



Excellence Chronicles

**Good Practices &
Success Stories**

**Fourth Quarter
2025**



**SOS CHILDREN'S
VILLAGES**

Introduction

As a member of SOS Children's Villages International, SOS Children's Villages in Ethiopia was established in response to the devastating 1973 famine. Since its inception, SOS Children's Villages in Ethiopia has been dedicated to providing essential childcare, protection, family strengthening, health, and education services to children who have lost parental care or are at risk of losing it. Additionally, the organization has played a crucial role in delivering life-saving humanitarian aid to individuals affected by conflict and drought, with a particular focus on supporting women and children.

SOS Children's Villages in Ethiopia operates in 9 regions (Tigray, Amhara, Oromia, Harrari, Afar, Sidama, South Ethiopia, Central Ethiopia, Somali) and two administrative cities of Addis Ababa and Dire Dawa. Through its comprehensive programs and services, SOS Children's Villages in Ethiopia continues to make a significant impact on the lives of vulnerable children, young people, their families and the community in Ethiopia, ensuring they have the support and resources they need to thrive.

For more than 50 years, SOS Children's Villages in Ethiopia has been dedicated to providing high-quality care for children and young people. Throughout our interventions, we have consistently communicated our impacts, achievements, and challenges to both internal and external stakeholders through the publication of annual reports, showcasing good practices, and sharing success stories.

As part of our ongoing unwavering commitment to transparency and accountability, our Success Whisperers team members from program development and quality assurance, brand and communications, sponsorship, and program implementation have compiled the success stories of the fourth quarter of the year 2025. These stories serve as a powerful testament to the impact and effectiveness of our work, highlighting the positive changes and improvements brought about by our projects and initiatives.

We firmly believe that by sharing these inspiring best practices and success stories, stakeholders like yourself can be motivated to get involved and support our cause, while also building trust and credibility in our organization and even can help strengthen our relationships and attract even more support.

Together, we can continue to make a meaningful difference in the lives of children, young people, their families and the community in Ethiopia. Thank you for your ongoing support and dedication to our shared mission.

Please note that names on the stories are changed for the sake of data privacy.

Good Practices

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Strengthening Child Protection Through Community Empowerment and Multi-Stakeholder Engagement

Child protection challenges in many communities are often rooted in deeply embedded social norms, limited awareness of child rights, weak institutional coordination, and low trust in reporting systems. Harmful practices such as child neglect, abuse, early marriage, child labor, and other forms of violence frequently go unreported due to fear, stigma, and lack of confidence in authorities. Recognizing these systemic gaps, SOS Children's Villages in Ethiopia implemented the Community Empowerment for Family Development initiative across all sub-cities of Addis Ababa to strengthen child protection through sustained community engagement and coordinated multi-stakeholder action.

The initiative moved beyond one-time awareness campaigns to foster long-term behavior change and system strengthening. It reached more than 6,000 parents, caregivers, children, and youth, particularly families directly engaged in the programme. Children and young people benefited through improved protection, increased awareness of their rights, and access to safer and more trusted reporting mechanisms. Central to the approach was collaboration with elders, religious leaders, women and youth representatives, community-based child protection committees, and government offices from social affairs, education, health, and labor and skills. Law enforcement actors, including police and justice officials, were engaged alongside schools, teachers, and student clubs advocating for child rights and gender equality. This broad engagement ensured shared responsibility and strengthened cross-sector coordination.

Implementation followed a participatory and inclusive model tailored to specific protection risks in each sub-city. Coffee ceremony discussions, group conversations, panel dialogues, case reflections, and community mapping exercises created culturally appropriate platforms for continuous dialogue and collective problem-solving. These were structured as ongoing processes rather than isolated events, encouraging reflection, accountability, and local ownership. Parallel coordination workshops clarified roles, strengthened referral pathways, and improved case management practices, while sensitization sessions promoted child-friendly and survivor-centered approaches among law enforcement. Community child protection committees were reinforced to identify, refer, and follow up on cases, strengthening existing structures instead of creating parallel systems.

As a result, awareness of child rights and protection responsibilities increased significantly, harmful practices were increasingly questioned, and reporting of child protection concerns improved as trust grew in community and referral systems. Coordination among community actors, government offices, and law enforcement became more consistent, reducing service gaps and duplication. Women and youth participated more actively in decision-making processes related to child protection, contributing to inclusive and responsive structures. While challenges such as entrenched social norms, initial mistrust, and high workloads among government offices affected coordination, these were addressed through sustained dialogue, trust-building efforts, and regular coordination meetings.

This practice demonstrates that sustained community engagement is more effective than one-off trainings in transforming attitudes and behaviors. By strengthening existing structures, fostering inclusive participation, and promoting coordinated multi-stakeholder collaboration, the approach offers a replicable model for urban settings seeking long-term child protection system change.





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Improving Kinship and Foster Care Processes Through a Local Case Management Team

Children in kinship and foster care arrangements often face complex and evolving needs that require coordinated support across multiple sectors, including child protection, health, education, and psychosocial services. In Hawassa, gaps in coordination and fragmented service delivery sometimes affected the quality, follow-up, and stability of care placements for children who had lost parental care or were at risk of losing it. Recognizing these challenges, SOS Children's Village Hawassa Program Location worked in close collaboration with local authorities to strengthen placement processes and improve long-term outcomes for vulnerable children.

In December 2023, the Local Case Management Team (LCMT) was formally established in Hawassa town as a coordinated, multi-stakeholder mechanism to improve decision-making and service integration. The team consists of 11 representatives drawn from the Hawassa City Administration and women, children, and youth affairs offices across all sub-cities. Embedded within existing government structures, the LCMT was designed to enhance collaboration, reduce service fragmentation, and ensure that placement decisions are made in the best interests of each child. The LCMT plays a central role in identifying children and families with complex needs, conducting holistic assessments, coordinating referrals across sectors, and validating appropriate kinship and foster care placements. Prior to assuming these responsibilities, members received targeted capacity-building training focused on child protection, safeguarding, gender equality, and gatekeeping procedures. This helped build a shared understanding of professional standards, clarify roles and responsibilities, and promote consistent case management practices.

Through regular case review meetings and structured coordination, the LCMT has strengthened follow-up mechanisms and improved the quality and stability of care arrangements. Children benefit from more comprehensive assessments and better-aligned services, while caregivers receive clearer guidance, timely referrals, and ongoing support. The improved collaboration among sector offices has strengthened accountability, and enhanced responsiveness to emerging protection concerns. The establishment of the LCMT demonstrates the value of institutionalizing coordination rather than relying on informal or ad hoc communication. By embedding the mechanism within local government systems and aligning it with national child protection frameworks, the model promotes sustainability and local ownership. It also strengthens the partnership between local authorities and SOS Children's Village Hawassa Programme Location, expanding the reach and long-term impact of services for children and young people without parental care.

While initial coordination required time and continuous engagement to align different sector priorities and workloads, ongoing communication and joint review platforms have helped maintain commitment and shared responsibility. The experience highlights that effective kinship and foster care systems depend not only on placement decisions, but on strong case management, multi-sector collaboration, and sustained capacity building. This practice offers a replicable model for strengthening alternative care systems at local level. By investing in structured coordination, professional development, and government ownership, communities can ensure that children in kinship and foster care receive stable, protective, and well-supported family-based care arrangements that prioritize their long-term wellbeing.





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Enhancing Safe Water Access Through Proactive Individual Donor Engagement

Tilahunen Drop-in Center provides day center and full center services for children under its agreement with SOS Children's Villages in Ethiopia through the Addis Ababa Children in Street Situations (CiSS) Project. In its ongoing effort to improve service quality and strengthen institutional capacity, a need was identified in 2025 to upgrade the center's water treatment facilities. Ensuring reliable access to safe drinking water was critical to safeguarding children's health and wellbeing. However, the estimated cost of purchasing the required water purification materials posed a financial challenge. To address this need in a sustainable and cost-efficient way, the project adopted a proactive resource mobilization approach. Rather than relying solely on existing institutional funding, targeted engagement was initiated with an individual foreign donor. Through clear communication of the center's needs and expected impact, the donor agreed to provide the required water purification materials free of charge. The process moved efficiently from needs identification and discussion to agreement and material handover.

The donation significantly strengthened the operational readiness of Tilahunen Charity Organization, which manages the drop-in center and is responsible for maintaining the equipment. With improved water purification capacity, the center is better positioned to provide safe and clean drinking water for children attending its services, reducing potential health risks associated with unsafe water. At the same time, the center avoided diverting limited financial resources toward equipment purchase, allowing funds to be redirected to other priority areas of child support. The initiative also demonstrated the value of diversifying funding sources. By engaging an individual donor through needs-based and transparent communication, the project introduced a flexible and timely solution to address an immediate infrastructure gap. The donated materials are environmentally appropriate and compatible with existing water systems, contributing to long-term sustainability. The strengthened asset base reduces operational strain and enhances the center's capacity to continue delivering quality services.

Although minor additional accessories were required to fully operationalize the system, this was addressed through follow-up communication, with further commitment secured to close the remaining gap. The experience highlighted that individual donors are an important yet often underutilized resource. Proactive outreach, trust-building, and clear articulation of impact proved essential in mobilizing support effectively. This practice shows strong potential for replication across other program locations. With thoughtful engagement and transparent communication, individual partnerships can complement institutional funding, respond quickly to emerging needs, and contribute to sustainable improvements in service delivery for vulnerable children.





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Integrating Gender Equality and Green Livelihoods for Sustainable Household Transformation

The Grow Equal Project (GEP) applies a Gender-Responsive Green Livelihood Approach that integrates women's economic empowerment, environmental sustainability, and household-level social transformation. The approach recognizes women as central economic actors while addressing the social and environmental barriers that limit their participation, productivity, and control over resources. In many rural and peri-urban communities, women face restricted access to skills development, financial services, and household decision-making power, while climate change and environmental degradation increase pressure on traditional livelihood systems. Addressing these interconnected challenges requires strengthening women's economic capacity while transforming harmful gender norms and promoting environmentally sustainable practices.

At the core of the model is gender-transformative capacity building. Women and men participate in structured training on gender equality, shared household responsibility, women's leadership, positive parenting, and respectful relationships. By addressing power dynamics alongside livelihood development, the project builds women's confidence, reduces household conflict, and creates a supportive environment for economic participation. Engaging both spouses promotes joint planning and improved outcomes for children. The project supports environmentally sustainable and market-relevant livelihoods such as green vegetable farming, climate-smart agriculture, and small-scale, low-impact retail and production activities. Selecting locally appropriate and environmentally friendly options strengthens resilience while minimizing environmental harm.

A defining feature of the approach is sequencing skills development before financial access. Participants receive entrepreneurship, financial literacy, and green economy training before being linked to financial services. This "skills first, capital second" model strengthens business planning, reduces financial risk, and promotes effective use of savings and credit. Partnerships with local Savings and Credit Cooperative Organizations (SACCOs) further strengthen financial inclusion by encouraging regular savings, improving women's control over income, and ensuring equitable access to credit through trusted community structures.

Community-level learning and visibility reinforce change. Successful women entrepreneurs are showcased as role models, creating peer learning opportunities and challenging restrictive gender norms. The visibility of women thriving in green enterprises accelerates community acceptance of women's economic leadership and encourages wider adoption of sustainable practices. As a result, women-led green enterprises grow, household income and food security improve, women's participation in decision-making increases, and investments in children's education and health are strengthened. Beyond economic gains, the model contributes to more equitable household relationships and greater recognition of women's leadership. The experience demonstrates that livelihood interventions are most effective when gender equality and environmental sustainability are addressed together, offering a scalable and replicable model for inclusive economic growth and climate resilience.





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From Survival to Sustainable Success

For years, 43-year-old Senait carried the full responsibility of providing for her family after separating from her husband due to deep marital challenges. With three daughters and one son depending on her, the pressure of meeting daily needs often kept her awake at night. Like any mother, she refused to let her children fall into despair. But with limited and unstable income, the family lived in constant uncertainty. Determined to improve their situation, Senait started a small home-based cookie business. It was a labor of love, but without proper equipment, sufficient raw materials, or business training, her efforts generated barely enough to survive. She had the determination but lacked the tools and structure to grow.

A turning point

After seeking support from the city administration, her case was prioritized and assessed jointly with local authorities. Senait was then referred to SOS Children's Villages in Ethiopia's family and community strengthening project, under the initiative focused on strengthening the resilience of women and girls to live a life free from violence. The project recognized that her business did not need replacing but strengthening. Senait enrolled in intensive training sessions covering entrepreneurship, financial literacy, and asset management. For the first time, she began to see herself not only as a struggling mother, but as a capable businesswoman. She learned how to track expenses, manage sales, and plan for growth. "The training gave me the opportunity to see my business differently, in a way that can actually work and make profit when done right," Senait reflects.

Building stability

By 2025, Senait was ready to apply her new skills. Through the project, she received 44,000 ETB in seed capital, which she invested strategically in professional baking equipment and bulk ingredients. Without a formal kitchen, she transformed her small outdoor space into a functional baking area. As demand grew, she expanded her products to include dabo kolo, a crunchy, spiced roasted dough snack, and difo dabo, a traditional bread baked in a clay oven. Today, her baked goods are well known in the Harar markets, with customers placing regular and special orders. "This support was what my business needed," Senait says. "Receiving the 44,000 ETB allowed me to buy supplies in bulk and use professional tools. My income has grown so much that I can now provide for my children with confidence." As her income stabilized, the project also provided scholastic materials for her children, ensuring they could focus on their education while she focused on expanding the business.

Today, Senait is no longer operating in survival mode. By joining a Savings and Credit Cooperative Organization (SACCO), she has strengthened her financial security and committed to saving 300 ETB each month, building resilience for the future. Senait's journey reflects what happens when caregivers are empowered at the heart of the home.

About the project

The family and community strengthening project (2025–2027) aims to address the root causes of vulnerability by empowering women-headed households and protecting the rights of women and girls. The project supports 350 women-headed households and their 977 children, including 465 girls while reaching an additional 30,000 community members indirectly. By strengthening economic resilience and improving access to safe, inclusive services related to sexual and gender-based violence, sexual and reproductive health and rights, child protection, and women's empowerment, the project helps families move from vulnerability to stability and long-term security.



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Turning Determination into Opportunity

At just 17 years old, Hirut was navigating adulthood largely on her own. After her parents separated and relocated to Addis Ababa, she remained in Dire Dawa under the care of her paternal aunt, a hospital cleaner whose modest income could not meet the growing needs of a teenager. Rather than surrendering her education or becoming discouraged, Hirut made a difficult choice. To cover school transport and basic personal expenses, she began collecting plastic bottles from the streets and selling them to recyclers. While her classmates focused solely on their studies, Hirut balanced long days under the scorching sun with evening Grade 10 classes. The work was exhausting, and the social stigma was painful. Yet she refused to let her circumstances define her future. Each evening, she washed off the dust of the streets and stepped into the classroom determined to keep going.

A turning point

Hope arrived through a collaborative outreach effort between SOS Children's Village Harar Programme Location and the local government office in Dire Dawa. During a joint mission, the "Reach Up" team identified Hirut as a young woman with strong determination who simply lacked opportunity. She was soon enrolled in the Reaching Out to Children in the Street Situation project as a pathway forward. Her journey began with an intensive three-day "Reach Up" life skills session focused on self-confidence, communication, and goal setting. With renewed clarity and belief in her potential, Hirut then chose to enroll in vocational training in beauty salon services, a field that matched her interests. She approached the training with the same discipline she had shown in school. This time, however, her hard work was matched with structured support.

Taking control of her future

Upon completing her training, Hirut secured work as a hair stylist at a local beauty salon. She now works on a revenue-sharing basis with the salon owner, contributing her expertise while building financial independence. By day, she earns her own income and by night, she continues her education. "The Reach-Up skills sessions helped me a lot to find a job; the mentors there supported me in knowing how to present myself and take hold of my future," Hirut explains. With the 15,000 ETB seed capital provided by the project, Hirut began saving consistently toward her long-term goal: opening her own beauty salon. Today, she is not only building her career but also supporting her younger sister's education, determined to create opportunities she once lacked. Hirut's journey from collecting bottles on the streets of Dire Dawa to becoming a professional stylist is a powerful reminder of what happens when resilience meets the right opportunity.

About the project

Through the Reaching Out to Children in the Street Situation project (2022–2026), SOS Children's Villages in Ethiopia aims to reach 9,000 children and young people across Addis Ababa, Dire Dawa, and Adama. By addressing the root causes of street involvement through family-based care, education, and economic empowerment, the project supports children and youth to move toward safety, dignity, and lasting opportunity.



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Leading Through Resilience

Twenty-two-year-old Simbo lives in Lencha village in Midega Tola District, where prolonged drought has left families deeply concerned about their survival and livelihoods. Crops have failed, income sources have diminished, and uncertainty has become part of daily life. Simbo once believed education would be her pathway out of hardship. But when her university journey was interrupted, she returned home to a community still battling the effects of climate shocks. For many, this would have marked the end of a dream. For Simbo, it became a turning point and a challenge she took on as she refused to let one setback define her future.

A turning point

Opportunity came through the Ethiopia Joint Response (EJR) project implemented by SOS Children's Villages in Ethiopia, and rather than waiting for employment, Simbo chose entrepreneurship and gave it her all. Together with nine peers, she formed a youth enterprise and launched a group income-generating activity. After assessing their local market and available resources, they agreed to start a livestock-fattening business. To strengthen their vision, the project provided intensive training in entrepreneurship and small business management. "Before the training, we had the will, but we didn't have the way," Simbo explains. "Learning how to manage our finances and plan our growth turned our ideas into a real profession. It gave me the confidence to stand as a businesswoman and know exactly how to make our enterprise thrive."

Taking the lead

Simbo and her team personally navigated the legal procedures required to register their enterprise, officially establishing the Lencha Livestock Fattening Enterprise with local authorities. What began as a group of determined friends became a formal, licensed business. With start-up capital provided through the project, the group purchased 11 oxen and began operations in a facility allocated by the local government. Simbo plays an active leadership role, managing procurement of feed and water, overseeing daily operations, and working alongside her colleagues in the physical labor required to care for the animals. In a community where women are often excluded from livestock enterprises, Simbo's leadership challenges traditional norms. "I have learned that drought can take our crops, but it cannot take our skills, and with our skills, we can manage the consequences of drought," she says. In Lencha village, where economic hardship frequently pushes young girls toward early marriage, Simbo represents an alternative path, one built on independence, dignity, and enterprise. Today, Simbo is not waiting for opportunity but creating one for herself and those around her. Her ambition is clear: to expand the livestock business and position the enterprise as a leading supplier in the region.

About the project

The Ethiopia Joint Response project (2025-2026) supports nearly 37,700 individuals affected by climate shocks and economic hardship. Designed around the most urgent community needs, it delivers integrated interventions including food security, livelihood support, protection services, and direct cash assistance, while laying the foundation for long-term recovery and sustainable development.



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Rebuilding Strength Through Care

Biritu is a single mother of six whose life changed drastically after the loss of her husband. Suddenly, she carried the full responsibility of providing for her children, both emotionally and financially. With no stable income and six young lives depending on her, each day brought new pressures. Meeting basic needs such as food, school expenses, and care required resilience, she was not sure she had in her. Yet even in her grief, Biritu remained determined to keep her family together, offering her children love, stability, and protection despite the uncertainty surrounding them.

A turning point

During this difficult transition, Biritu was identified and enrolled in the SOS Children's Villages in Ethiopia Action for Rights, Accountability and Development Assurance (ARADA Project). The support she received was tailored to her needs as a widowed caregiver navigating loss and financial hardship. Through the project, she participated in positive parenting training, savings and financial literacy sessions, and business skills development workshops. These interventions helped her regain confidence, manage stress, and begin planning for a more secure future. Reflecting on this moment, Biritu shared, "When I joined the ARADA Project, I realized God listens."

Building stability for her family

With the knowledge and skills she gained, Biritu began baking and selling injera and expanded into goat rearing as additional income-generating activities. These efforts now provide a more stable source of income, enabling her to better meet her children's needs. The savings training strengthened her ability to plan ahead, manage household finances carefully, and prepare for unexpected challenges. But Biritu's resilience extends beyond her own family. Despite her limited resources, she opened her home to a child who had lost parental care and had been found on the street as an infant. By welcoming this child into her family, she provided a safe and nurturing environment, a powerful reflection of her compassion and commitment to protecting children, even while rebuilding her own life.

About the Project

The Action for Rights, Accountability and Development Assurance Project (2025-2027) aims to reach 11,500 people, supporting children and youth in and around the Hossana community to grow up in caring and protective family and community environments. By strengthening caregivers through parenting support, economic empowerment, and community-based protection mechanisms, the project addresses the root causes of vulnerability and builds sustainable foundations for children's well-being.



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Starting Again with Confidence

Tigist is a mother of six whose determination and strong work ethic have always defined her. Yet life has not been easy on her. For years, she faced economic hardship and family stress, taking on any work she could find, from cooking in small-scale restaurants to attempting to start her own food business. With courage and hope, she invested all her savings into launching it. But without sufficient business knowledge, she struggled to break even. Eventually, the business closed, leaving her without stable income and without the confidence to try again. The greatest pain was not losing the business; it was not knowing where to begin to continue providing for her children. The financial pressure of supporting a large family began to affect her parenting, and she lacked guidance on how to respond to her children's emotional needs. Economic instability combined with limited parenting skills made daily life difficult for both Tigist and her children.

A turning point

During this challenging period, Tigist was identified and selected to participate in SOS Children's Villages in Ethiopia's Action for Rights, Accountability and Development Assurance (ARADA) Project. The project focuses on strengthening both household livelihoods and family care. Through ARADA, Tigist participated in positive parenting training, business development and management training, and caregiver dialogue sessions held during traditional coffee ceremonies. She also joined a Savings and Credit Cooperative Organization (SACCO), which gave her access to structured savings and loan services. The business training helped her rethink her approach, from choosing the right location to managing expenses and planning for profit. With a loan accessed through her SACCO membership, Tigist reopened her food business, this time equipped with practical knowledge and renewed confidence. Reflecting on this change, she shares, "The trainings showed me how to start again in a new and better way. Today, I am standing on my own feet."

Strengthening her family and community

The positive parenting training brought meaningful change at home. Tigist now prioritizes listening to her children, spending quality time with them, and showing consistent care and affection. She often reflects that she wishes she had received such guidance earlier, as it helped her better understand what her children truly need from their parent. Beyond improving her own situation, Tigist has become a source of encouragement for others. She mentors women in her community who want to start small businesses and actively participates in Care of Caregivers groups, helping facilitate savings initiatives for 60 women. Through coffee ceremony discussions, she promotes shared learning, financial discipline, and collective resilience. Today, Tigist is not only rebuilding her livelihood, but she is also strengthening her family and contributing to the resilience of her wider community.

About the project

The Action for Rights, Accountability and Development Assurance Project (2025-2027) aims to reach 11,500 people, supporting children and youth in and around the Hossana community to grow up in caring and protective family and community environments. By strengthening caregivers through parenting support, economic empowerment, and community-based protection mechanisms, the project addresses the root causes of vulnerability and builds sustainable foundations for children's well-being.



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From Limitation to Possibility

Nine-year-old Kidist lives in Hawassa with her devoted caregiving aunt, Alem. From the moment Alem learned about Kidist's physical and intellectual disabilities, she made a firm decision to stand by her and provide the care, protection, and stability she needed. As Kidist grew older, daily life became increasingly challenging. She was unable to walk independently, and attending school seemed impossible. Most days were spent at home, her world limited to the space within their walls. Alem carried her everywhere, to therapy appointments far from their home and back again. On some occasions, understanding the difficulty of the journey, therapists visited them instead. "It was not easy," Alem recalls. "I carried her wherever we went. School was not an option, and her world was very small." Caring for a child with disabilities came with emotional and physical strain, especially in a community where disability is often misunderstood. Yet Alem remained steadfast, raising Kidist alongside two other foster children with patience and unwavering commitment.

A turning point

In mid-2024, Kidist received support through the SOS Children's Village Hawassa Programme Location under the Foster and Kinship Care unit. After a careful assessment of the family's situation, the programme provided Kidist with a wheelchair suited to her age and mobility needs, along with financial and technical support. With her wheelchair, Kidist gained mobility, safety, and a new sense of independence. Around the same time, she enrolled in school for the first time and began attending therapy sessions regularly and with greater ease. Most importantly, she began exploring life beyond her home. "Now she is active and happy, and that is all I have wanted for her," Alem shares with a smile. "She is learning, meeting children her age, and seeing the world." Today, Kidist is a child full of curiosity and energy, no longer defined by the barriers that once limited her. For Alem, the support made all the difference. Sometimes, a single intervention, provided at the right time, can open a world of learning, dignity, and possibility.

About the programme

Alternative Care is one of the core programme areas of SOS Children's Villages in Ethiopia. It provides care for children who cannot remain with their immediate families, ensuring they grow up in safe, stable, and nurturing environments. Services include family-like care, foster family care, small group homes, kinship care, and supervised independent living arrangements, all designed to prioritize the best interests, development, and long-term well-being of each child.



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Rebuilding Hope and Restoring Dignity

Living in the city of Adama, Kedija, a mother of four, once found herself in a cycle of hardship and uncertainty. She worked as a daily laborer and earned small amounts of additional income by washing clothes, but it was never enough to support her family. Eventually, they had no choice but to rely on relatives for survival. As financial pressures mounted, the impact on her children was heartbreaking. Two of them dropped out of school and began spending their days on the streets, begging to survive. The younger two were unable to enroll in kindergarten. For the family, education became a distant dream, something they could no longer afford to prioritize. Despite these overwhelming challenges, Kedija did not lose her determination. Her resilience, strong work ethic, and deep love for her children kept her moving forward, even when hope felt out of reach.

A turning point

Kedija's life began to change when she met the outreach team from SOS Children's Villages in Ethiopia through the Children in Street Situations (CiSS) Adama Project. Through the project, her two children were admitted to the De La Salle Rehabilitation Center, where they received structured day-center rehabilitation services and were supported to leave street life behind. Knowing her children were safe and receiving care brought Kedija a renewed sense of relief and emotional stability. For the first time in a long while, she could begin to imagine a different future. While her children received the support they needed, Kedija was given an opportunity of her own. She participated in business skills training and received in-kind start-up support worth 8,000 ETB to begin an income-generating activity. With this support, she launched a small injera baking business. What began as a modest effort soon grew into a steady source of income. Kedija now supplies up to 150 injera per day to local shops, generating an average daily income of 3,000 ETB. Through savings habits she developed during the training, she began setting aside 1,000 ETB each week and participating in a local savings group, which allowed her to access additional capital. Using these earnings and savings, Kedija opened a small shop in front of her home, selling household goods alongside her injera supply. She worked tirelessly, often staying open late into the evening, determined to transform her family's circumstances.

Building stability and independence

Kedija's dedication has paid off. Not only are her children now back in school and thriving, but they also proudly support her by helping deliver injera after school. The younger children are preparing to begin kindergarten, a milestone that once seemed impossible. From having no stable income, Kedija has grown her business capital to more than 100,000 ETB. She manages her finances carefully, reinvests in her shop, and continues to strengthen her participation in the community savings scheme. Today, she is not only able to cover her household expenses but also care for her husband, who has been struggling with a prolonged kidney illness. Most importantly, she has regained her independence and dignity.

"I don't know how long we could have continued relying on relatives, while my children were out on the streets begging," Kedija shares. "Because of this support, I am now able to stand on my own and provide for my children the way I always dreamed

About the project

Kedija's story reflects the impact of the Children in Street Situations Project (2022-2026). The project aims to reach 9,000 children and young people across Addis Ababa, Dire Dawa, and Adama by addressing the root causes of street involvement through family strengthening, education support, rehabilitation services, and economic empowerment. By combining structured support with the resilience of families like Kedija's, the project is helping transform vulnerability into stability and restoring hope for a brighter future.



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Turning Persistence into Professional Breakthrough

Girum is a 27-year-old resident of Awash district in the Adama City Administration. A Civil Engineering graduate from Dilla University in 2019, and when he left university, he was ambitious and hopeful for the future. However, soon after graduating, he faced a difficult reality. Despite his qualifications, Girum struggled to secure a job in civil engineering due to limited work experience, a lack of professional networks, and scarce internship opportunities. To support himself and avoid relying on his family, he worked in various jobs unrelated to his field. Still, he remained determined not to give up on his dream. One day, Girum heard from friends about SOS Children's Villages in Ethiopia's Sustainable Training for Employment Promotion (STEP) Project. Believing he met the selection criteria, he applied through the Awash District Job Creation and Skills Office. To his surprise and relief, he was selected as one of the project's job-seeking youth participants in 2025. He began with a one-day service provision and youth safeguarding orientation, followed by five days of life and employability skills training. The training strengthened his confidence, workplace readiness, and communication skills, areas he realized were essential for professional growth.

Gaining practical experience

Following the training, Girum was offered an internship opportunity in his field at the Ethiopian Engineering Corporation (EEC). For the first time since his graduation, he was able to apply his academic knowledge in a practical setting. Through the internship, he gained hands-on experience in assessing ground stability, collecting and analyzing field data, contributing to project planning, conducting surveys, and understanding environmental aspects of civil engineering. "I learned about the various disciplines of civil engineering," Girum shared. "The Ethiopian Engineering Corporation allowed me to gain practical knowledge and skills that bridged the gap between theory and real work experience." The internship proved transformative. It not only strengthened his technical skills but also renewed his confidence and motivation to continue pursuing a career in engineering despite the obstacles he had faced. "I am grateful to the STEP Project for this internship experience," he said. "I hope it continues to benefit many talented graduates in the future."

An unexpected opportunity

As part of the program, Girum later participated in a career fair organized by the STEP Project, where young job seekers connected with potential employers. Although he did not secure a job during the event, something unexpected happened soon after. Recognizing his dedication and performance during the internship, the Ethiopian Engineering Corporation offered him continued employment as an Assistant Data Analysis Engineer. His hard work had not gone unnoticed. Through his journey, Girum learned that persistence and commitment can eventually open doors. Today, he is firmly on the path toward professional growth. With continued experience, he hopes to advance in his career and possibly establish his own engineering company in the future.

About the project

Through the STEP Project (2024-2027), 3,500 young people in Addis Ababa and Adama are receiving vocational training, entrepreneurship coaching, and business support. By strengthening employability skills and connecting youth with work-based learning opportunities, the project is helping young people transition into meaningful employment and become agents of economic and social change.



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Never Too Late to Learn

Ager, a 39-year-old mother of three living in Lalibela, carries herself with great strength. For most of her life, however, that strength was tested by hardship and many ups and downs. Her greatest regret of all was not living in poverty or struggle, it was illiteracy. Ager's childhood was disrupted when her parents divorced and her father refused to send her to school and instead arranged for her to marry at an early age. At just 11 years old, she made the courageous decision to run away from home, not knowing where she would end up. She survived by working as a domestic worker, sacrificing education for survival. As she grew older and became a mother, the weight of not being able to read or write became heavier. She could not help her children with homework, read medical prescriptions, or sign documents with her name. "How could I live 38 years without knowing how to read and write?" she often asked herself. Despite raising three children with limited income and facing recurring health challenges, Ager never stopped wishing for a second chance at education.

A turning point

In 2023, SOS Children's Village Bahir Dar Programme Location began implementing the family strengthening and child development project in Lalibela. Through community outreach and vulnerability assessments, Ager and her two daughters were identified as participants. Through the project, they received food assistance, counselling support, and livelihood strengthening services. During household discussions, Ager shared her lifelong dream of becoming literate. Recognizing her motivation, the project enrolled her in the basic adult education programme. The literacy classes were conducted within the community, making them accessible. Ager received books, exercise books, pens, and structured instruction in reading, writing, and basic arithmetic. For eight months, she attended every session with unwavering commitment. She practiced at night after completing household chores and repeated her lessons with her children.

A new chapter

After completing the programme, Ager sat for the Amhara Region Sight Exam and scored 90 out of 100, ranking 6th among 150 adult learners. She was publicly recognized at a regional education forum, a moment she describes as one of the proudest in her life. Today, Ager reads and writes Amharic better than she ever did. She performs basic calculations to manage her household finances and now signs her name independently. Most importantly, she supports her children's education even with the little knowledge she has now gained. "I am no longer afraid of letters," she says with a smile. "I can read a little, and I will get better and better with time."

About the project

Phase I of the Family Strengthening and Child Development Project in Lalibela ran from 2023 to 2025, aiming to build a resilient community that supports the wellbeing of children and young people.

During this period, the project provided coordinated support in child protection, livelihoods, education, and health for 900 children and 450 caregivers while working closely with four partner child and community care coalitions, four savings and credit cooperatives, and four public schools to deliver integrated, lasting impact.



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From Unemployment to Independence

Desta is a determined young mother whose daily life once revolved around survival. Living in Addis Ababa, she struggled to balance childcare responsibilities with unstable, low-paying work. Despite her willingness to work hard, she lacked technical skills and professional exposure. Job opportunities were limited, and without reliable childcare, she frequently missed chances to improve her employment prospects. Her income barely covered rent and food. Savings were impossible and the future felt increasingly uncertain. "I wanted to do more," she recalls, "but I didn't know where to begin."

A new opportunity

Her breakthrough came when she learned about the youth-focused Sustainable Training for Employment promotion (STEP) project implemented in Gullele and Yeka sub-cities by SOS Children's Villages in Ethiopia. After meeting the selection criteria, she enrolled in the programme. The journey began with life skills and employability training. Desta strengthened her communication skills, built confidence, and learned about workplace expectations. For the first time, she felt professionally prepared. Recognizing her interest in beauty and fashion, the project enrolled her in a three-month make-up course at Hewan Beauty and Fashion Design Training Center. The programme also covered her childcare expenses, ensuring she could attend consistently without financial strain. She completed the course with high performance and gained both certification and practical experience.

Following her training, Desta secured employment in the beauty industry. Her steady income allowed her to contribute meaningfully to her household expenses and begin saving. Beyond income, the transformation was personal. She describes herself as more confident, articulate, and hopeful. Her child now grows up witnessing a mother who pursued growth despite obstacles. "The training didn't just give me skills," she explains. "It gave me hope of a better tomorrow."

About the project

Through the STEP Project (2024-2027), 3,500 young people in Addis Ababa and Adama are receiving vocational training, entrepreneurship coaching, and business support. By strengthening employability skills and connecting youth with work-based learning opportunities, the project is helping young people transition into meaningful employment and become agents of economic and social change.



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Ability Beyond Disability

Moalimu grew up confronting both economic hardship and the social barriers associated with living with a disability. In his community, misconceptions often limited opportunities before he even had the chance to prove himself. Employment was difficult to secure, and informal work was inconsistent. Supporting his family meant constant financial uncertainty with the weight he was already carrying. There were times when covering school expenses for his children and daily household needs required painful compromises. Yet Moalimu refused to accept that disability meant dependence. "I did not want sympathy," he says. "I wanted an opportunity." He believed that with the right support, he could build something sustainable, not only for himself, but for his family.

When opportunity meets determination

When he least expected it, Moalimu was identified through an outreach programme under the disability inclusion project implemented by SOS Children's Villages in Ethiopia. After the necessary assessments, he was enrolled in the programme. The support began with financial literacy training, where he learned budgeting, record-keeping, and savings discipline. He also participated in psychosocial support sessions, which strengthened his confidence and resilience. For the first time, he felt that his potential, not his limitation, was being recognized. Through linkage with a local Savings and Credit Cooperative Organization (SACCO), he began saving small amounts consistently. With mentorship and start-up support, he developed a simple business plan and opened a men's clothing retail shop after identifying a gap in the local market.

Becoming a business owner

The early days of the business required persistence. He carefully managed stock, built relationships with customers, and reinvested profits instead of spending them. Gradually, his shop gained visibility and trust within the neighborhood. Today, Moalimu earns a stable income that supports his children's education and covers household expenses more reliably than ever before. Financial stress has significantly reduced, allowing him to plan for the future. Beyond income, the transformation has been social. Community members now recognize him as a business owner and contributor rather than someone defined by disability. He actively encourages others living with disabilities to pursue economic independence. "My disability did not disappear," he says with pride, "but the way people see me has changed."

About the project

Implemented between 2021 and 2025, the Disability Project strengthened the capacity of children and caregivers with disabilities to claim their rights and actively participate in family and community decision-making. The project combined rights awareness with practical economic support, promoting livelihood diversification, entrepreneurship, and business literacy to improve household income, shelter conditions, and food security. It also enhanced access to health services and inclusive education through educational materials and tailored support for girls and boys with disabilities. Community awareness initiatives promoted inclusive practices, while capacity-building for Disabled Persons' Organizations (DPOs) strengthened local advocacy and influence. By the end of the project, it had directly reached 120 children and 60 caregivers, while indirectly benefiting 1,000 children and 500 caregivers.



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A New Chapter of Belonging

For more than a decade, Bizunesh and her six children lived in SOS Children's Village Jimma Programme Location, where they received consistent care, protection, and educational support. The village had become more than a residence, and a place of safety, routine, and shared experience during a formative period of their lives. As the children grew older and gained independence, the next important step in their journey began to take shape: transitioning from village-based care to independent living within the wider community. While the transition represented growth and progress, it also required careful preparation and emotional readiness. Leaving a familiar environment after many years is never simple. For Bizunesh, the transition symbolized both responsibility and opportunity, a chance to build a fully independent household while ensuring her children remained stable and supported.

Preparing for reintegration

The transition process was carefully planned, and case workers worked closely with the family to assess readiness, identify housing options, and ensure sustainable income arrangements were in place. Bizunesh participated in counselling sessions and household management guidance to strengthen her confidence in budgeting, decision-making, and independent parenting. The preparation phase focused not only on logistics, but also on emotional adjustment. The children were supported to understand the move as a positive milestone rather than a loss. A farewell ceremony was organized within the village to celebrate the family's growth and mark the beginning of this new chapter. Shortly afterward, they moved into their new home in Jimma town.

Establishing roots in the community

Integration into the broader community was a crucial step toward long-term sustainability. Neighbors welcomed the family warmly, helping them settle into their new surroundings. Bizunesh joined a local savings group, strengthening her access to community-based social support systems. The children enrolled in nearby schools and quickly began forming friendships beyond the village environment. They accessed public spaces such as libraries, playgrounds, and youth centers, gradually building their own social networks. Daily routines began to feel natural and stable. The family was no longer living within an institutional setting and became active participants in community life.

Today, Bizunesh manages household responsibilities independently and expresses confidence in her ability to guide her children's future. Financial planning, school follow-ups, and community engagement are now part of her regular routine. The children demonstrate strong adaptation to their new environment and attend school consistently while participating in social activities. "My children don't feel isolated anymore," Bizunesh shares. "We are part of the bigger community now and I see the positive development this has brought in their lives."

About the project

Aligned with Ethiopia's national policies, which increasingly emphasize family- and community-based care for children, SOS Children's Villages in Ethiopia has embraced this direction not only as an organizational responsibility but as an opportunity to better serve the best interests of children. With the goal of transitioning from a single model of care to a more comprehensive continuum of care, the organization has been working to respond more effectively and sensitively to the diverse needs of children and families. In recent years, SOS Children's Villages in Ethiopia has launched an initiative to integrate families from its villages into the wider community. This approach promotes social inclusion, strengthens community connections, and supports a more sustainable, community-based care model for children.



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