to a composite drawn mainly from self-efficacy, voice/influence in decision-making, and participation/safety indicators as opposed to a measurement from a formal, pre-defined agency framework

# Summary of findings by criterion

## Relevance & coherence

The integrated child-protection–food-security model was highly relevant to contexts where hunger and protection risk are tightly linked, and communities themselves articulated clearly the connection stating that “*food insecurity is the root cause of all risks*”. Its central limitation is linked to the operational design of the model. The food security component was operationalised rather as nutrition messaging accompanied by short-cycle and very small-scale cash or food transfers than as a larger scale food security intervention, with no livelihoods component due to donor guidelines, leaving the material/economic support side of the model under-resourced

## Effectiveness

Knowledge and awareness gains are the strongest but also the most consistent and attributable result. Child self-protection knowledge for instance rose in every country and community nutrition knowledge approached saturation (above 82% everywhere). But the data shows an important **knowledge–practice gap** with household food security (OI5) and infant feeding (OI6) indicators showing no progress in all countries except in Bangladesh and modestly Ethiopia. The gap can be explained by multiple factors including the scale of the activities, measurement on non-identical samples, and a deteriorating external context. Caregiver confidence rose far faster than demonstrated competence, and behaviour change was strongest where awareness was paired with material support. Children rated the programme highly (8.1/10 Bangladesh, 9.1 Burkina Faso, 7.5 Ethiopia for instance).



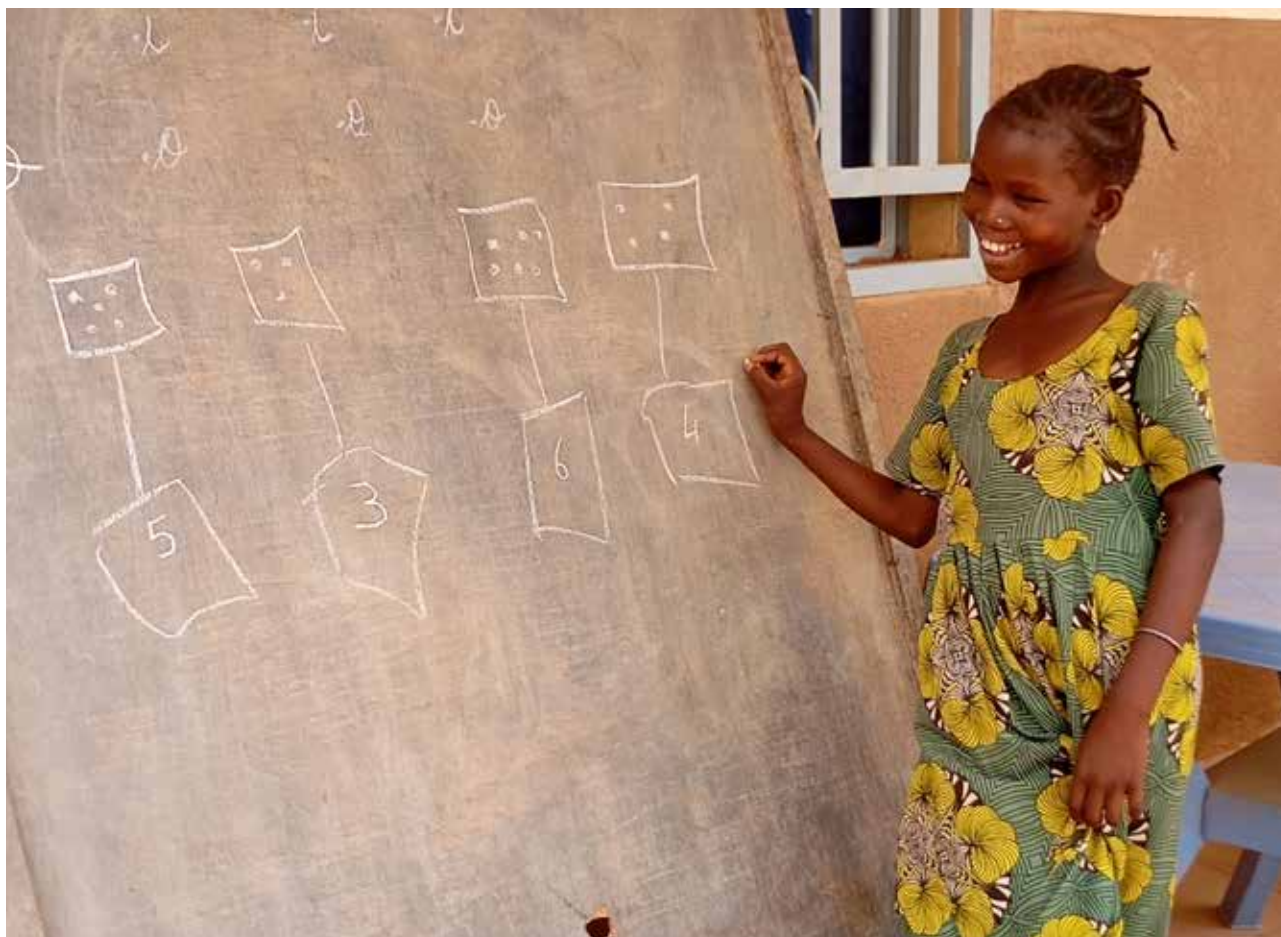
## Efficiency & coordination

External coordination with government, clusters and other actors was broadly effective, with genuine duplication-avoidance where a formal service/resource map existed (notably Ethiopia; alignment with national and humanitarian coordination frameworks was also reported in South Sudan, Bangladesh, Burkina Faso and CAR). Cross-sectoral coordination was a particular strength: country-level CP–Food Security workshops in CAR, Burkina Faso and Ethiopia (building on the previous phase in Cox’s Bazar and South Sudan) brought both sectors together with cluster endorsement and strong reported knowledge gains, though this joint working was firmer at inter-agency level than in routine field delivery. The consortium added real value through complementary expertise and cross-country learning, but the evaluation also noted some gaps and missed opportunities. For example, in all countries, partners worked in separate zones, with very little shared field delivery. Monitoring was adaptive but also rarely joint.

## Sustainability

The **social and behavioural component of the project is considered relatively durable** (community child-protection structures sometimes acting autonomously, knowledge and norm change, etc.) while the **economic and institutional component remain fragile**. Material gains can only be sustained where support has been built as a productive, market-linked asset (e.g. in Ethiopia provision of goats, in Bangladesh home gardening). Institutional handover is also only possible where government systems have been embedded from the start (Ethiopia/Amhara). The reduction of activities from community volunteers ahead of project’s closure (CAR’s RECOPE for instance) shows how fragile the sustainability of some initiatives is in some contexts. Sustainability is also ultimately capped by economic deprivation, displacement and the absence of livelihood opportunities.





## Gender & inclusion

Gender-norm change is a positive project's achievement with improvements noted in girls' education, reduction in early and forced marriages, more equitable roles within the household. Girls showed greater results at endline than boys on knowledge<sup>1</sup> in all five countries but yet reported lower confidence to act showing a **self-efficacy gap**. Women gained more knowledge at the caregiver level, although men showed greater confidence and capacities in CAR and South Sudan. Access to activities was equitable (both in terms of representation or meaningful participation) in most countries with some activities specifically tailored to gendered needs but **gaps were noted in South Sudan**, where girls were significantly under-consulted, feeling less safe giving feedback and overall less satisfied. Disability inclusion was deliberately pursued but partial, with gaps for severe disability and remote households.

## Child participation

Efforts were made in fostering child participation in the project including through the creation of specific tools to gather their feedback, including ahead of the midterm review workshops. Participation was **broad but often felt shallow for most children**: children were widely consulted but in the Ladder-of-Participation exercises they place themselves on the lower rungs (for most of them as beneficiaries, rarely as influencers or decision-makers). Where the feedback loop was closed (session times, activities and items changed in response to children's input), participation became genuinely meaningful. Feedback mechanisms exist but awareness and felt-safety lag, with Bangladesh's emoji-based, fully-actioned feedback loop standing out as the clear positive exception and the model to scale up across the portfolio.

1. Please refer to [Annex A](#) for all disaggregated quantitative results.

# Recommendations

Based on the evaluation findings, twelve recommendations were developed to inform future integrated child protection and food security programming in humanitarian contexts. They are detailed in section 5.1 Recommendations. They have been grouped and synthesised as follows:

## 1. Strategic Recommendation 1 — Design context-responsive integrated programmes that address the underlying drivers of child protection risks.: combine behaviour-change and protection with cash and livelihoods at the scale the context demands.

The evaluation's central finding is a knowledge–practice gap — awareness rose but food-security and feeding practices did not, because the economic drivers were under-resourced. Integration only delivers when knowledge is paired with adequate resources and practical skills.

Size cash and livelihoods support to the depth and duration of household vulnerability, adding productive assets/IGA where markets and security allow.

Replace one-off sensitisation with practical, repeated, demonstration-based learning (e.g. cooking demonstrations), and measure demonstrated competence, not just confidence.

## 2. Strategic Recommendation 2 — Design and deliver as one integrated programme: shared outcomes, joint teams and harmonised measurement.

The CP–FS integration concept was validated but delivered as parallel sectoral workplans with coordination-heavy, partner-specific monitoring. Genuine integration requires shared outcomes and joint delivery.

Build design on a shared CP–FS results framework and resilience pathway (using the [CP–FS Toolbox](#) and What We Need to Know -[WWNK- joint assessment](#)), with joint targeting, joint planning and coordinated implementation.

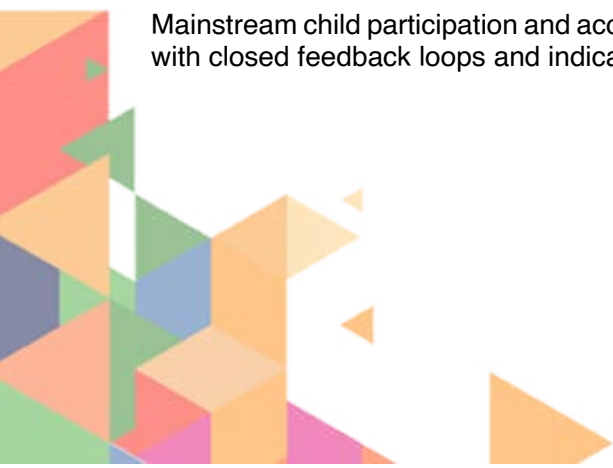
Introduce harmonised joint monitoring across partners — a small set of shared indicators and where possible cohort tracking — and document finding-to-design linkages for learning.

## 3. Strategic Recommendation 3 — Place children's protection, wellbeing and participation at the centre of integrated programming: sustain safe spaces and case management, and give children real influence.

Child-Friendly Spaces, psychosocial support and case management were the most valued and most impactful components, yet children's influence over decisions was limited and wellbeing under-measured.

Fund Child-Friendly Spaces, psychosocial support and case management as core components, strengthening CFS as entry points linked to referral and case management.

Mainstream child participation and accountability across all interventions and the whole programme cycle, with closed feedback loops and indicators of children's influence — not just attendance.



#### **4. Strategic Recommendation 4 — Make gender equality and inclusion deliberate: strengthen girls' agency and embed disability and host-community inclusion.**

Girls gained knowledge but not the agency to act on it, and inclusion (disability, host communities) was strongest at the targeting stage but thinner across the rest of the cycle.

Invest in adolescent girls' leadership, life skills, safe spaces and mentorship, with gender-transformative work engaging caregivers, men and community leaders.

Embed inclusion through the whole cycle — dedicated accessibility assessments, disaggregated monitoring and a ring-fenced disability-inclusion budget.

#### **5. Strategic Recommendation 5 — Target fairly and build for sustainability: transparent targeting, managed expectations, and community structures linked to systems.**

Widespread need made even sound targeting feel unfair and fuelled social tension, while durability depended on community structures that were not consistently embedded in formal systems.

Communicate targeting criteria and programme limits up front, base selection on community prioritisation rather than rigid quotas, and complement individual targeting with community-level measures where need is near-universal.

Plan handover from inception: embed community structures (CBCPCs, including teachers) in government, education and cluster systems (Protection and Food Security Clusters), with light-touch mentoring and IGA where feasible.

#### **6. Strategic Recommendation 6 — Build adaptive integrated programmes for humanitarian contexts: budget for shocks, access and funding volatility.**

Predictable features of these contexts (insecurity, inflation, displacement, seasonality and funding cuts) repeatedly eroded results and were not adequately planned for.

Build contingency budgets and realistic security/access costs into design, and align activities with seasonal calendars.

Use scenario-based plans with pre-agreed adaptation triggers, reviewing transfer values and budgets against inflation throughout implementation.





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*For All Children*

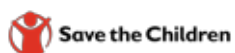


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