

SHARING JUNIOR FARMER FIELD AND LIFE SCHOOL EXPERIENCES, CHALLENGES AND INNOVATIONS



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**SHARING
JUNIOR FARMER FIELD
AND LIFE SCHOOL
EXPERIENCES, CHALLENGES AND
INNOVATIONS**



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LIST OF ACRONYMS

| | |
|---------------|---|
| AIDS | Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome |
| COBET | Complimentary Basic Education for Tanzania Programme |
| FAO | Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations |
| HIV | Human Immunodeficiency Virus |
| JFFLS | Junior Farmer Field and Life School |
| MVC | Most Vulnerable Children |
| OVC | Orphans and Vulnerable Children |
| ToT | Training of Trainers |
| UN | United Nations |
| UNICEF | United Nations Children's Fund |
| UNIDO | United Nations Industrial Development Organization |
| WFP | World Food Programme |

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this report is to document some of the Junior Farmer Field and Life Schools (JFFLS) experiences to date, and allow readers to reflect on approaches used in the various JFFLS in the countries where they have been set up. The JFFLS approach, developed by the Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the World Food Programme (WFP), has been operational since 2003 and has been recently adapted to provide a response to emergency situations. The goal of the JFFLS is to empower vulnerable youths, giving them livelihood options and long-term food security while minimizing their vulnerability to destitution and to risky coping strategies. One of the other major objectives of the JFFLS is to promote the creation of gender-equal attitudes, not only through the same exercise of roles and responsibilities, but also by developing the capacity of youths to critically assess relationships and links and understand risks and resources within their community.

The strength of the JFFLS lies in their unique learning methodology and curriculum, which combine both agricultural and life skills. Vulnerable youths, including those living in refugee camps, can learn how to apply gender-sensitive good agricultural practices and life skills to their reality and help their guardians/parents do the same. When working with populations of humanitarian concern, who are landless, practical agricultural and life skills should be devised to provide young people with vital guidance and help them to leave or avoid the deadly cycle of violence and disease that threatens them.

The JFFLS team at FAO Headquarters feels that it is important to share details of country-specific JFFLS community-level innovations with other JFFLS teams. It is hoped that sharing experiences will provide insights on what has worked in various JFFLS and contribute to discussions around the smooth running of local JFFLS. In May 2007, a consultant was commissioned to gather case studies. A questionnaire to guide JFFLS country coordinators in gathering stories on JFFLS innovations and experiences was prepared and sent out. Subsequently, follow-up with JFFLS country coordinators took place to gather anecdotal

evidence of successes and challenges as well as to gather more in-depth information. Thus, all information contained in this report comes directly from the field, and from those directly involved in the JFFLS.

The resulting report portrays brief insights into aspects of a JFFLS, such as details on how facilitators were chosen, how the life skills component was tackled, or an example of how the curriculum was adapted. These insights are included to illustrate the varied ways the JFFLS operate in practice and demonstrate particular situations and issues that commonly arise.

Although FAO and WFP have set out some basic principles for setting up a JFFLS, as we will see, many JFFLS teams took on board new ideas and implemented JFFLS activities in ways that suited their country or district context better. The ideas and approaches contained in these case examples are not necessarily radical departures from the classic JFFLS model; rather they constitute small actions or changes, but which are nonetheless significant in their impact. Some examples outline strategies that should be avoided and why. We hope that sharing JFFLS experiences will stimulate thinking and discussions, as well as provide tips for others who are contemplating expanding or setting up JFFLS. Ultimately we would like to be able to document what the children have gained through their participation in the JFFLS. More immediately, we would like to initiate discussion so that wider inferences can be drawn from experiences to date.

The case examples are organized under four main chapters. Chapter 1 covers the general management of the JFFLS; Chapter 2 summarizes some of the issues concerning JFFLS facilitators; Chapter 3 focuses on the JFFLS curriculum; and Chapter 4 concentrates on sustainability and linkage issues. Topics are organized under sub-headings, with similar examples from different countries grouped together.

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For instance, in **Tanzania** in various districts where JFFLS are located, participants have become involved in goat rearing, and in cultivating maize, cabbage and tomatoes. However, not all these activities would be typical for all JFFLS in Tanzania.

Attendance is generally three times per week in a learning field for practical sessions, with theoretical classes held nearby, often in the local school. All activities are scheduled for after school hours. In **Malawi**, for example, the JFFLS meet three times a week on specified days for two to three hours. Each day covers both theoretical and practical sessions. Although officially the JFFLS only meet a few times a week, it is common to see children visiting the field daily to check how their crops are progressing, and to weed or water as necessary.

As mentioned, the JFFLS children are often orphans. The early deaths of one or both parents means that much agricultural wisdom is not passed down to children. Indeed traditional knowledge such as indigenous crop production, knowledge of medicinal plants and biodiversity issues are often lost. Thus the JFFLS programme not only covers modern agriculture practices but also includes indigenous agriculture techniques.

The JFFLS also cover basic entrepreneurship skills and life skills education. Without the opportunity offered by interventions such as the JFFLS, orphaned and vulnerable children may have few economic alternatives in the future other than engaging in small-scale agricultural businesses or selling their labour. JFFLS boys and girls are encouraged to develop problem-solving and decision-making skills. Such skills are necessary for earning their living in the future and for other aspects of life.

The emphasis on life skills is there because many of the children attending the JFFLS do not have parents who can pass on some of the skills we all need to live a healthy and balanced life. The JFFLS address such issues as HIV and AIDS awareness and prevention, sensitization on gender equality, child protection, nutritional education, good hygiene and the prevention of human, crop and livestock diseases and their treatment. Efforts are made to ensure that the different needs of boys and girls are identified and met when covering the life skills components. Emphasis is placed on

participatory educational theatre and social animation to explore sensitive issues such as sexuality, sexual health, children's rights, gender roles and HIV and AIDS.

Agricultural themes are linked as much as possible to life and entrepreneurship skills. Facilitating the empowerment of vulnerable children is the ultimate aim. Imparting practical agricultural skills along with life skills is a means of empowerment. Through this approach, children gradually gain self-confidence and should have better livelihoods alternatives and options in the future.

A JFFLS coordination team steers the process. The JFFLS team is usually made up of local people who are based in the community, FAO JFFLS coordinators and partner organizations. Collaboratively, they guide the focus and direction of the JFFLS. Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and donor agencies also contribute depending on the location of the JFFLS.

In most of the schools, WFP provides food support for the initial months in the form of on-site hot meals and take-home rations. Food support is one of the most important elements of a successful JFFLS programme as it provides an initial incentive for the JFFLS participants to enrol, attend sessions and have enough energy to participate in the learning process. In general, all children who attend a JFFLS school receive some type of school meal. The JFFLS participants receive additional meals on the days they attend the after-hours sessions. Take-home rations are also provided for JFFLS participants and their families. In many instances food support to the JFFLS programme has relieved caregivers of the burden of having to provide enough food for the children they are looking after. The basic WFP take-home food package in **Mozambique**, for example, provides cereals, beans, fish, salt and vegetable oil.

The production of vegetables in the JFFLS learning fields has also improved the food diet of the children who sometimes are not accustomed to eating vitamin rich vegetables. For instance, a community around a JFFLS in Mozambique reported improved nutrition because of the introduction of new vegetables for home consumption (lettuce and green peppers). In fact, as in other districts of Mozambique, there is a lack of vegetables in local markets, and if and when they are available, they can be very expensive. Similarly in

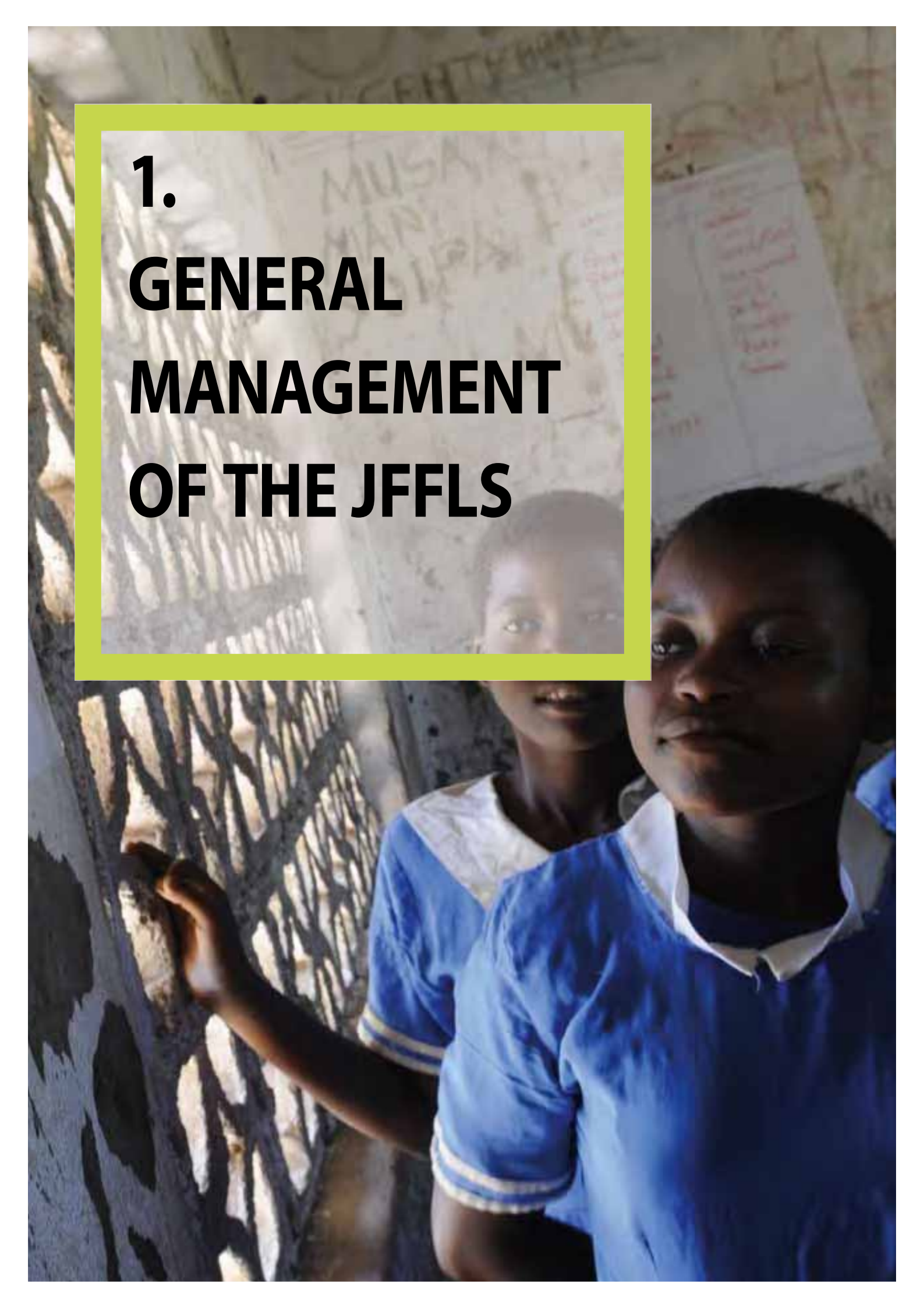
the districts of Malawi, where eight JFFLS are located, vegetables are improving the diets of many families who mainly survive on fish.

In **Northern Uganda** the response towards the JFFLS by the children in all areas is overwhelming. They are enthusiastic and eager to engage in agriculture and learn how to cultivate new crops through the JFFLS and it is quite apparent that they are mostly interested in vegetable growing (cabbages, onions, carrots, tomatoes, egg plants). There is also a high preference among the children for pineapples and fruit trees like oranges and mangoes, and there could be very good opportunities to set up fruit tree nurseries in the medium term in the JFFLS.

In summary, in order to meet the challenges confronting vulnerable and HIV and AIDS-affected children in the agricultural sector, FAO has been supporting JFFLS initiatives to promote rural livelihoods and food security. As we will see in the JFFLS country-specific examples provided in this report, the JFFLS have been successfully sharing agricultural knowledge and life and entrepreneurial skills with young people, so that they can grow up as independent, conscientious and enterprising citizens.



JFFLS in
Tanzania

The background image shows two young girls in blue school uniforms with white collars. They are looking towards the camera. The setting appears to be an outdoor or semi-outdoor area with a wall covered in graffiti. The word 'MUSAN' is visible in the graffiti. A piece of paper with red markings is pinned to the wall. A yellow rectangular box is overlaid on the left side of the image, containing the text '1. GENERAL MANAGEMENT OF THE JFFLS'.

1. GENERAL MANAGEMENT OF THE JFFLS

INTRODUCTION

The FAO manual for running a JFFLS¹ has nine “getting started” steps. These include initial planning with the community, selecting JFFLS facilitators and participants and training the facilitators, organizing the curriculum, and continuing all the way through to planning on how to monitor and scale up the JFFLS. Many issues arise in JFFLS around set-up, logistics and partnering with the community and with primary schools. Various stories reported from the field around the management of the JFFLS are provided in this chapter.

INVOLVING THE COMMUNITY

Community involvement is fundamental to all JFFLS, not least to ensure the sustainability of community support over longer periods. Getting started with a JFFLS includes selecting the site for the JFFLS, and it is essential that the community agree about what will work well in local circumstances, including the agro-ecosystem. The best location of a JFFLS site may not be the most available site, and often discussions and negotiations will focus on what community members feel children can do on a site, based on plots available, cost-effectiveness, types of plants and livestock as well as the all-important ecological and climatic factors. Negotiations usually involve local village chiefs to ensure land (or more land) is allocated for the JFFLS.

NEGOTIATING WITH LOCAL AUTHORITIES ON RESOURCES

In **Malawi** unused land close to a perennial bore hole was prioritized in the selection of the JFFLS sites in particular primary schools. However, unused land with a water source is not always available, as we can see from the Mozambique example below.

Since the beginning of the JFFLS programme in **Mozambique**, 13 schools have been assisted in negotiations with local authorities to acquire land for the school. In 2004/2005 the JFFLS was introduced in Nhanssana Primary School in Mozambique, which is located on the *Tete Corridor*, the road to Malawi, where there is a higher instance of HIV and AIDS (the northern part of Manica Province). Lack of water is a constant constraint. There was not enough water at the designated learning field to irrigate horticultural crops, so the school director negotiated

¹ Getting Started: Running a Junior Farmer Field and Life School, FAO 2007
<http://www.fao.org/docrep/010/a1111e/a1111e00.htm>

with the local chief to secure a piece of land close to a water point, near the school. However another problem arose. The water was not enough for both consumption and irrigation. A meeting was organized with the community, the school and the village chief to set a timetable that facilitated the identification of different needs. This strategy worked. Once the water issue had been settled, the JFFLS participants decided to grow horticultural crops and beans, as well as more common drought-resistant crops such as sorghum and millet. With hard work and determination, a green patch slowly developed around the water point, raising great interest amongst the local population and proving that the investment in the children had been worth it. In **Cameroon** traditional leadership and local religious leaders were encouraged to participate from the start to ensure that all the necessary support was offered to the facilitators and participants from the word go.

INVOLVING STAKEHOLDERS AT AN EARLY STAGE

In **Swaziland** during the initial planning stage, the JFFLS coordinators found that the best way to set up a JFFLS was through partner organizations. Partner organizations were given the criteria and characteristics necessary for a JFFLS site. Based on these criteria they selected the most appropriate sites, which were then assessed by the JFFLS team and the community. Following this a community mobilization session was undertaken.

For the JFFLS team in **Swaziland**, involving partners at an early stage of a JFFLS set-up was critical for buy-in. The JFFLS team also found that including a range of people from top management to junior farmers was fundamental. Having focus persons in each partner organization ensured clear responsibilities with positive contributions.

Along the shores of Lake **Malawi** in the Mangochi district, four out of the eight Malawi JFFLS sites are located in fishing communities. Many boys leave school to fish. Girls marry at a young age. The first discussions on the JFFLS concept was held in November 2006 and jointly facilitated by FAO in collaboration with the Ministry of Education and Vocational Training. A broad range of stakeholders were involved in the JFFLS at an early stage, including government ministries (Education and Vocational Training, Agriculture and Food Security and Gender and Social Welfare), FAO, UNICEF and WFP.



Community
mobilisation,
Malawi

DEVELOPING A GOOD TEAM SPIRIT

In **Mozambique**, the setting-up of sub-regional units (Sub-units) to implement the JFFLS was based on a good practice from Farmer Field Schools experiences in Egypt. The coordinators in Mozambique found that if you want to get these Sub-units to function, the most important element is to foster a good team spirit. The Chimoio Sub-unit is an excellent example of how things can work. The team includes people from three ministries (Education, Agriculture, and Women and Social Affairs), plus a committed agricultural technician within the Ministry of Education and a director from the most successful JFFLS in Mozambique. These people are able to carry out monthly training sessions, inviting one facilitator from each of the eight JFFLS to assist in presenting special topics. The team also carries out monitoring visits. The monthly meetings rotate from school to school, so all the facilitators experience what is happening at other schools and exchange ideas.

FOLLOWING THE RIGHT PROCEDURES AND PROTOCOL

In **Malawi**, it was acknowledged that the JFFLS concepts, approach and general implementation had to be carefully discussed in the community before the schools were launched. A district-level meeting

was organized first with heads of district government offices such as education and agriculture, along with district executive offices. Later, community-level meetings were organized through the district heads. District heads invited local and religious leaders, school heads, teachers, parents and teacher association representatives, prominent business people and community contributors. Finally, community meetings were organized in collaboration with the district and area leaders, focusing on the JFFLS site and school.

In **Zimbabwe**, the JFFLS has followed a distinct procedural path:

1. Community awareness raising and mobilization for initiating a JFFLS always comes first
2. The characteristics of the local farming system where the JFFLS will be held are defined
3. Problems are identified and prioritized in line with local enterprise potential
4. Based on the identified priorities, the curriculum is developed
5. Training of facilitators is organized
6. A participatory technology focus is applied, following an analysis of problem gaps
7. Site and host farmers are selected
8. The JFFLS is set up and implemented
9. The JFFLS programme is reviewed

BUILDING GUARDIAN COMMITMENT

The enthusiasm and commitment of the children's guardians helps to ensure the success of the project. In Odhuro, in the Bondo district of **Kenya**, an initial meeting was held to share the overall JFFLS Programme approach with guardians. They warmed to the idea and immediately helped map strategies for the success of the JFFLS. They set rules and regulations and designed a duty roster to prepare the meals for the children. Each guardian member had to donate 2kg of flour to prepare porridge for the children. A membership fee of Sh.50 (US\$ 1 approx.) was also agreed with guardians. Guardians were strongly encouraged to tend their own gardens using JFFLS approaches experimented and they did so willingly. This helped the children replicate what they learned at the JFFLS plot in their own home gardens.

CREATING JFFLS COMMITTEES WITH WOMEN MEMBERS

Each JFFLS catchment site nominated a ten-member community committee in **Malawi**. It was decided that at least four women should sit on each committee. In some districts of **Malawi** it was more difficult to achieve the minimum number than in others. For example, in Ntcheu culturally important community activities are for men. When the community did not nominate women, the JFFLS coordinators decided to select some women. Although no resistance was observed, it was obvious that men were more willing to sit on the committee than women. In Mangochi, on the other hand, female nomination was not a problem. Most men are involved in fishing and fish mongering in that district. Traditionally, women take part in community activities. In some instances there were seven female committee members for the JFFLS. However, it was noted that that most of the time in female-dominated committees men are absent from sessions. This is a challenge that must be addressed.

ENGAGING MEN IN THE PREPARATORY LABOUR

Much preparation work is required for the actual JFFLS field plots. For example the land must be cleared of rocks and bushes, fenced, prepared and so on. In **Namibia** in Lizauli community (Caprivi region), as in many other regions of sub-Saharan Africa, such work is exclusively undertaken by women. At the instigation of the JFFLS team, a village meeting was held. The *Khuta* is the all-male traditional local authority, made up of senior heads, known locally as *Induna* (traditional leaders), who represent their village areas. JFFLS facilitators and women, who had been working continuously on the plots, were given the floor and complained about the non-participation of men. After lengthy discussions the women gained the full support of the *Indunas* to increase male involvement. For example, men were asked to build sheds and volunteer houses by a specific deadline. Apart from moving the JFFLS project ahead with the participation of men, this meeting had the ‘knock-on’ effect of enhancing women’s voice in the *khuta* structure.

SELECTING JFFLS PARTICIPANTS

Malawi provided information on the criteria used for selecting ‘vulnerable’ girls and boys. Children had to be aged between 12 and 19 and were selected by the JFFLS committee and facilitators in collaboration with



JFFLS participants, Malawi



JFFLS participants, Kenya

school heads, the local and religious leaders and the community as a whole. Vulnerability was assessed in three ways:

- If someone was an orphan or from a child-headed household
- An assessment of household poverty specifically food, nutrition and income availability
- The child's vulnerability versus their behaviour and willingness to attend.

Boys and girls were then divided into three categories of vulnerability, and children from each category were chosen to attend the JFFLS. It was eventually decided that only including the most vulnerable children leads to their stigmatization and the stigmatization of the JFFLS project as a whole. The third aspect of assessing vulnerability came to have increased significance. The facilitation teams reported that the 'will' of the child to take part in the JFFLS was essential to the child getting the most out of the JFFLS. Orphans' immediate basic needs have to be met first for them to have the 'will' to participate. Unless there is a plan to meet their immediate needs, facilitation teams in Malawi suggested that the most vulnerable should not be targeted.

In Odhuro Bondo district, **Kenya**, out of 195 orphans/pupils in a school, only 30 could be chosen to participate in the JFFLS. A committee comprising the guardians, four facilitators, the school head teachers and school management committee chairpersons was set up to select the 30 beneficiaries.

Criteria included child-headed homes, grandmother-headed, single parent-headed, amongst other criteria for vulnerability. In the first cycle of JFFLS, 12 out of the 30 children left the JFFLS, mainly due to the following reasons:

- Some pupils had a negative attitude towards agriculture
- Some guardians did not understand why the children had to learn the JFFLS skills
- Some schoolteachers felt that it was a waste of pupils' precious time

Subsequently, it was decided that only children who had an interest in joining the JFFLS could participate, rather than the stricter criteria previously used.

With so many orphans and vulnerable children (OVC) in the Caprivi region of **Namibia**, grandmothers and guardians questioned why only 30 OVC could be chosen for one school alone. As one grandmother complained:

“I have two orphans under my responsibility, but according to the criteria I am better off than others. When will my children be included?”

Eventually 120 children were targeted for inclusion in this community in Caprivi. The first 30 reflect the standard JFFLS guidelines. Two additional groups were set up, with less strict criteria, bearing in mind that HIV and AIDS affects all people in the community.

Each of the girls and boys who were selected by the communities in **Cameroon** were given a series of seminars on the objectives and content of the JFFLS to ensure that they were participating on a voluntary and consensual basis.

In **Tanzania**, six JFFLS were piloted in the Kigoma and Kagera regions of northwest Tanzania, targeting 201 orphans and vulnerable children. This is an area that has hosted many refugees so the JFFLS were implemented in collaboration with the UN-funded Human Security Project, and the UNICEF Complimentary Basic Education for Tanzania programme (COBET) to target local non-refugee populations who were not being reached by other humanitarian interventions. In essence, the government is attempting to bring back to school many children who had dropped out due to poverty, security issues and death of parents from HIV and AIDS. COBET classes are held in the formal school premises. The JFFLS are set up alongside COBET. Most of the JFFLS participants are COBET pupils. COBET pupils normally are ready to join formal primary schools once they catch up. Because the JFFLS generally caters for children who are part of another back-to-school programme, non-participating children often seem to think that JFFLS children have a double advantage. This sometimes means that other non-participating children treat the JFFLS children in a hostile way, a challenge that has to be addressed in many JFFLS.

In **Tanzania**, one school of thought is that it would be better for future JFFLS to target youths between the ages of 14 and 19 who have

completed and/or left primary school. However, this would mean that these youths, many of them orphans, would be over the minimal school age, so the main target group would be out-of-school girls and boys who lack both agricultural and life skills training.

Others stress that not all youth will have an interest in agriculture, and will not wish to work on the land. They argue that targeting should concentrate on those children who have a particular interest in agriculture, rather than vulnerable and orphan criteria set out in the JFFLS guidelines. This is an issue that needs to be discussed at country level and needs to be included in the development of entrepreneurial activities.

The signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) in **Sudan** has formally ended 21 years of conflict, and has ushered in a challenging new era of peace building and reconstruction. The CPA stipulates that all child soldiers will be demobilized and separated children registered for family tracing within six months of signature. Although Child DDR has been delayed along side many aspects of the CPA, both parties continue to reaffirm their commitment to the removal of children from armed forces as a priority activity.

In South Kordofan state (**Sudan**), over 199 children have been formally demobilised and reunified with families. Additional children have also returned from armed forces or groups spontaneously. Assessments of successful reintegration programmes point to the need for children to see immediate benefits of return, and support to participate in community based reintegration programmes such as education and skills training programmes. Other challenges include lack of information for children being demobilised, lack of follow-up to identify problems in households, and low capacity of service providers. Regular follow-up with children is also needed to prevent re-recruitment.

The JFFLS in **Sudan** have been established in partnership with UNICEF and has contributed to giving children released from armed forces and groups a protective environment, education and vocational opportunities as well as the chance to work and play with their peers. The JFFLS will be part of a referral systems supported by social workers and will contribute to a follow up system to facilitate all aspects of their reintegration into their communities. The JFFLS was

piloted in the Nuba Mountains in 2007 and has had very positive results, it provides children associated with armed forces and groups with agricultural training and alternative livelihood opportunities in the context of inclusive community based reintegration programming for vulnerable children and youth.

TIMING JFFLS ACTIVITIES

The JFFLS try to make sure that sessions do not interfere with the formal school schedule. In **Zimbabwe**, most JFFLS sessions are held over the weekend. Only field trips and graduation ceremonies are held during the week.

In **Tanzania** as in most countries, is it mandatory for all children to attend school between the ages of 7 and 14 years. For various reasons many children drop out of school. Programmes such as the COBET are designed to teach out-of-school youth enough so that they can re-enter formal school classrooms, at or near their natural age grades. As mentioned above, classes are held in primary schools to facilitate the movement of students into regular grades. In one village (Kanazi), the agricultural tasks combined with schools tasks proved to be too much of a burden for participating children. In fact, children who were being strongly encouraged to go back to formal schooling found that there were too many formal and informal activities involved with the JFFLS curricula to allow them to do so. It was noted in **Tanzania** that because agricultural skills training is offered to children at school, they often do not implement the skills learned for several years, because they are not engaged in agriculture full-time until they are much older. In Kandaga village in Kigoma district, because the JFFLS participants were slightly older, the group has become more involved in income-generating activities, focusing on tomato production for the market. Older youths who would participate in the JFFLS could be encouraged to eventually form farmers' associations and register as legal economic entities to access financial resources after graduation. Thus, targeting agricultural skills to older vulnerable children was put forward as a recommendation that is more appropriate in the Tanzanian context. The JFFLS is considered more suitable for those out-of-school youths who are interested in farming, rather than younger children.

ENSURING GIRLS STAY IN THE JFFLS

In **Malawi** girls were often too shy to participate in JFFLS activities initially. It was found that often the girls were leaving it up to the boys to dictate how things should be done. To overcome this cultural barrier, a single day per week was agreed on as being girls' day, when girls controlled all the activities. This boosted the girls' participation and gradually built their self-confidence.

In **Kenya**, in Odhuro School in the Bondo district, out of 38 girls, eight dropped out because they were pregnant or had eloped in an attempt to escape their desperate situation. Too often, within a few months the girl comes back and now has to fend for herself and a baby. This presents a challenge for the JFFLS coordinators and they have realized that more emphasis on the empowerment of the girl child is required.

PROVIDING TOOLS, EQUIPMENT AND WATER

Agricultural tools and equipment are required for the smooth running of a JFFLS. FAO and other partners provide such support. For example in **Zimbabwe**, JFFLS members received drop kits for lessons on vegetable production and garden tools. If the JFFLS did not have a decent water supply, they received treadle pumps. In the Kakuma camp in **Kenya**, water was scarce in the refugee set-up, with no water



Monitoring
& Evaluation
session in
Tanzania

available for irrigation. Water troughs were constructed to harvest spillage and waste water from the kitchens (water was available in kitchens). Malakal and Unity JFFLS formally organized groups to harvest such waste/spillage water for vegetable production.

In **Malawi** children were asked to bring agricultural equipment from home, such as hoes. However not all of the children had the required tools, so FAO met the shortfall by supplying basic gardening and agricultural equipment (lighter hoes, watering cans, rakes and wheelbarrows) as well as seeds. Each JFFLS also received three bicycles from an external donor. Communities came to depend on the children's equipment, which often resulted in excessive wear and tear. In addition, since the bicycles were supplied to the JFFLS, they were perceived as being owned by the community for the community. JFFLS committee members, facilitators and school staff often argued over whose turn it was to use the bicycles. When donations of equipment are made to the schools, clear messages need to be shared and understood that the equipment is not owned by individuals but is there to assist in the smooth running of the schools.

RESOLVING POWER STRUGGLES

Ownership of and control over certain aspects of JFFLS brought challenges in many cases. This is because sometimes as the committee checks on the JFFLS activities it tends to override the authority of the facilitators. Conversely, a facilitator's role is key to the success of the JFFLS. Power struggles between the committee and facilitators have to be carefully monitored and dealt with in a timely fashion.

In **Malawi**, these power struggles were tackled through sensitization meetings. The JFFLS coordinators stressed that nobody can decide on ownership issues apart from the coordinators. Facilitators and committee members were asked to iron out their differences together with their chiefs, prominent people in the community and in some cases religious leaders and in consultation with people from the district offices of education, FAO and WFP. Some committees were dissolved and reshuffled, with new members being selected. However, a challenge remains as a result of reshuffling: some ex-committee members might have negative attitudes towards the JFFLS and exert a negative influence on its activities.

MANAGING THE CONSUMPTION OF VEGETABLE HARVEST

In Nhanssana Primary School in **Mozambique** at harvest time, the JFFLS youths were faced with a problem: Who would consume the lettuce, eggplants, peppers, carrots and other vegetables they produced? These vegetables were not what local people were accustomed to eating. Even at the JFFLS school there was a certain resistance to consuming these vegetables. Each child was given vegetables to take home as a way of broadening consumption habits. This strategy worked. According to one community member:

“Now, two years later, the vegetable production is not enough! Today, we know how to prepare carrots, peppers and even raw lettuce, and we have come to like them all. The only problem is that we don’t have enough water to produce more.”

MONITORING AND RECORD KEEPING

Not having baseline data and outcome and impact indicators often makes it difficult to monitor the achievements of the JFFLS. In **Mozambique** for their income-generating pilot project, very simple questionnaires were developed and are being used. A member of the JFFLS team in Mozambique suggested that these could also be developed for the JFFLS students at the beginning and end of each course. Children could be asked to write a few lines or do a drawing about how they use what they learned at school, at home.



2.

**FACILITATORS –
THE LYNCHPIN
OF JFFLS**

INTRODUCTION

The quality and experience of the facilitators involved in the JFFLS are key to a successful JFFLS. This quote from **Malawi** shows their importance:

*“ Facilitators make the JFFLS clock tick.
They are the fuel for the day-to-day running of the JFFLS.”*

Indeed, the **Mozambique** JFFLS coordinators have noted that the essential ingredients for a successful JFFLS are: an enthusiastic school director; and good facilitators. These are the people who make the JFFLS work.

Good facilitators ensure that the JFFLS achieve their objectives and the children are put at the forefront of all activities. There are many issues that arise in JFFLS around facilitation and facilitators. This chapter describes the different experiences from the various JFFLS around these issues.

FINDING THE RIGHT FACILITATORS

In **Swaziland**, many excellent local trainers are available even though they are located in different organizations. A broad range of local trainers were invited to the last JFFLS training of trainers (ToT). This means that an extremely professional group of highly motivated community facilitators is trained and ready for work.

In **Malawi** the criteria for facilitator selection was adopted from the “Getting Started” manual. Following the discussions on desirable qualities of a good facilitator, the school heads, local leaders and prominent community members chose facilitators. The JFFLS national working group recommended that each JFFLS facilitation team include: a local primary school teacher; an area agricultural extension officer; and three selected community members with recognizable capabilities. The inclusion of the extension worker and local teacher was mandatory as they are paid staff and work in the area, and the JFFLS work falls within their existing responsibilities. Each JFFLS selected five facilitators. Local individuals who could contribute local dances and songs as well as agricultural and life skills was considered essential.

One team in Mangochi district in **Malawi** included:

1. a well qualified extension worker
2. a local school teacher
3. a social animator who could not read or write
4. Two community members who could hardly read or write, but who could undertake diverse cultural, social and life skills activities.

In another district (Ntcheu), the team included three retired civil servants, an extension worker and a primary school teacher.

In **Zimbabwe** senior farmer field schools are closely linked to the JFFLS. Volunteer farmer facilitators often come from the senior farmer field schools, but also older JFFLS participants who volunteer after they have received basic training on facilitation.

In **Uganda** a mix of professions and skills that match the varied demands of the programme are used. The facilitators work in pairs to complement each others' strengths and to offer support in those areas where they are less knowledgeable. The facilitators fall into three categories: teachers, who are in charge of the JFFLS in the formal schools and whose work complements that of the community animators; the agriculturists, who also play a supervisory role and bring in the technical aspects in agronomy; and the social animators (some of whom are retired teachers or social workers), in charge of the community JFFLS, to ensure that the children within the communities have someone from their own community to provide the requisite support.

Different criteria altogether was necessary in Kakuma refugee camp in **Kenya**. In order to overcome the lack of transport, facilitators were only selected from the localities where the JFFLS were operating, so that they could walk to the JFFLS sites.

In **Sudan** local extension workers, teachers, and some social workers are primarily responsible for facilitating the implementation of the JFFL Schools. The communities have also nominated willing and capable progressive male and female farmers to be facilitators and "mentors" in implementing this intervention. These key local stakeholders, including the adolescents, designed the basic curriculum of the JFFLS in a very participatory manner.

MOTIVATING / COMPENSATING FACILITATORS

Although many facilitators are motivated by the joy of teaching and helping OVC, others still expect some type of compensation. Some facilitators anticipate free handouts or financial benefits. In **Kenya**, for example, some facilitators left when they discovered that no allowances were forthcoming. Ensuring their own relatives are participants at the JFFLS motivates other facilitators.

Long-term rewards for facilitators can be unforeseen. In Malakal primary school in **Kenya**, the head teacher was extremely interested in the JFFLS and demonstrated his commitment through his very active support for and facilitation of the project in his school. He was eventually rewarded by being promoted to schools inspector because of the success of the JFFLS associated with his school.

Financial compensation was not possible in **Mozambique**, but trainings, regional meetings, exchange visits and petrol allowances were all incentives offered to the facilitators. In 2007, the JFFLS coordinators suggested that bicycles be provided for all the facilitators. A further suggestion from Mozambique is that if JFFLS have funds for income-generating projects, the facilitators themselves should have the opportunity to access these funds and participate in and benefit from income-generating schemes. This would be a large incentive for facilitators. In Tranga Passo, for example, two JFFLS facilitators showed great interest in participating in a pottery micro-project and helped to facilitate a pottery income-generating group as a result.

In **Malawi**, even though the five-member facilitation team comprised one government-paid teacher and one government-paid extension worker, these facilitators often reduced their commitment towards JFFLS activities because of the lack of allowances. If they collaborated with NGOs operating other projects in the area, they would receive allowances. This is an interesting phenomenon, because NGOs generally complain that the reverse is true of United Nations (UN) initiatives (the UN used to be perceived as offering higher allowances than NGOs). Only those community members with a good record of voluntary activities should be invited to participate in the future, according to Malawi reports. A fully trained community worker can provide technical support in other JFFLS areas if he/she has transport.

Another problem noted in **Malawi** is the strong possibility of trained facilitators being 'head-hunted' by NGOs that wish to start up independent JFFLS or other initiatives. These NGOs will pay the 'volunteer' JFFLS facilitators, thus offering an attractive incentive. Some NGOs might be tempted to establish the JFFLS in what is termed by the Malawi coordinator as 'the easy way'. FAO is currently looking at the means of coordinating JFFLS activities in **Malawi**, because a lack of coordination might result in a dilution of the JFFLS concept.

In **Swaziland**, attention was focused on selecting those facilitators who would be available within the community and who would in all probability not migrate or leave. Interesting gender discrepancies were noted in Swaziland. Many of the male facilitators tended to be more elderly (or retired), as young males tend to migrate. Younger facilitators tended to be female, particularly women married within the community. Because such women were settled with children in the community, the likelihood of them leaving the area was minimal and they were favoured over the men.

In **Cameroon** local coordinators are already experiencing difficulty in covering costs for the transport of facilitators to the school sites, but they are seeking solutions with the line ministries involved in the JFFLS.

TRAINING FACILITATORS

As reported from **Malawi** and other countries, training of facilitators was informal and 'hands-on'. Facilitators were encouraged to share views and suggest changes to the schedule of the training as required. Because of the amount of content to be discussed during livelihood and life skills training, in **Malawi** two separate 12-day trainings (three months apart) were created to avoid overburdening the facilitators.

In **Tanzania**, agricultural training was held in Mumembwe village in the Ngara district and local village agricultural extension officers were trained as facilitators for the JFFLS. Training was organized to coincide with the weekend and public holidays, so that people were not taken from their regular work.

In **Tanzania**, as in other countries, it is thought that on-site facilitators and district level partners would benefit from periodic training



Training of
facilitators in
Kigoma,
Tanzania 2006

during the school year, to build their expertise. This would also help to ensure that all relevant topics supposed to be covered at the JFFLS are actually being covered. A second ToT course is being organized in Tanzania to improve on the experiences of the pilot JFFLS phases. At this ToT, the manual and training modules for the JFFLS will be tested and adapted. Likewise in **Zimbabwe**, refresher and reorientation training sessions are often deemed necessary.

During training of facilitators in **Mozambique** (as in other countries), it was found that practice sessions on facilitation techniques were essential. Constructive comments were made afterwards to help facilitators understand the completely different approach used in the JFFLS, in comparison to typical top-down, non-participatory teaching practices.

In **Mozambique** the best JFFLS graduates are asked to help facilitate the second phase of JFFLS schools. Graduates were generally proud to do so. However it was acknowledged that trained facilitators should also be present initially to provide the new facilitators with support. In the first year of the JFFLS in Nhanssana Primary School in **Mozambique**, the JFFLS did not produce good results because of the lack of trained facilitators at the school. The JFFLS also lacked agricultural extensionists to provide assistance. No children graduated

in 2004/2005. However, in 2005/2006, the facilitator problems were resolved and the children responded accordingly. The school decided to combine the first group of children who still attended, together with a new group (a total of 46 children).

In **Cameroon** training of facilitators took place four months before roll-out therefore further training was undertaken over a five day period to refresh skills and to make sure that everyone was aware of and in agreement with the basic principles of the JFFLS approach. In one or two pilot sites there is a shortage of facilitators from certain disciplines, which they hope to resolve in the near future.

SHARING FACILITATING EXPERIENCES

In **Malawi** facilitator meetings are organized every 40 to 60 days. These are district-level meetings, which provide a forum to share JFFLS experiences and discuss the way forward. A small allowance is provided to the facilitators at the end of the meeting to encourage regular attendance. JFFLS committee members are sometimes invited to these meetings to share JFFLS experiences as viewed from a committee perspective.

ADDRESSING CONFLICT AMONGST FACILITATION TEAMS

In **Malawi**, but not reported elsewhere, facilitators with a formal education often acted in a superior manner to those in the facilitation team who have not had the benefit of the same. This kind of reaction can mean that the facilitation team divides into *leaders* (educated) and *followers*. Leaders can adopt a superior manner and look down on non-formally educated co-facilitators. Sometimes the leaders would not allow JFFLS sessions to start unless they were present, negatively affecting curriculum coverage and resulting in the cancellation of some sessions. The community-based facilitators (without any formally recognized education) tended to link better with the JFFLS committees than the formally educated teachers and extension workers. In Malawi it was recommended that because teachers and agricultural extension officers generally do not come from the community, they should not assume leadership. Training of facilitators could possibly include topics on how those with formal education can 'un-pack' their attitudes towards those who have not had the benefit of a formal education, but who are nonetheless knowledgeable in different ways.

A young boy with short, curly hair, wearing a red shirt, is shown from the chest up. He is holding a large branch of a plant with bright green, oval-shaped leaves. He appears to be working with the leaves, possibly for a craft or agricultural project. The background is a clear blue sky. The text is overlaid on a semi-transparent white box with a green border.

3. THE JFFLS CURRICULUM

INTRODUCTION

The “Getting Started” guide for the JFFLS has already been completed, and several country-specific facilitators’ guides are currently being tested. However this depends on the country, as some of the JFFLS are operating in their second or third cycles. Thus many countries already have a rich experience of implementing a JFFLS curriculum. They have adapted the curriculum to their particular context, changed the length of learning cycles and worked without a written curriculum using available training materials. JFFLS also have attempted to deal with sensitive topics and life skills issues, which many of them found to be quite a challenge initially. Some experiences from the field related to the JFFLS curriculum development are outlined in the sections below.

USING LOCALLY APPROPRIATE MATERIALS IN THE CURRICULUM

In **Mozambique** during the ToT, facilitators were asked to design creative exercises using locally appropriate materials. These creative exercises have fed into the Mozambique training manual. Those designing the training manual in Mozambique tried as much as possible to build on existing government-produced materials, so as to link with the school curriculum. Local speakers were invited to the training sessions for the facilitators. Their contributions were also turned into exercises for the manual. They used local examples and local crops to make the content more relevant. Using local information can also help to institutionalize the approach with district and regional agricultural bodies.

In **Mozambique**, one of the JFFLS facilitators, Hélder Moisés João, based in Gorongosa, is a very talented artist. He made beautiful illustrations for the Mozambique manual, and also designed a poster. Having a background in primary school education, he was also able to conceptualize and present the JFFLS ideas in a child-friendly way, linking examples to local rural realities.

ADOPTING A JFFLS CURRICULUM

In **Swaziland**, the JFFLS training manual is currently being reviewed, tested and amended by a team including the JFFLS facilitators, a consultant, and five university students.



Facilitator at work at the JFFLS, Malawi.

In Odhuro, in the Bondo district in **Kenya**, the following topics were part of the curriculum:

- Enterprise selection – short-term crops, long-term crops, medicinal plants and livestock
- Hygiene – good hygiene practices, good grooming, handling food, handling seeds, cleaning and maintaining farm implements
- Nutrition – food value, preparation and utilization
- Dental care
- Environmental conservation measures
- HIV and AIDS
- Home-based care for AIDS patients
- Drug abuse

In **Malawi**, following discussions, a four-month JFFLS curriculum was developed, with help from the examples given in the JFFLS *Getting Started* manual. This curriculum then formed the basis for discussions with the JFFLS facilitators and the community in each school, leading to the participatory development of a JFFLS curriculum adapted

to the activities, agricultural cycle and different needs identified. During facilitators' monthly report meetings, progress on activities identified in the curriculum was discussed. Following an exchange of ideas among members of the JFFLS team, FAO, WFP and the District Ministry of Education Office, these draft curricula were further adapted at district level. Each JFFLS later developed its own written session timetable or plan that sought to give equal weight to the livelihood and life skills components of the programme. JFFLS prefer to develop their session timetables for a period ranging from two to four months (rather than six months).

The **Malawi** JFFLS now follow their district draft curriculum. JFFLS differ in the contents of their session timetable or plans for activities for a designated time. All contents are in line with the local agricultural cycle and agro-ecological conditions. The learning cycle is one year, and all JFFLS cover every components of the curriculum. There is less focus on agricultural activities during the dry season.

LINKING AGRICULTURE TO LIFE FOR THE EMPOWERMENT OF REFUGEE YOUTHS

Because of the particular situation in the Kakuma refugee camp (**Kenya**), where the target group for the JFFLS was of humanitarian concern, sessions on peace building, conflict resolution and repatriation were introduced into the JFFLS curriculum in an innovative way. For example, inter-cropping onions with kale for pest control was used to demonstrate how people who are not related can live peacefully together and benefit each other. Planting a hedge of *neem* trees to act as a windbreak around the vegetable gardens was used as a metaphor for communities benefiting when they interact, support each other and work together. Following the signing of the peace agreement in Sudan, the JFFLS at Kakuma refugee camp was used as a forum to inform the refugee youths about the importance of returning home. Social animation was introduced into the curriculum and used as a repatriation tool.

In **Northern Uganda** the JFFLS in the Adjuman District (10 out of the 36 in total) targets children affected by the war. To date in the area, more than 20,000 children have been abducted to serve as child soldiers and sex slaves. It is believed that more than 85 percent of the rebel army combatants are abducted children, who were forced

to commit atrocities against civilians, often members of their own families or communities (see Table 1 below). The information shared with the children through the JFFLS provides them with life skills and a means of re-integrating into their communities. The practical agricultural skills linked to life skills that they learn through the JFFLS can provide vital guidance for these youths and help them to leave or avoid the deadly cycle of violence and disease that threatens them.

Table 1: War violence experienced by abductees in Uganda

| | |
|--|-----|
| Witnessed killing | 78% |
| Tied or locked up | 68% |
| Received severe beating | 63% |
| Forced to steal or destroy property | 58% |
| Forced to abuse dead bodies | 23% |
| Forced to kill strangers | 20% |
| Forced to kill an opposing soldier | 15% |
| Forced to kill a family member or friend | 8% |

Source: Research Brief, Survey of War-Affected Youth (SWAY) 2006

USING PARTICIPATORY APPROACHES FOR CURRICULUM CONTENT

In **Zimbabwe**, the JFFLS developed the curriculum in a participatory way, using participatory rural communication appraisal tools. Field-based visualization techniques, interviews and group work were used to generate information and to design the curriculum. Participatory processes were used to identify and document the major constraints to crop production in the JFFLS pilot areas. Feasible options for dealing with these constraints were put forward. The curriculum was then organized around these options. For example, infertile soils, mining of the soil and unreliable rainfall were identified as constraints. A curriculum covering integrated soil water and nutrient management technologies was developed, with 14 modules divided into two interrelated sections on soil fertility and water conservation.

Similarly, the shortage of poultry feeds in the dry months and the lack of proper housing, resulting in high mortality, were identified as constraints to indigenous poultry production. Solutions put forward included supplementing poultry feeds with grain from the JFFLS

plots and providing low-cost improved housing for the animals. As a result, a six-module curriculum using participatory approaches was developed around these options and serves as a guideline.

Also in **Zimbabwe** one of the causes of the high incidence of HIV and AIDS rates in the communities was identified as resulting from a lack of knowledge on HIV and AIDS mitigation strategies. The JFFLS came up with a four-module HIV and AIDS curriculum.

USING CREATIVE AND CHILD-CENTRED ACTIVITIES

In **Zimbabwe** the JFFLS coordinators and facilitators emphasized the importance of group dynamics in the JFFLS curriculum. Child-centred activities were included in all lesson plans. Similarly in **Mozambique** it was found that starting with a story or game grounded in community living was the best way to introduce various JFFLS topics. Although children have few problems in developing and acting out role-plays around a story, not all facilitators are comfortable with the idea of theatre. In **Mozambique** ready-made plays were prepared for the training manual. A team of trainers from Ancis Politeia introduced the Patch Adams approach to include the use of humour as a way of tackling threatening issues such as child exploitation and dealing with loss. To this end, new exercises were incorporated in the Mozambican facilitators' guide

In **Malawi** cultural activities were high on the JFFLS agenda. Open field days were organized to pass on messages and also to have fun. Drama, songs, dances and poetry were used to pass on messages about HIV and AIDS issues (in the Nakundu JFFLS). Dances included *ingoma*, *chintali* and *mabeat*.

The *Ingoma dance* is a Ngoni warrior dance. The Ngonis (who live in central and northern Malawi) used to dance this dance after success in war. In the JFFLS, boys and girls dance together. The girls clap their hands and the boys brandish their weapons (hoes, axes, etc.).



Mabeat dance,
Malawi

They celebrate their victory over malnutrition and food insecurity. Children celebrate their successes together. This instils gender equity amongst the JFFLS boys and girls.

The *Chintali dance* is an all-girls dance, while two to four boys beat the drums. Most messages in the JFFLS *chintali* dance tackle girl child issues, e.g the need for girls' education, girl child empowerments, girl child protection, gender equity in household chores. Nutrition issues are also depicted.

In the *Mabeat dance* two children beat drums and the other children dance to the beat. Both boys and girls dance together. Normally there is no singing. This is an exercise dance and involves rigorous shaking of the entire body. Children use this as a form of exercise (energizer) during JFFLS sessions.

Both boys and girls can join in dance activities. Interactive drama and stage plays are put on, usually with a focus on HIV and AIDS, gender, agriculture and the JFFLS themselves. Likewise in Odhuro, in the Bondo district **of Kenya**, curriculum topics were reinforced with songs, poems and role-plays. For example, children performed a dramatized song for the Kenyan Agricultural Research Institute on the uses of cassava.

One youth in Odhuro, who had dropped out of school early, returned to the JFFLS and was able to entertain and educate other children with his own rap compositions on education. Drugs had been a part of this youth's earlier life. Being young and 'hip,' he was well able to relate to the JFFLS participants and pass on messages through rap about the importance of education.

In **Northern Uganda** at least 30 children who previously dropped out of school are now back in the JFFLS, where they are transferring knowledge gained to practice in their home gardens.

TACKLING THE LIFE SKILLS COMPONENT OF THE CURRICULUM

Experience from the JFFLS has shown that the schools can provide a safe space for both sexes to discuss sensitive issues. Nevertheless, there is often a need to strengthen the life skills components in the JFFLS. Facilitators require a lot of help in planning activities around life skills. How to integrate life skills into the curriculum is definitely an area that requires additional training. In **Mozambique** it was found that using humour to introduce 'serious' subjects worked well. In **Malawi** it was noted that most JFFLS prefer to place life skills sessions in between livelihood sessions, dividing sessions into things to know and things to do. In the pilot JFFLS in **Tanzania**, the partner COBET programme already provides life skills training to these out-of-school children and they tackled this aspect of the curriculum.

In **Mozambique**, it was found that it was necessary to include a life skills trainer in technical trainings to facilitate the integration of the life skills component in the JFFLS lessons.

Mini JFFLS libraries have been established at the JFFLS sites in **Malawi**. These are looked after by the facilitators in coordination with the JFFLS committee members. Resources are shared and important information on livelihoods and life skills are kept there.

ADDRESSING GENDER ISSUES

The AIDS epidemic has emphasised the inherent danger of acute gender inequalities when it comes to access to resources and the risks of HIV infection. To combat these inequalities the JFFLS in **Mozambique**

promote gender equal attitudes not only through the equal exercise of roles and responsibilities by both girls and boys in all activities, but also through the practice of human ecosystem analysis (HESA). In HESA the children learn to perceive and understand the links between the community and the field, the relationships between the social, economic and environmental spheres and of the gender system that dictates the relations between all of these.

In **Malawi** drama and dance is used by the girls and boys to illustrate these relationships in verbal and non-verbal way and help raise awareness with members of the community on how gender inequalities can make women and girls more vulnerable to HIV infection. Because gender analysis is seen as a cross-cutting issues in all activities in the JFFLS the girls and boys become more aware of traditional power relations between women and men, their shortcomings and as a consequence they develop culturally sounds ways of addressing them differently.

In **Uganda** the JFFLS are located near FFS where gender analysis is included in the training programme to assist the participants to understand the social, cultural and economic advantages of promoting gender equal attitudes. By creating strong links between the adult and youth groups the JFFLS participants learn by example that gender equality can lead to social and cultural advantages that benefit all members of the community.

In **Mozambique**, both boys and girls are involved in all the steps of processing fruits such as papaya, pineapple etc. and how to market the resulting produce. This is one way of encouraging some change in traditional roles.

In **Kenya** in the learning cycle “Protection” was introduced as one of the main topics. Refugees youths, boys and girls alike, were taught to make the link between the protection of their crops and protection of themselves. AESA was conducted on a regular basis and linked with reproductive health and HIV protection. On graduation day the girls and boys were able to demonstrate to their community members, through AESA and HESA, the links between crop protection and self-protection especially against HIV infection.

It was found in **Malawi** that most of the messages in JFFLS drama,

songs and dances depicted girls and women as the main culprits in the spread of HIV and AIDS, which is perceived as being spread only through sexual intercourse with a sex worker or a 'loose' girl. HIV and AIDS talks during the life skills sessions helped to dispel this myth.

In Odhuro in the Bondo district of **Kenya**, one girl who was very shy before joining the JFFLS gained confidence and self-esteem throughout the JFFLS cycle. This was evidenced by her ability to draw attention to some of the problems schoolgirls face during their menstrual cycle. This young woman even started a girls' forum in the school, where girls met weekly to discuss issues affecting girls in particular. The JFFLS coordinators later took some of these issues on board.

In the Caprivi region of **Namibia**, a traditional leader (Induna) told the facilitators that frank discussions about sex are taboo in Mubiza. Sexual education is typically only addressed in separate initiation ceremonies for boys and girls. However, the Caprivi Region has a staggering HIV infection rate of 43 percent. The challenge for the JFFLS was to address sexual education in a manner that is approved by the community while also addressing gender issues. The JFFLS came up with an action plan. They returned to the communities and created awareness about what would be discussed at the JFFLS. They involved the community in presenting sensitive issues on HIV and agreed to implement the action plan in separate male/female groups, followed by plenary discussions. Queries can be placed in an anonymous question box by the participants. Facilitators are not expected to present certain life skills topics to children until a comfortable rapport with them has been established.

INTRODUCING INCOME-GENERATING ACTIVITIES

Some of the JFFLS provided the children with basic skills and know-how on developing business ideas. In **Swaziland**, for each of the JFFLS garden sites, the children reserved a portion of the land for each child to produce vegetable crops, which were consumed at their homesteads with excess being sold. One example from Mahlangatsha outlines how children learned about growing spinach and its nutritional properties. The children were assisted in pricing their spinach produce and marketing it in the neighbourhood. A notice was put up near the garden, advertising spinach for sale to potential customers. Sales from

the crops were a source of income to benefit the whole group, and children were encouraged to price each leaf depending on its size and quality. A fund from the plots was generated. Each JFFLS site then had to decide how to use the money. The facilitators encouraged them to save the income to purchase additional inputs for farming. Children began to realize the value of producing spinach for resale rather than only for home consumption.

In **Zimbabwe**, activities in the JFFLS are clearly linked to income generation. For example, extra birds produced at the JFFLS during poultry studies are either marketed or shared among members, or both. Income is subsequently used to support the JFFLS. Some JFFLS were formed around social groups such as soccer teams. Sometimes surplus income is channelled towards supporting their sporting activities, which is much appreciated by the children.

Unity and Malakal JFFLS in Kakuma refugee camp in **Kenya** formed groups that continued using their agricultural skills after graduation. The groups produced and harvested vegetables for sale in the local market. One member managed to start a kerosene business following profits made from selling eggs.

In **Malawi** following ten months of observation, the facilitation teams agreed that income-generating activities should be introduced into the curriculum to help ensure that the JFFLS become self-sufficient.

INCLUDING AGRICULTURAL SCIENCE AS A SUBJECT

In **Tanzania**, JFFLS pupils were typically quite young because of collaboration with the COBET initiative. Young JFFLS participants provide a challenge, because they will not immediately implement what they have learned. Two questions that remain to be answered are: Should a school with an agricultural garden that teaches agricultural science as one of the subjects introduce JFFLS for a select group of orphans in that school? If the school does not have agricultural science in its normal curriculum, should the JFFLS be attached to the school organized as a school project?

ORGANIZING EXCHANGE VISITS

Exchange visits were encouraged amongst facilitators from different JFFLS in many countries, including **Malawi, Kenya** and **Zimbabwe**. In parts of **Mozambique**, exchange visits were found to create energy and fresh ideas for both children and facilitators, leading to curriculum diversification. In fact, the Ministry of Education focal point from Manica province is actively involved in organizing exchange visits between schools (including facilitators and children). Transport reimbursements are provided on approved visits.

Once the JFFLS in **Malawi** becomes self-sustaining (presumably after nine months), JFFLS coordinators are planning to fund exchange trips. In **Zimbabwe** the JFFLS, although autonomous, are linked to the senior farmer field schools and some activities are harmonized. JFFLS graduates are encouraged to visit and join the senior schools.

SPREADING LEARNING WITHIN COMMUNITIES

In **Mozambique** JFFLS community gatherings are organized periodically. At such gatherings guardians, parents and relatives of the JFFLS graduates have an opportunity to give their impressions of the JFFLS. The meetings provide space for the community to agree on income-generating activities for selected JFFLS graduates. In Nhamwale (Barué district, 150 km north of Chimoio in Manica province), at one such meeting parents recalled how they had actually learned from the youths attending the JFFLS. One man related that when passing the JFFLS field, he would consult with youths about when to seed and how to space crops, and discuss with them the advantages of planting in lines. Although he acknowledged that there was more work involved in line planting of crops using the correct spacing, he could see the rewards in terms of higher yields.

Also in **Mozambique**, the annual presentation of the JFFLS to the community has been a very positive way of getting the children to improve their presentation skills and disseminate learning. On a typical presentation day, two children present one crop, discussing different important points on its care and use. They also present the improved JFFLS infrastructures. Finally, different cultural presentations are given, with songs and dance from the JFFLS course.

In **Malawi**, the JFFLS were established at community primary schools. Given that communities have traditionally regarded schools with suspicion due to top-down authoritarian approaches, it took a lot of effort to gain their trust during the first two months of establishing the JFFLS. All members of the community were offered the 'freedom of the garden'. They could share ideas and innovations with the children. Communities are free to visit the JFFLS for any information regarding how the different crops are grown. The JFFLS children, facilitators and committee members welcome anyone from the community into the school garden and they are allowed to bring their own crops to experiment in the garden. Facilitators examine the crops and see if they are beneficial to the children. Various beliefs on the medicinal properties of some plants are assessed. Most communities now feel 'ownership' of the garden and help with most JFFLS activities. Such collaboration means that community members are available when help is needed and should mean the schools are a more organic element in community life.

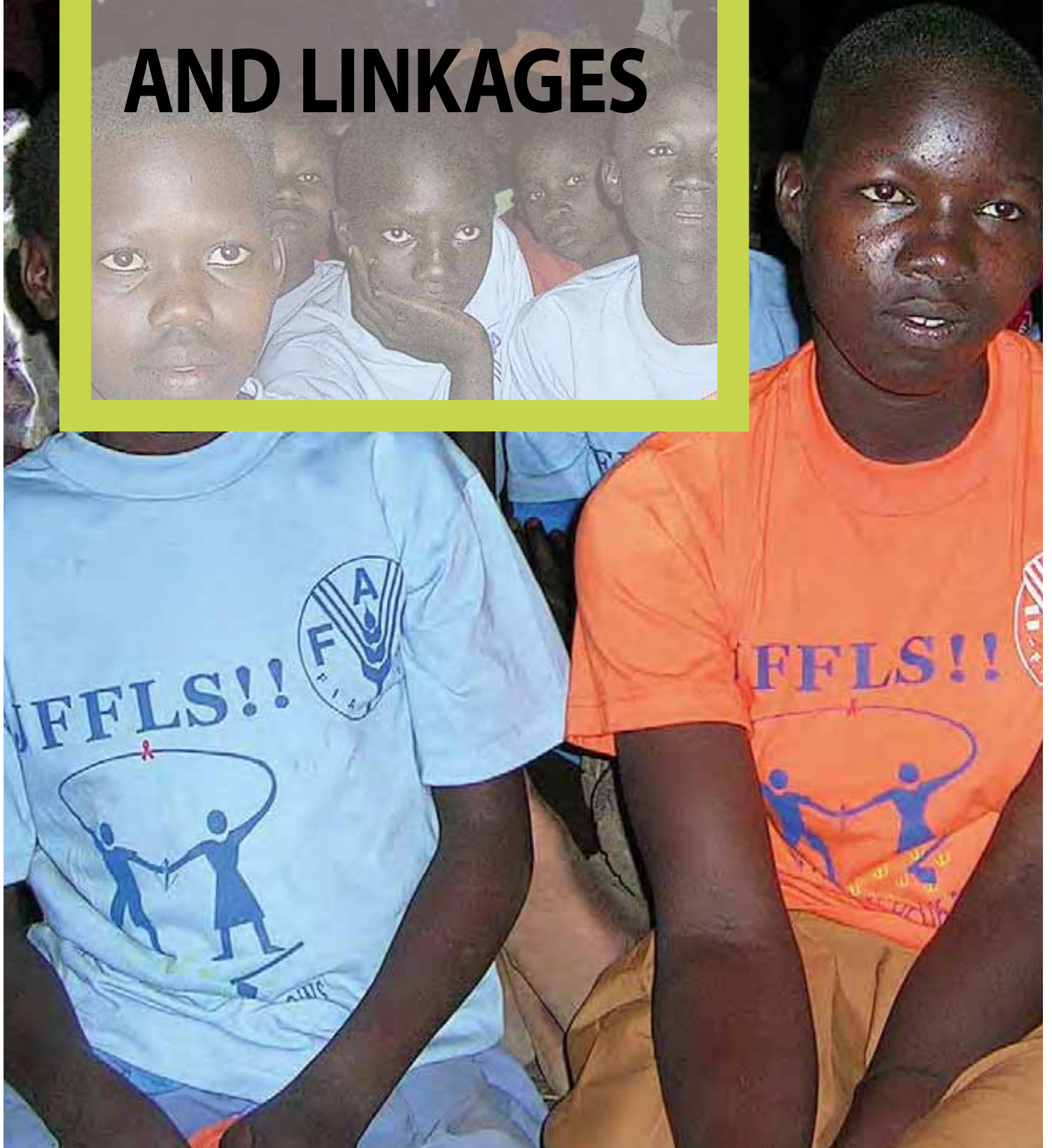
In Oduro, in the Bondo district of **Kenya**, the community around the JFFLS actually comes to the school for advice, seeking guidance on new technology, nutrition, herbal medicines, preserving foods, storing and so on. In fact, many guardians have joined the project for the sole purpose of learning new agricultural practices that they can apply on their own land.



Graduation day
in Namazizi,
Malawi

4.

SUSTAINABILITY AND LINKAGES



INTRODUCTION

Many JFFLS are faced with the problem of continuing to run their schools when funding ends. Linking with national systems to institutionalize the JFFLS in some way is ideal in the long term but not always possible in the short term. More immediately, there are many issues around meeting the high demand for JFFLS, and around the felt need that the school should reach more than 30 young people per school. If JFFLS are to expand, an important measure is to ensure that communities take their own steps toward sustainability, raising funds on their own, partnering with civil society organizations and local NGOS, and linking with local administrations and line ministries. In many countries, working through the formal schools does ensure that awareness of the JFFLS concepts reaches children beyond those who have been directly targeted. In some instances, facilitators or graduates have attempted to set up new JFFLS in other locations.

The short case examples that follow were provided by JFFLS coordinators in the field. They describe some of the issues that arise around sustainability.

LINKING WITH THE COMMUNITY

Improved agricultural techniques seem to be applied around many JFFLS, demonstrating obvious results. In **Tanzania**, two JFFLS in Mnjobwe and Kazuramimba villages reported that they harvested a bumper maize crop at the end of 2006. They were able to feed themselves and sell the surplus to meet other school demands, ensuring sustainability of the schools. Plans are underway to expand and apply what was learned to individual one-acre plots. The commitment of the community to the JFFLS concept is evident in another village in Tanzania, Biturana. Even though the cabbage harvest in Biturana (grown through the JFFLS) was affected by floods, the community has still requested that cabbages be grown again in 2007.

In Odhuro in the Bondo district of **Kenya**, following the first cycle of the JFFLS, the school authorities were proud to be able to feed the entire school population of 622. The harvest from the JFFLS has diversified and includes sorghum, maize, onions, beans, sweet

pepper, sweet potato, cowpeas and kale. Guardians contributed significantly to the JFFLS success. When an agro-biodiversity project was introduced to this site, the medicinal and nutritional values of local vegetables (often no longer planted) were highlighted. Mito, Osuga, Susa and Dek were subsequently planted, making indigenous vegetables popular again.

In **Zimbabwe**, Catholic Relief Services (an international NGO) is implementing the JFFLS and works through local NGOs as partners.

Mozambique provides us with an example of how schools can move towards sustainability. The Nhamagua Primary School lies in the district of Macossa, a semi-arid district that suffers from a lack of food security and water supply. In 2004, a JFFLS was set up in this district with the objective of introducing appropriate agricultural practices for the area. It was hoped that the JFFLS would not only train young students but would also gradually provide the local community with sustainable agricultural techniques. Once the JFFLS programme was introduced, 30 youths started learning about various conservation agriculture methods, how to maximize water conservation and soil fertility, while depending as much as possible on locally available resources. At the beginning of the programme, many members of the community were sceptical and did not believe that positive results would be possible in such a difficult agro-ecological zone. However, the scenario began to change when the students achieved good results.

Having convinced the school director that progress was possible, the JFFLS programme then began negotiations with the local Chief to allocate more land for the school. The JFFLS youths shared their knowledge on better conservation techniques. Before harvest, the school organized a field day to enable the youths to share their knowledge with the community. They displayed their new skills, shared information on the production techniques used, and outlined what they had consumed and sold so far. From the sales they managed to earn 5.000 Mtn (about US\$200)! With their profits, they bought seed for the next season, as well as a pig and some chickens to commemorate International Children's Day. They also bought school materials to help schoolmates who did not have notebooks or other school essentials.

Today Nhamagua primary school has at least 11 goats, as well as ducks and chickens of its own. Not only is it a successful example of the JFFLS programme, but it is also a reference point for horticulture product sales. Producers and retailers from the area around the school go there to buy products.

LINKING WITH GOVERNMENT PROGRAMMES

For World Food Day in 2005, one of the JFFLS in Odhuro, in the Bondo district of **Kenya**, was chosen to host district celebrations for the day. The Provincial Director of Agriculture, the District Commissioner and other dignitaries were present. The children were given the opportunity to show off their harvest and explain what they had been learning. The Provincial Director challenged the community to replicate what the children were doing, but to his surprise found out that some members of the community were already replicating the JFFLS activities. The Director was so impressed that the Provincial Administration offered to support the JFFLS from January 2006.

In **Mozambique**, one of the priority policies of the Ministry of Education is to have school food production on a large scale at all government schools. This ambitious aim has posed some problems in institutionalizing the JFFLS programme. The government wants large-scale production, while the JFFLS programme wants the emphasis to be on learning and small-scale production. Nevertheless, there are some good examples of synergy between the two programmes. At Nhamawale Primary School in Manica province, the school director has set up large production fields around the JFFLS learning field. In this way, the JFFLS youths can directly share and discuss the results of their experiments, as the rest of the school works in the nearby fields.

In **Mozambique** in Manica province, the government is currently testing a nutrition manual called *Vamos Comer* (Let's Eat) at three schools. The testing has proved to be a good means of linking to the JFFLS curriculum and including nutrition education throughout the province.

In one of the schools in Tambara district of **Mozambique**, nine youths (12-14 years old) are making their own gardens using the practices

learned in JFFLS. They have organized themselves into groups of two or three. When asked about their objectives, they said that they wanted to improve their food sources and to have money to buy notebooks for school. When asked who was giving them plants and seeds, they said they had asked the school facilitator and that the neighbours gave them watering cans. Two of the youths are orphans. They have already completed the fencing and are now transplanting cabbage and tomato. The JFFLS programme decided to support the initiative of these children and spoke about it with the Administrator of the district. The Vice-Minister of Education was visiting the school at the same time, and was impressed with the work carried out.

An ongoing discussion is underway on with the Ministry of Education to include the JFFLS approach in training at the Teachers' Colleges. This would mean that a future generation of primary school teachers would already have some background in JFFLS, increasing the pool of trained facilitators available.

In **Mozambique**, it is also felt to be important that the government agree to delay transferring any people trained as facilitators by the JFFLS programme for two or three years. As the majority of them come from the Ministries of Agriculture and Education, the government has the power to ensure that measures are taken to guarantee their presence in the area for the requisite period. It is also critical that there be enough capacity to keep the school going if someone is transferred from that school.

HELPING GRADUATES PAVE THE WAY FOR SUSTAINABILITY

Plans are underway in **Malawi** to give 'start-up' packages, including agricultural inputs, to the first group of graduates. This will allow them to put into practice immediately what they have learned at the JFFLS. Along with their guardians, they will be expected to form agricultural clubs and establish village learning gardens and share what was covered at the JFFLS with the community. In collaboration with the agricultural extensions development office in the area, graduates will be expected to act as trainers for other children.

In **Mozambique**, JFFLS graduates have been making presentations and giving demonstrations on good agricultural practices at the Chimoio

Open Centre in the Tranga Passo Barrio. The JFFLS graduates gather there with members of the church community three times a week and lead a 15-minute discussion on the different subjects covered at the JFFLS programme. All members of the community (both old and young) benefit from hearing new ideas.

High-value horticultural crops such as lettuce and cabbage are the sole source of income for people in the Tranga Passo Barrio in **Mozambique**. Having observed the use of conservation agriculture techniques through the JFFLS at the Chimoio Open Centre's fields, local producers decided to approach the Chimoio Centre's pastor to seek assistance from the JFFLS graduates to help them improve their horticultural production. Some of the graduates were selected to assist the local producers and, in exchange, the youths receive horticultural crops for their consumption, thereby improving their diet.

One of the orphans is the leader of the young JFFLS graduates involved in helping local producers. His life has greatly improved since entering the JFFLS programme. Now 17 years old, he has found his vocation as a main agricultural facilitator in the Centre's JFFLS programme. Along with his older brother, who also facilitates life skills at another centre, they hope to study at the agricultural college and become agricultural extensionists. The JFFLS programme is introducing bursaries with this follow-up strategy in mind. The brothers are already well on their way to fulfilling their dream!





**Empowering
orphans
and vulnerable
children
living in a world
with HIV and**

AIDS