

YOUTH INFLUENCING CARE REFORM IN KENYA

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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 Kenya
	Country: Kenya
	Period: 2022 – 2025

CHANGE	<p>The project has significantly contributed to national advocacy for the rights of children and youth that have lost parental care. SOS Kenya has engaged and empowered care-experienced youth to participate in high level advocacy presenting their views and personal stories to raise awareness of the specific vulnerability and human rights violations of children and young people who have grown up in alternative care.</p> <p>This has noticeably influenced national legislation and strategies in Kenya, in terms of the revised Children's Act of 2022 and the National Care Reform Strategy 2022 that both contain important commitments from the government to protect and promote the rights of children and youth.</p> <p>This is a noticeable achievement that will impact the lives of children in alternative care in many years to come. The Care Reform Strategy has a 10-year timeframe showing the way forward in terms of deinstitutionalization and promoting community and family-based care instead of residential care that is so common and widespread in Kenya. This will have a huge impact on the child protection systems and social support mechanisms that now need to include care leavers as a special interest group in need of support. So far, the government has shown commitment to follow this through and now the work focus on holding them accountable to keep their promises and provide the necessary investment.</p>
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CONTEXT	<p>Child and youth participation is a right enshrined in the Constitution of Kenya (2010), the Children Act 2022, the Child Participation Guidelines 2008 among other policies. The government has established formal structures for promoting child and youth participation such as the Kenya Children Assemblies and child rights clubs in schools. Most of these platforms are not adequately funded and supported to ensure that the voices of children and youth are heard and respected. In addition, there is poor inclusion of particularly vulnerable groups such as children and youth who have grown up in alternative care and who often face discrimination and stigmatization in the community. As the government in Kenya implements Care Reform, it is of utmost importance that children and youth with care-experience are consulted and engaged in order to ensure their voices are heard and their lived experiences contribute to shaping the implementation.</p>
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CONTRIBUTION	<p>SOS Kenya has positioned itself as an organisation that champions for the rights of children and youth in care and those leaving care. To this extent, SOS Kenya has further contributed to the development of such policies that promote the rights of such vulnerable children and youth. These include the National Care Reforms Strategy that was officially launched in May 2022. The Strategy recognises care leavers and the key services that they require during their care in different alternative care options as well as while leaving care. Through the contribution of SOS Kenya to make changes in policy, they have further supported programmes that support children and youth in care to raise awareness on the different challenges they experience while in care. This is a positive outcome of SOS Kenya's contribution as they are currently involving children and youth in care throughout the implementation of the programme.</p> <p>Under the safeguards for the rights and best interests of the rights of the child, the Act recognises the right to social security that will also be accorded to children in alternative care. It further places emphasis on family-based care, community-based care and after care services for any children who leave alternative care as they transit to independent living. The result of this direct contribution to policy review has also seen us using different platform such as the media to raise</p>
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more awareness on the issues affecting children and youth leaving care while further strengthening mechanisms for young care leavers such as the Kenya Society of Care Leavers.



ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

ACTIVITY	<p>Through the Leave No Youth Behind Project, SOS Children’s Villages Kenya has customized trainings focusing on the rights and responsibilities of children and youth, available government programmes for youth and further provided opportunities for youth in and leaving care to engage constructively with policy makers at different levels. SOS Kenya support the organization and representation of care leavers specifically in the Kenya Society of Care Leavers (KESCA) as a means to ensure their voices are heard and acted upon. In addition, SOS Kenya works with a number of CSOs to improve young people’s access specifically to sexual and reproductive health services and rights and mental health and psycho-social support as well as employability.</p>
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LESSONS	<p>The following are lessons learnt from involving children and youth in and out of care: Involving children and youth to participate in policy reviews and programme implementation has provided an opportunity to identify and document some of the challenges they experience in their daily lives. These range from psycho-social, economic, moral and legal challenges among others. With this information, SOS Kenya has further identified areas of improvement and specifically working towards mainstreaming issues affecting care leavers in our plans, programmes and budgets. SOS Kenya is currently supporting the Kenya Society of Care Leavers to establish County specific chapters and strengthening their leadership.</p>
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EVIDENCE	<p>The new Kenyan National Care Reform Strategy talks about several very specific issues related to young people who have grown up in alternative care. https://www.socialprotection.go.ke/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/The-National-Care-Reform-Strategy-for-Children-in-Kenya-2022-2032.pdf http://kenyalaw.org:8181/exist/kenyalex/actview.xql?actid=No.%2029%20of%202022 SOS Kenya is further involved in the review of the Children Policy (2010). This will be an opportunity to advocate for the rights of youth leaving care and highlight such challenges for consideration in government plan and budgets. The National Care Reform Strategy is now a government flagship programme that has been included in the implementation of the annual plans and budget under the Ministry of Labour and Social protection.</p>
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DOMAINS	Development strategy priorities:	Democracy and Human Rights
	Changes in the lives of people facing poverty, marginalization, or vulnerability	X
	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	
	Changes in partnerships of groups facing poverty, marginalization, or vulnerability	X
	Changes in local leadership of development and humanitarian work	