

YOUTH ENGAGEMENT FOR IMPACT IN ETHIOPIA

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PROJECT	Leave no youth behind: Young care leavers claim their rights in Ethiopia, Kenya and Somaliland
	Partner: SOS Children's Villages Ethiopia
	Country: Ethiopia
	Period: 2022 – 2025
CHANGE	<p>The project has contributed to enhanced awareness about the challenges faced by young care leavers and enhanced engagement of government stakeholders to address these challenges. Following the launch of the 'Leave no youth behind' project, representatives of key government offices from Addis Ababa City Administration along with young care leavers associations, and like-minded organizations have joined the Project Advisory Committee (PAC). 3 of the 12 Project Advisory Committee members are youth and representatives of associations organising care-experienced youth. The first tangible change so far is the awareness among government representatives of the specific challenges and obstacles faced by care-experienced youth while seeking livelihood and health services (sexual and reproductive health as well as mental health and psycho-social support).</p> <p>The project has also expanded SOS Ethiopia's collaboration with like-minded organisations providing alternative care services in Addis to enhance outreach, share learning and increase impact.</p>
CONTEXT	<p>Young care leavers in Ethiopia, aged 15 to 29, are marginalized and double vulnerable. In addition to facing all the challenges faced by young people such as unemployment, addiction, and poorly served by existing services, young care leavers face unfavourable policy environments and lack of social support system. This is mostly because government stakeholders pay them less attention and their transition into independent living is not included in policies and action plans of the relevant government body. Most young people in this group are at risk for low self-esteem, forced labour, living on the streets, abusing drugs, self-harm, getting in conflict with the law, or being trafficked, radicalized, or forced to migrate. Young care leavers also face challenges in getting adequate and quality social services such as health, housing, and employment.</p> <p>Only a few residential care facilities provide good after-care support, and the government has no specific provisions in recognition of the multi-faceted vulnerability of these young people.</p>
CONTRIBUTION	<p>In 2019, the annual UN Resolution on the Rights of the Child urged state parties to ensure special protection and assistance to adolescents and young people leaving alternative care in preparation for their transition to independent living. However, young care leavers' rights have not been directly addressed by national-level laws, policies, and practices in Ethiopia.</p> <p>The project has contributed to creating awareness about the challenges faced by young care leavers and enhanced the engagement of government stakeholders to address these challenges. Key decision-makers have become part of the project advisory committee and support the agenda that the government as duty bearer holds responsibility to provide after-care support and include youth with care-experience in relevant social protection schemes.</p> <p>The fact that SOS Ethiopia is now invited to provide input to the national Youth Leaving Care Guideline and the Child Protection Information Management System (CPIMS) indicates that the project has been able even in a short time to put the issue of young care leavers on the government's policy agenda.</p>



ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

ACTIVITY	In order to maximize the impact of joint advocacy efforts and improve the quality of project implementation, the project supported the establishment of a Project Advisory Committee (PAC). The PAC members, chaired by the Addis Ababa Bureau of Women, Children, and Social Affairs, are now working to develop a nationwide learning and advocacy platform to advance the agenda of youth leaving care in Ethiopia. In its most recent meeting, the PAC also provided strategic direction on the development of a national youth leaving care guideline.
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LESSONS	<p>In this very early stage of the project, three key lessons have emerged from this case.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Firstly, the engagement of care leavers in our advocacy work is crucial because it is their right to participate in decision making that relates to their situation. • Secondly, the involvement of young care leavers in the implementation of the project and different advocacy platforms have contributed immensely to raising awareness about the gaps in laws, policies, and practices that challenge young care leavers' access to quality social services. • Thirdly, involving government stakeholders from the start and bringing them close to implementation is the best way to influence policy development and ensure sustainability and local ownership.
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EVIDENCE	Because of the groundwork of the Project Advisory Committee SOS Ethiopia has been able to engage more closely with the Ministry of Women and Social Affairs. This has opened possibilities for influencing the Ethiopian government's Child Protection Information Management System to add data on young care leavers and provide input to the national Youth Leaving Care Guideline. Another important milestone made possible through the Project Advisory Committee is the Technical Working Group on care leavers in Addis Ababa established in October 2022 to help secure a national YCL learning and advocacy platform, is established and strengthened.
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DOMAINS	Development strategy priorities:	Democracy and Human Rights
	Changes in the lives of people facing poverty, marginalization, or vulnerability	----
	Changes in laws, policies, and practices that affect people's rights	X
	Changes in the capacity of organizations and communities to support rights	----
	Changes in partnerships and collaborations that support people's rights	X
	Changes in partnerships of groups facing poverty, marginalization, or vulnerability	X
Changes in local leadership of development and humanitarian work	----	