

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



The designations employed and the presentation of material in this information product do not imply the expression of any opinion whatsoever on the part of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations concerning the legal or development status of any country, territory, city or area or of its authorities, or concerning the delimitation of its frontiers or boundaries. The mention of specific companies or products of manufacturers, whether or not these have been patented, does not imply that these have been endorsed or recommended by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations in preference to others of a similar nature that are not mentioned.

All rights reserved. Reproduction and dissemination of material in this information product for educational or other non-commercial purposes are authorized without any prior written permission from the copyright holders provided the source is fully acknowledged. Reproduction of material in this information product for resale or other commercial purposes is prohibited without written permission of the copyright holders. Applications for such permission should be addressed to:

Chief

Electronic Publishing Policy and Support Branch - Communication Division

FAO

Viale delle Terme di Caracalla, 00153 Rome, Italy

or by e-mail to: copyright@fao.org

Photos: © FAO / C.Djeddah, G.Bizzarri, C. Kachale, E.Mativo, R. Mavanga

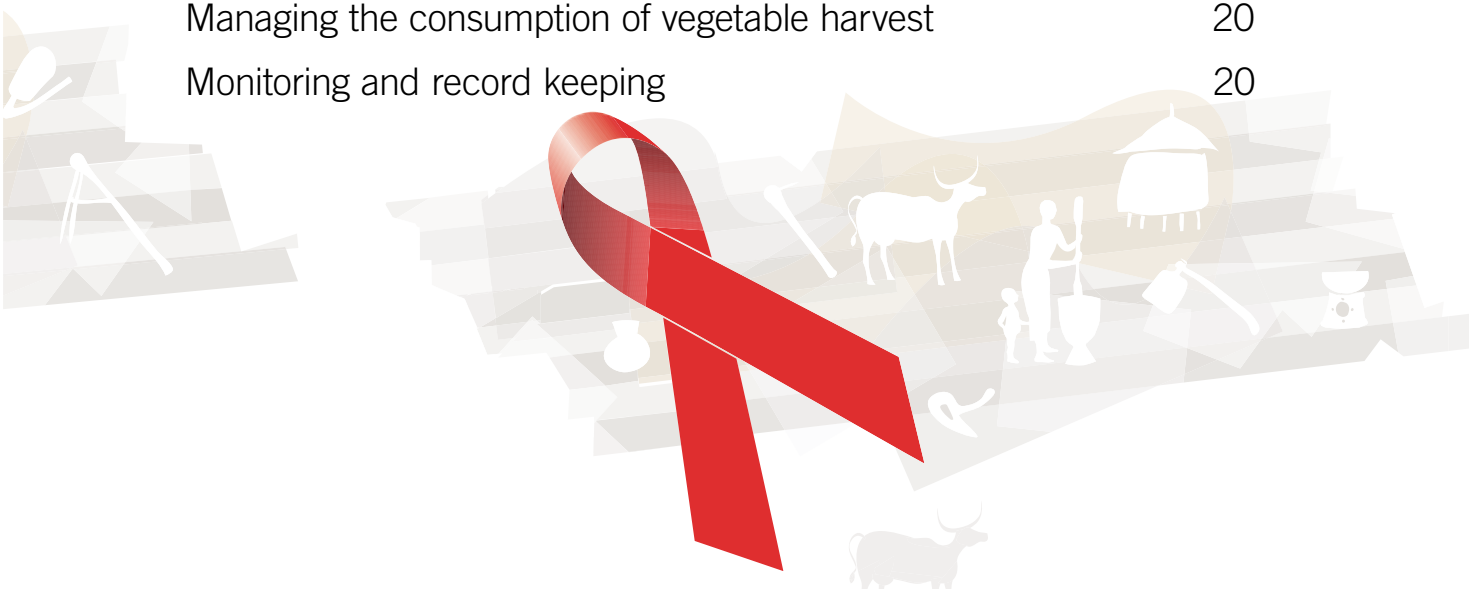
© FAO 2008

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



TABLE OF CONTENTS

| | |
|---|------------|
| List of Acronyms | v |
| Introduction | vii |
| Acknowledgements | ix |
| Junior Farmer Field and Life Schools | 1 |
| 1. General management of the JFFLS | 7 |
| Introduction | 8 |
| Involving the community | 8 |
| Negotiating with local authorities on resources | 8 |
| Involving stakeholders at an early stage | 9 |
| Developing a good team spirit | 10 |
| Following the right procedures and protocol | 10 |
| Building guardian commitment | 11 |
| Creating JFFLS committees with women members | 11 |
| Engaging men in the preparatory labour | 12 |
| Selecting JFFLS participants | 12 |
| Timing JFFLS activities | 17 |
| Ensuring girls stay in the JFFLS | 18 |
| Providing tools, equipment and water | 18 |
| Resolving power struggles | 19 |
| Managing the consumption of vegetable harvest | 20 |
| Monitoring and record keeping | 20 |



| | |
|---|-----------|
| 2. Facilitators – the lynchpin of JFFLS | 23 |
| Introduction | 24 |
| Finding the right facilitators | 24 |
| Motivating / compensating facilitators | 26 |
| Training facilitators | 27 |
| Sharing facilitating experiences | 29 |
| Addressing conflict amongst facilitation teams | 29 |
| | |
| 3. The JFFLS curriculum | 31 |
| Introduction | 32 |
| Using locally appropriate materials in the curriculum | 32 |
| Adopting a JFFLS curriculum | 32 |
| Linking agriculture to life for the empowerment of refugee youths | 34 |
| Using participatory approaches for curriculum content | 35 |
| Using creative and child-centred activities | 36 |
| Tackling the life skills component of the curriculum | 38 |
| Addressing gender issues | 38 |
| Introducing income-generating activities | 40 |
| Including agricultural science as a subject | 41 |
| Organizing exchange visits | 42 |
| Spreading learning within communities | 40 |
| | |
| 4. Sustainability and linkages | 45 |
| Introduction | 46 |
| Linking with the community | 46 |
| Linking with government programmes | 48 |
| Helping graduates pave the way for sustainability | 49 |

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.

Carol Djeddah
Senior Officer
Gender, Equity and Rural Employment Division, FAO

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This report has been compiled by Ms Una Murray and Ms Patricia Colbert.

FAO is grateful for the multi-country collaboration for the development of this document:

Cameroon – Jean-Paul Mbessa Ayissi and Fred William Tjeega Tchoukoue

Kenya – Anne Anam, Masai Masai and Eric Mativo

Malawi – Caesar Kachale and Chesterman Kumwenda

Mozambique – Annette Jaitner, Rogerio Mavanga and Mundie Salm

Namibia – Patrick Karanja, Kiwan Cato and Melissa Fraser

Swaziland – Hlengiwe Nsibandze, John Weatherson and Sibusiso Mondlane

Sudan – Yonis Berkele and Emmanuel Lujuo

Tanzania – Raphael Laizer and Nhamo Ndebele

Uganda – Winfred ‘Winnie’ Nalyongo and James Okoth

Zimbabwe – Willie Makumbe, Dave Masendeke, Fadzai Mukonoweshuro and Zwanyadza Soroti

This work has been supported by FAO and the United Nations System-Wide Work Programme on Scaling-up HIV and AIDS Services for Populations of Humanitarian Concern (funded by the UK Department for International Development), whose support allowed us to analyse some of the needs and realities of vulnerable youths.

Thanks also go to Francesca Dalla Valle, Paolo Israel and Brett Shapiro for the contributions they made and to Antonella Porfido for the graphic design.

JUNIOR FARMER FIELD AND LIFE SCHOOLS

FAO, in collaboration with the World Food Programme (WFP) and other partners, is implementing Junior Farmer Field and Life Schools (JFFLS) in parts of Africa that have been badly affected by HIV and AIDS. To date, JFFLS have been set up in Cameroon, Kenya, Namibia, Malawi, Mozambique, Sudan, Swaziland, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

These schools target vulnerable boys and girls, often orphans, and invite them to attend a JFFLS set up in collaboration with the local community.

At the JFFLS, agricultural techniques are covered and focus on both traditional and modern agricultural practices. Children learn practical agricultural skills by doing practical agricultural tasks in an allocated plot or field. The children, who are 12-18 years of age, are trained for periods from 6 to 12 months (depending on where the schools are set up) following the local cropping cycle. Children learn about local agro-ecological conditions, field preparation, sowing and transplanting, weeding, irrigation, integrated pest management, utilization and conservation of available resources, utilization and processing of food crops, harvesting, storage and marketing skills. The choice of agriculture-related activities varies, as it depends on the agro-ecological location of the school.



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

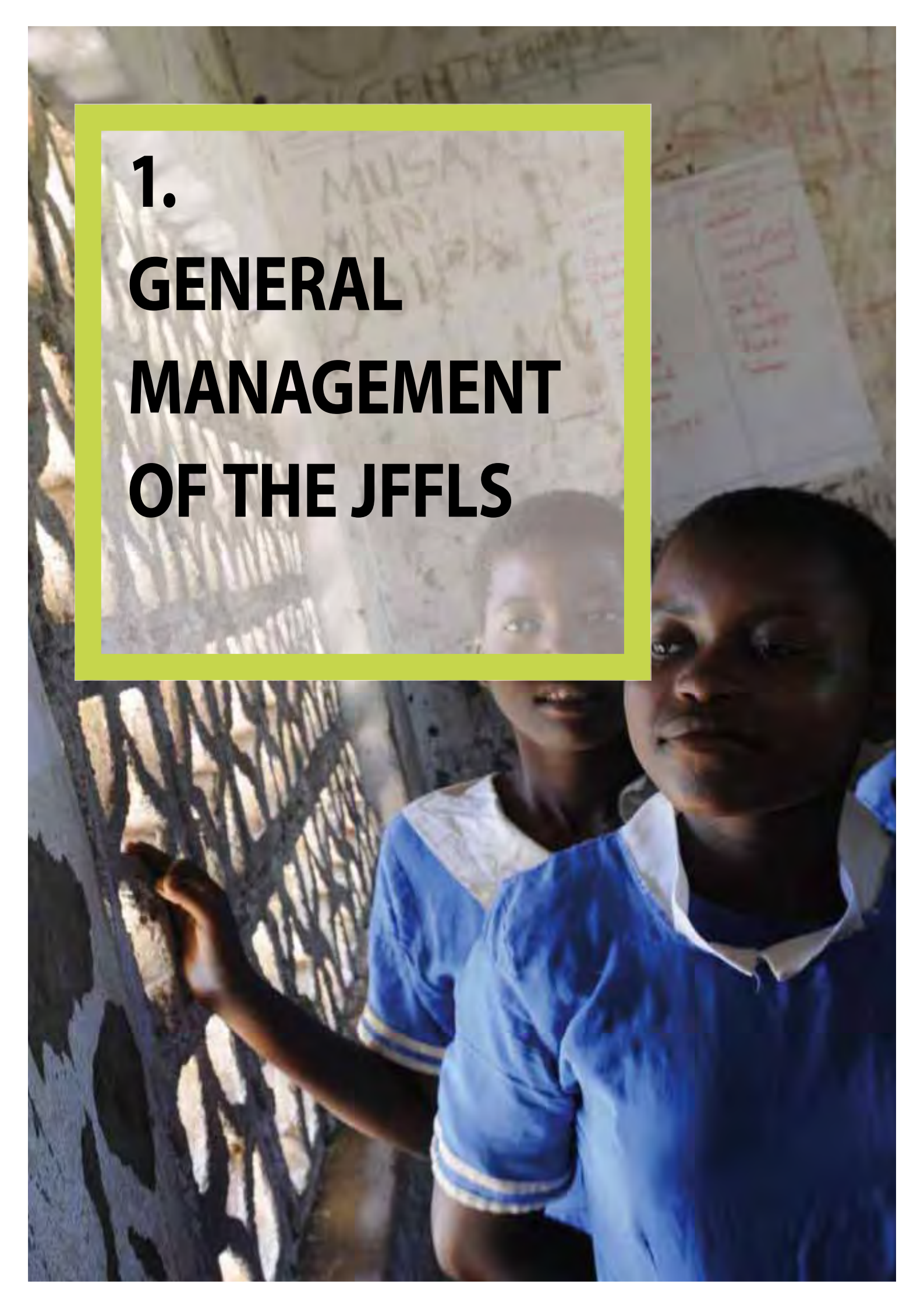
the districts of Malawi, where eight JFFLS are located, vegetables are improving the diets of many families who mainly survive on fish.

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 girl in the foreground is slightly to the right, and the girl behind her is to the left. They are standing in front of a wall that has some graffiti and a piece of paper pinned to it. The wall appears to be made of concrete or plaster. The lighting is natural, suggesting an outdoor or semi-outdoor setting. The overall tone is educational and focused on the girls' interaction with the wall.

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.