

## RESULTS SUMMARY

### *Youth Advisory Groups (YAG) as advocates of Youth Leaving Care in Somaliland.*

Author: SOS Children's Village in Denmark, 2025

|                |                |                                     |
|----------------|----------------|-------------------------------------|
| <b>PROJECT</b> | <i>Title</i>   | Leave No Youth Behind Project       |
|                | <i>Partner</i> | SOS Children's Villages Somaliland. |
|                | <i>Country</i> | Somaliland                          |
|                | <i>Period</i>  | Jan 2022 – December 2026.           |

**CHANGE:** This case study highlights how the Leave No Youth Behind project has empowered the Youth Advisory Group (YAG) to become strong advocates for youth leaving care. Comprising 16 members (9 male and 7 female) from both care-experienced youth and others in Hargeisa and Burao, the YAG significantly reduces the marginalization and stigma faced by many care leavers. This empowerment instills the courage to advocate for their rights and engage in broader issues, including mentoring younger children in residential care. The YAG has actively contributed to policy development, including the Alternative Care Policy, National Youth Policy, and minimum standards of care, ensuring that the voices of youth leaving care are heard. This advocacy is expected to continue well beyond the project's duration.

**CONTEXT:** Youth who have grown up in alternative care in Somaliland encounter numerous challenges in their transition to independent living. They face common issues such as unemployment, economic hardship, and political exclusion, compounded by unique challenges like poor social networks, stigma, and discrimination stemming from unclear family ties in a clan-based culture. For those outside youth associations, the transition can be particularly arduous, lacking access to vital resources like training and mentorship. The risks for these youth are significant: girls may face early pregnancies and marriages, while boys are at greater risk of homelessness, substance abuse, irregular migration, legal conflicts, and radicalization. Notably, more boys are placed in residential care when parental care is lost or when the father's identity is unknown, due to the clan structure that prioritizes paternal lineage for social status and heritage.

**CONTRIBUTION:** To empower youth structures as strong advocates for the rights of youth leaving care, it is essential to integrate care leavers with other youth. This integration minimizes discrimination and stigma, fostering a sense of unity within the community. Together, their voices resonate more powerfully, enabling effective advocacy for their rights and meaningful participation in decision-making processes. The project aims to equip these youth change agents with the skills and knowledge necessary to overcome barriers to political inclusion, educating them about their rights, responsibilities, and roles as citizens. By advocating for their rights and holding duty bearers accountable, they can create networks that enhance the well-being of their communities. The YAG's contributions have been instrumental in shaping national policies such as the Alternative Care Policy and National Youth Policy, ensuring these frameworks comprehensively support care leavers. This collaborative effort fosters mutual understanding and opens avenues for joint initiatives, maximizing the impact of their advocacy well beyond the project's conclusion.

## IMAGES



**ACTIVITY:** During the project period, key activities included training Youth Advisory Group (YAG) members in advocacy, leadership, and communication skills, as well as organizing workshops to enhance their capabilities. The YAG has actively contributed to the development and implementation of national policies related to youth leaving care, such as the Alternative Care Policy and minimum standards of care. They successfully advocated for the inclusion of a clause addressing youth leaving care during the review and update of the national youth policy.

**LESSON LEARNED:** Young people possess the energy and determination to drive change; they require only support and guidance to become effective change-makers. The collaboration between care-experienced youth and their peers has empowered them to advocate for their rights, influencing local authorities and policymakers on decisions that impact their lives.

**EVIDENCE:** YAG members in Hargeisa and Burao have successfully undergone capacity development, taking ownership of their initiatives to create action plans and execute activities. They are actively engaging with policymakers and have initiated meetings with local governors in Burco and Hargeisa. This commitment demonstrates their dedication to effecting positive change within their communities. One YAG member expressed their passion for advocacy, stating, "We are dedicated to advocating for the rights of young people leaving the care system." Another member added, "I am proud that we successfully advocated for the inclusion of a clause about youth leaving care in the national youth policy review."

**DOMAINS: Development strategy priorities:**

Changes in the lives of people facing poverty, marginalisation or vulnerability  
Changes in laws, policies and practices that affect people's rights **X**  
Changes in the capacity of organisations and communities to support rights  
Changes in partnerships and collaborations that support people's rights  
Changes in participation of groups facing poverty, marginalisation or vulnerability **X**  
Changes in local leadership of development and humanitarian work