



Excellence Chronicles

**Good Practices &
Success Stories**

**Second 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 eight regional states across Ethiopia, including Tigray, Addis Ababa, Amhara, Harari, Oromia, Sidaama, Somali and South Ethiopia Regional State. 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 second 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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SOS CHILDREN'S
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Small Business Scale-Up Competition for Youth Economic Empowerment

SOS Children's Village Addis Ababa programme location organized a Small Business Scale-Up Competition aimed at promoting economic independence and entrepreneurship among youth in Small Independent Living (SIL) and young care leavers. The competition provided a platform for youth to present their business ideas, enhance their entrepreneurial skills, and gain confidence necessary for independent living. The competition involved 16 youth (13 females) and their business ventures spanned various sectors including fashion design, makeup, candles, epoxy decor, digital technology, and artificial intelligence. Expert judges from the Sustainable Training for Employment Promotion (STEP) project, alongside independent evaluators, facilitated a fair and structured assessment process.

The competition was structured with clear assessment criteria: innovation, sustainability, clarity of vision, and impact. Participants pitched their business ideas to a panel of judges, who evaluated and ranked them accordingly. The STEP project team coordinated the event to ensure consistency and professional judging standards. Awards totaling 202,000 ETB were distributed to the top 9 winners. This initiative successfully enhanced participants' business skills, entrepreneurial mindset, and self-confidence. The youth felt that their work was recognized as innovative and valuable, which encouraged them to continue developing their ventures. The competition served as a motivational platform, enabling youth to envision a sustainable path toward economic independence.

Given its success, this practice is recommended for replication across other SOS Children's Villages projects in Ethiopia, especially those focusing on youth empowerment. Scaling this initiative can promote innovation, business growth, networking opportunities, and self-employment among young people nationwide. The competition fostered innovation by encouraging young people to present unique business ideas across diverse sectors, including digital tech and AI, reflecting current market trends and future economic opportunities.

Sustainability is embedded through ongoing encouragement and support for youth entrepreneurship, nurturing long-term independence not only for participants but also for other young people in their communities. Recognizing youth achievements helps build a culture of pride, ownership, and resilience. A significant challenge identified was the limited skills in business pitching among some youth, which affected their ability to convincingly communicate the potential of their ideas. However, peer-to-peer exchanges and detailed feedback from judges helped many participants recognize and address these gaps, highlighting the need for ongoing capacity building in presentation and communication skills.

Focused initiatives like the Small Business Scale-Up Competition can transform young lives by fostering economic empowerment and confidence. Celebrating youth success cultivates a supportive environment where young people believe in their potential and are motivated to pursue their entrepreneurial goals. Integrating economic empowerment into all youth care strategies is essential to achieve sustainable impact.





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Mother-to-Mother Support Groups for Maternal and Child Health: Kelafo District

In the low-resource setting of Kelafo district, maternal and child health outcomes were severely affected by limited access to health education, cultural stigma, and weak support systems. To address these challenges, the Kelafo Family and Community Empowerment Project, implemented by SOS Children's Villages in Ethiopia, introduced and integrated Mother-to-Mother Support Groups across all targeted kebeles. The initiative targeted pregnant and lactating mothers, engaging them alongside community elders, religious leaders, women's representatives, and local health professionals. A comprehensive training program was delivered to all group members in collaboration with local health centers and posts. The training focused on antenatal and postnatal care, exclusive breastfeeding, infant and young child feeding, hygiene and sanitation, maternal nutrition, and recognizing danger signs during pregnancy and early childhood. The information was delivered in a culturally sensitive, accurate, and practical way to ensure relevance and uptake.

Each group met monthly, creating safe spaces for peer learning, open discussions, and mutual support. The approach helped reduce stigma and misinformation, especially around topics like birth complications and contraceptive use. As women gained knowledge and confidence, they became more proactive in seeking healthcare, supporting each other through home visits, and encouraging wider behavior change in their communities.

This approach has led to significant improvements: antenatal care attendance increased by over 35 percent in supported kebeles, exclusive breastfeeding rates improved, and under-five illness related to poor hygiene and nutrition declined. In total, 60 groups were formed, directly training 300 members and indirectly reaching more than 2,000 caregivers through peer-to-peer outreach. Several groups also initiated small-scale savings initiatives, further enhancing solidarity and self-reliance.

The initiative's sustainability lies in its integration into existing kebele-level structures and alignment with Ethiopia's health extension system. Group leaders and health workers received capacity-building support to ensure continuity beyond the project's lifespan. Ongoing collaboration with Woreda health bureaus has ensured the groups are involved in routine health campaigns and WASH activities, with plans already underway to scale this model to neighboring communities.

One of the main challenges in the beginning was that a few participants were hesitant to speak openly due to cultural barriers. However, incorporating community-led discussions helped build trust over time. The greatest lesson learned is that women become powerful agents of change when supported by both their peers and the wider community. This peer-led, community-integrated model has proven to be one of the most impactful, sustainable, and culturally appropriate approaches within the Kelafo Family and Community Empowerment Project creating not just healthier families, but more informed, resilient communities.





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Adaptive Planning Through Joint Rapid Needs Assessment (JRNA) in Crisis-Affected Communities

In Midhaga Tola, a community affected by prolonged drought and harmful traditional practices, families face growing uncertainty. In response, the Dutch Relief Alliance Ethiopia Joint Response (DRA-EJR) project, led by SOS Children's Villages in Ethiopia (SOS CVE) and delivered with a coalition of international and national partners, has become a source of hope and practical support. In this area alone, SOS CVE, Tearfund, and EKHDCDC are working across 10 kebeles, supporting vulnerable communities through food security, protection, and cash assistance.

What makes the project stand out is its flexibility, listening closely, and adapting quickly. At the heart of this is the Joint Rapid Needs Assessment (JRNA), conducted each year before the Annual Operational Plan is finalized. It's not just a planning step, but a way to reconnect with community realities. The JRNA brings together local voices, government actors, and partner organizations to identify urgent needs, gaps, and opportunities. It replaces assumptions with lived experiences.

This process has led to significant shifts. When the recent JRNA revealed that families preferred small livestock over forage seeds, the project changed its plan accordingly. When new food shortages emerged, the project added one-time food assistance, even though it was not in the original plan. These were not simple changes; they were timely lifelines.

The JRNA has also helped the project team reallocate funds based on changing market conditions, making interventions more practical and cost-effective. More importantly, this inclusive, community-centered approach is building trust and strengthening the connection between the project and the people it serves.

By focusing on what matters most to the communities, the DRA-EJR project in Midhaga Tola is doing more than delivering aid; it is co-creating solutions that are grounded, responsive, and respectful. This adaptive way of working can certainly be replicated into other regions by other projects as it proves to be effective. While challenges still exist, the biggest lesson has been clear: when communities are heard, better choices follow, and the impact speaks for itself.





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Raising Child Protection Awareness Through Radio: A Community-Led Advocacy Initiative

In times where limited access to formal child protection platforms persists, SOS Children's Village Hawassa programme location Alternative Care (AC) unit launched a groundbreaking radio program to raise awareness about child rights and protection. The initiative aimed to spark community dialogue and shift behaviors on critical issues such as child abuse prevention, positive parenting, and community-led protection mechanisms.

Each episode tried to incorporate insights, opinions, hands on experiences of various expertise and professionals including SOS Children's Villages in Ethiopia higher officials, government representatives, community and religious leaders, children's and families, and various other members of the community. Themes ranged from the impact of harsh discipline and child right abuse on their wholistic development to the benefits of child sponsorship.

The 20-minute radio show aired twice a week over eight weeks and was delivered both through local radio and satellite broadcasts reaching more than 25 to 30 million listeners on Debub Radio FM 100.9 across three regions: Sidama, South and Oromia (partially). Each episode combined expert insight with real-life stories, featuring interviews with parents, social workers, educators, children, and SOS CVE staff. Crucially, the program was interactive. Listeners could call in or send messages, making each episode a platform for two-way communication. This approach fostered trust, allowed for clarification of concepts, and brought community members into the conversation as active participants rather than passive recipients.

Community feedback reflected high levels of engagement, and a growing understanding of issues previously considered misunderstood. One of the most well-received topics was the impact of unmonitored phone and social media use of children, with many parents rethinking everyday parenting practices. The inclusion of diverse voices from children to high-level officials helped reinforce the message that child protection is a shared community responsibility.

The interactive format and diverse range of voices made it more than just an awareness campaign; it became a community dialogue space, bridging information gaps and breaking silences around child safety, abuse, and digital threats. Given its wide reach and adaptability, this initiative holds strong potential for replication in other programme locations. The biggest sustainability concern is the cost of airtime and program production. Building long-term partnerships with radio stations, government entities, and donors will be essential. Embedding the program within broader child protection frameworks at the regional or national level could also ensure continuity. However, the biggest takeaway was the value of dialogue: communities were more receptive to learning when they felt heard and involved.



Success Stories

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Sirgut's Journey of Strength and Success

Sirgut, a determined mother of two, lives in Adama City Administration. For many years, she lived under the weight of chronic poverty, doing all she could to give her children a better life. Her situation worsened when her husband, who had joined the military with the intention of returning after three years, disappeared without any contact or support. As time passed without a word from him, Sirgut was left to face life on her own. Forced into the role of sole provider, she found employment in a private household. Despite working long hours, her monthly income of just 1,000 ETB was not nearly enough to cover food, rent, or even the most basic needs for her children. Feeding them became a daily struggle, and the thoughts of sending them to school felt like a distant dream. With no way to pay school fees or provide supplies, the future looked uncertain. The risk of losing their shelter and ending up on the streets loomed large.

A chance encounter

At one of the darkest points in her life, Sirgut met the outreach team from the SOS Children's Villages in Ethiopia's Children in Street Situations (CiSS) Project. Through her involvement in the project, Sirgut received support tailored to help her rebuild her life. She participated in a business skills training program that equipped her with the knowledge and confidence to start her own venture. Alongside the training, she was also given a modest start-up capital to launch her business. To ease the pressure at home, health insurance was arranged for her and her children. In addition, her children received everything they needed to finally begin school. With this renewed support and sense of direction, Sirgut set out to explore which business would best suit her skills and her community's needs. After careful research and observation, she decided to begin selling women's clothing in her local area.

Encouraged by her early success, Sirgut did not stop there. She expanded her business by opening a small coffee preparation kiosk near a busy pedestrian area. The combination of convenience and warm service quickly made her coffee corner popular among passersby. Today, Sirgut is successfully running both businesses. She now earns more than 1,000 ETB a day and has managed to save 200 ETB each day, amassing 60,000 ETB in savings so far. What once felt impossible is now a reality.

A brighter tomorrow

Sirgut has proudly enrolled both of her children in school and ensures they never miss a day. Beyond just survival, her life is now filled with plans and ambition. She has started preparing to open her own restaurant, purchasing furniture and gathering the materials she needs to turn this new dream into a reality. Although the absence of her husband still lingers, Sirgut's days are no longer filled with despair. They are filled with purpose, pride, and hope. "I now have renewed hope to stand on my own and believe in my capacity to become a provider for my family," she says. "Because I received the right support at the most important time in my life."

About the project

The Children in Street Situations (CiSS) Project, implemented by SOS Children's Villages in Ethiopia, is a five-year initiative running from 2022 to 2026. It aims to reach 9,000 children across Addis Ababa, Dire Dawa, and Adama by promoting family-based care, education, and economic empowerment. By supporting families like Sirgut's, the project helps break the cycle of poverty and build lasting, positive change in the lives of children and caregivers alike.



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Dreams Without Borders

At just 21 years old, Amanuel stands as living proof that love, resilience, and opportunity can transform a life. His journey began in SOS Children's Village Harar programme location, where he was raised in a warm, nurturing family-like environment. For Amanuel, it was not simply a place to live; it was a home. A place filled with encouragement, care, and constant belief that he could achieve something great. From a young age, Amanuel showed a strong curiosity and a love for learning. That drive, nurtured within the village, carried him through school and eventually led him to study Computer Science at Mekelle University.

Holding onto a dream

But just as he began to chase his dream, the world around him shifted. In 2020, war broke out in Tigray, the northern region of Ethiopia where his university is located. Caught in the middle of the conflict, Amanuel found himself in a war zone. He endured daily fear, food shortages, emotional strain, and total loss of communication with his family in Harar. Many gave up under such pressures. But not Amanuel. Even amidst conflict, without the comfort of family or security, he held on. He continued his studies, drawing strength from the values instilled in him since childhood, courage, persistence, and hope. Against all odds, he graduated. For Amanuel, that degree was not just a piece of paper; it was a symbol of survival, determination, and of hope. Today, Amanuel is in China, pursuing a master's degree in enterprise management at the Wuhan Institute of Technology, through a global scholarship he earned through sheer determination and discipline. His journey from Harar to a university in China is nothing short of inspiring. But Amanuel is not finished yet. He dreams of earning a PhD and becoming a university professor, so he can guide others the same way he was once guided. Above all, he remains deeply connected to his roots, committed to giving back to his family in SOS Children's Village Harar programme location and the community that raised him.

The power of alternative care

Amanuel's story reflects the transformative impact of alternative care, one of the central programs of SOS Children's Villages in Ethiopia. This approach offers children and young people who cannot live with their biological families a safe, stable, and loving environment. In this setting, children grow up in supportive households, guided by a caregiver and surrounded by siblings, where they receive individual attention, education, and life skills until they are ready for independence. Amanuel is a powerful example of what happens when a child is given love, structure, and the opportunity to dream.



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Positive Parenting for a Generation of Hope

In Midhaga Tola Woreda of East Hararghe Zone, Oromia Region, communities have long faced serious challenges. Prolonged drought and deeply rooted harmful traditional practices have made daily life difficult, particularly for families and children. Recognizing the urgent needs, SOS Children's Villages in Ethiopia, through its Humanitarian Action efforts, launched the Ethiopia Joint Response Project. This initiative is not only addressing immediate vulnerabilities but also building the foundation for long-term, sustainable recovery.

A new approach to parenting

One of the most transformative elements of the project has been its Positive Parenting initiative, also known as 'Parenting Without Violence'. In collaboration with local government offices and grounded in community-based assessments, the program introduced a culturally sensitive and practical training approach aimed at equipping caregivers with the tools to raise their children in safe, nurturing environments. Across ten kebeles in Midhaga Tola, 250 caregivers participated in awareness sessions and training programs. These sessions focused on promoting understanding, empathy, and non-violent communication between parents and children.

Celebration of change

The success of the initiative was beautifully captured during a vibrant graduation ceremony held on May 8, where caregivers gathered to celebrate their journey. Singing traditional songs as they entered the venue, the caregivers did not just mark the end of a training, they celebrated a transformation. What stood out most during the event were the stories of personal change. Participants openly shared how their parenting methods had shifted since joining the program. What once may have been met with resistance or fear of community judgment was now spoken of with pride and renewed purpose.

Local facilitators leading the way

A key strength of the program was its use of 20 trained local facilitators, who were recognized at the graduation with certificates and appreciation. Because these facilitators came from the communities themselves, they brought familiarity, trust, and deep cultural understanding to the sessions, making the lessons more relatable and impactful for participants.

Lasting impact

Despite some initial challenges, including hesitancy toward new ideas and social stigma around change, the program succeeded in altering perceptions. Positive parenting is no longer seen as an outside concept, but rather as a valuable and sustainable practice that aligns with the community's hopes for its children. As the initiative moves forward, ongoing follow-up and refresher sessions are planned to ensure lasting impact. Caregivers now return to their homes not just with certificates, but with confidence, strengthened relationships, and a renewed commitment to raising children with love and respect.



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This Certificate is hereby presented to
Desi Tolera

**For a Successful Facilitation of Structured
Parenting Skill Training**

Presented on: May 7, 2025

Yafet Gebrekidan
ACTING LOCATION PROGRAM
DIRECTOR IN HARAR

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A Childhood Cut Short

Aynalem's childhood ended far too soon. At just nine years old, driven by stories of girls who had fled their small villages in search of a better life, she left home and traveled to Lalibela, alone and unaware of the harsh realities that awaited her. With no family to support her and no income, she began working as a domestic helper. Despite her circumstances, she was determined to learn and managed to attend evening classes, but only up to grade four. Over the years, she took on various low-income jobs, eventually selling eggs on the streets to survive. Life was never easy.

Hope followed by more loss

Marriage offered a brief moment of hope, but it did not last. Shortly after giving birth to her daughter Hiwot, now four years old, Aynalem's husband left without notice. The heartbreak did not end there. Within a year, she lost both her parents, and with their passing, became the sole guardian of her two younger sisters. She brought them to Lalibela to live with her, taking on the overwhelming responsibility of raising three children alone, all while battling poverty, grief, and instability. With no steady income and limited education, Aynalem came close to migrating to the Middle East. But fate had something else in store.

A lifeline at the right time

In 2023, as she hit rock bottom, SOS Children's Villages in Ethiopia launched its Family Strengthening and Child Development Project in Lalibela. Aynalem and her sister Fantu qualified for the program, and it changed the course of their lives. Through the project, Aynalem received training in entrepreneurship, business skills, child protection, and positive parenting, essential tools to help her care for her family. It was her first time navigating parenthood, and this support gave her both confidence and knowledge. She also received educational materials, which allowed her to return to school. Determined to rewrite her story, Aynalem became one of 170 proactive caregivers to receive a comprehensive start-up package. Her dream was to open a small restaurant, and she was supported with vital equipment: a refrigerator, stove, and kitchen essentials. However, the journey was not without setbacks. Conflict in the Lalibela area and high competition made it hard for her restaurant to succeed. Still, Aynalem refused to give up. Drawing on the training she had received, and experiences shared with fellow participants, she made a bold decision to pivot her business. Without selling any of her restaurant tools, she took a leap of faith and borrowed 130,000 ETB from a local bank. With it, she opened a household goods shop on one of Lalibela's busiest streets.

A thriving business

Today, her shop is thriving. "I pay my rent, save every month, and I'm repaying my loan slowly. I'm finally able to support my family." She shares. More importantly, she is investing in her family's future, paying for her sisters' school fees. Aynalem dreams of owning her shop premises and expanding into a full-scale household goods and catering supply store. Her journey from a difficult childhood to becoming the backbone of her family and a successful businesswoman is a testament to what is possible when people are given not charity, but opportunity.

About the project

The Family Strengthening and Child Development Project in Lalibela (2023–2025), implemented by SOS Children's Villages in Ethiopia, supports families through childcare and protection, economic empowerment, education and skills development, and health and well-being. With the aim of helping build resilient communities where children can grow up safely and thrive just like Aynalem is now working to ensure for Hiwot and her sisters.



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A Passion Turned into a Business

Tigest always had the drive to succeed. Motivated and hardworking, she launched her own small business selling traditional spices and cereals. But she quickly learned that passion alone was not enough. Managing a business proved far more challenging than she expected, especially with limited financial resources, little formal business knowledge, and the responsibilities of being a mother of four. Parenting was its own challenge. With her husband working far from home, Tigest often had to raise their children alone. And like many in her community, she had never been exposed to conversations around positive parenting. Tigest's turning point came when she joined the Grow Equal Project, implemented by SOS Children's Villages in Ethiopia. Through the project, she attended training in entrepreneurship, basic business skills, sexual and reproductive health and rights, and most importantly, positive parenting.

These sessions gave Tigest the tools to run her business and raise her children more intentionally, she began to see real change in her life. She even stepped into a leadership role, becoming a facilitator in parenting for respectability sessions organized by the project.

A revived business

With her active participation and dedication, Tigest qualified for seed capital support. She reinvested this into her spice and cereals business, diversifying her product line and improving customer service. These changes quickly paid off, she attracted more customers and began earning the respect of her community as a capable, trustworthy entrepreneur. Her growing income allowed her to better support her family, covering household expenses and school costs.

A new chapter in parenting

Of all the changes in her life, Tigest says the most meaningful has been in her relationship with her children. The positive parenting training shifted how she saw discipline, communication, and emotional support. "I am learning how to raise my children with love and respect," she shares. "I avoid hurtful discipline now, and I understand them better." The results speak for themselves: three of her children showed significant improvements in behavior and school performance. One moved from 12th place in class to 1st, while another made it into the top 10. Today, Tigest is not only running a successful business; she is raising confident, thriving children and playing a vital role in her community.

About the project

The Grow Equal Project (2024–2027), implemented by SOS Children's Villages in Ethiopia, aims to reach nearly 750 children, young women, girls, and their caregivers directly, and over 2,900 people indirectly. The project works to build communities that promote equal rights, sustainable income generation, and functioning social protection systems.



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Carrying the Weight Alone

Alemnesh is a resilient and determined woman caring for six children, including her own and her younger siblings. Her life changed dramatically after the tragic loss of her husband, leaving her to shoulder full responsibility of the household. At the time, her youngest child was still an infant. The pain of grief was compounded by the overwhelming demands of motherhood and survival. Without a steady income or access to support, Alemnesh struggled to provide the essentials, food, school materials, and emotional care. She was weighed down by uncertainty, unsure how to rebuild a future for her family. Every day was a test of her endurance and love.

A new beginning

In 2022, at her most vulnerable moment, Alemnesh's story began to shift. She was selected to participate in the ARADA project, implemented by SOS Children's Villages in Ethiopia. The support she received was multi-dimensional, reflecting the real needs of caregivers like her. Through the program, Alemnesh took part in training sessions on positive parenting, helping her support her children not only physically but emotionally. She also learned about personal and environmental hygiene, laying the foundation for better health at home. Perhaps most importantly, she received practical knowledge in saving, business planning, customer service, and entrepreneurship, all tailored to help her build long-term self-reliance. Financial and technical support from the project allowed her to put these skills into practice. Alemnesh launched a vegetable-selling business at her local market, a humble start, but one rooted in knowledge. Her dedication to applying what she learned was clear from the beginning.

From survival to stability

Today, Alemnesh's business is growing steadily. The income she earns has brought security to her household, and she now provides for her children and siblings with confidence and pride. The same woman who once stood at the edge of despair now leads her family with strength, dignity, and renewed hope. Her children are back in school, their meals are more consistent, and their home is filled with a sense of direction. Alemnesh attributes this transformation not just to the support she received, but to the belief it restored in her own abilities. "I thank SOS Children's Villages in Ethiopia for standing by me," she says. "I want others to take a lesson from my life, and if given the same opportunity, to take it and work to realize it."

About the project

Alemnesh's story is one of countless examples of what becomes possible when the right support meets a determined spirit. The Action for Rights, Accountability, and Development Assurance (ARADA) Project, now in its second phase (2024–2027), continues this mission, ensuring children and young people are protected and cared for, that caregivers and youth develop sustainable incomes, and that every child has the chance to grow up educated, skilled, and healthy. By aiming to reach 1,300 children, 100 young people, and 300 caregivers, ARADA is helping transform hardship into possibility for families like Alemnesh's, and for communities across Hosaena.



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For a Better Tomorrow

Frehiwot, a single mother of five, once lived a life defined by hardship and isolation. Her health condition, though manageable, brought heavy stigma in her community. She faced not only physical pain but the emotional toll of being socially excluded. This stigma made it hard for her to connect with others or fully be present for her children. With no stable income and no one to lean on, Frehiwot struggled daily to feed her children, send them to school, and afford even the most basic medical care. As time went on, the emotional weight of her circumstances began to wear down her confidence and her hope.

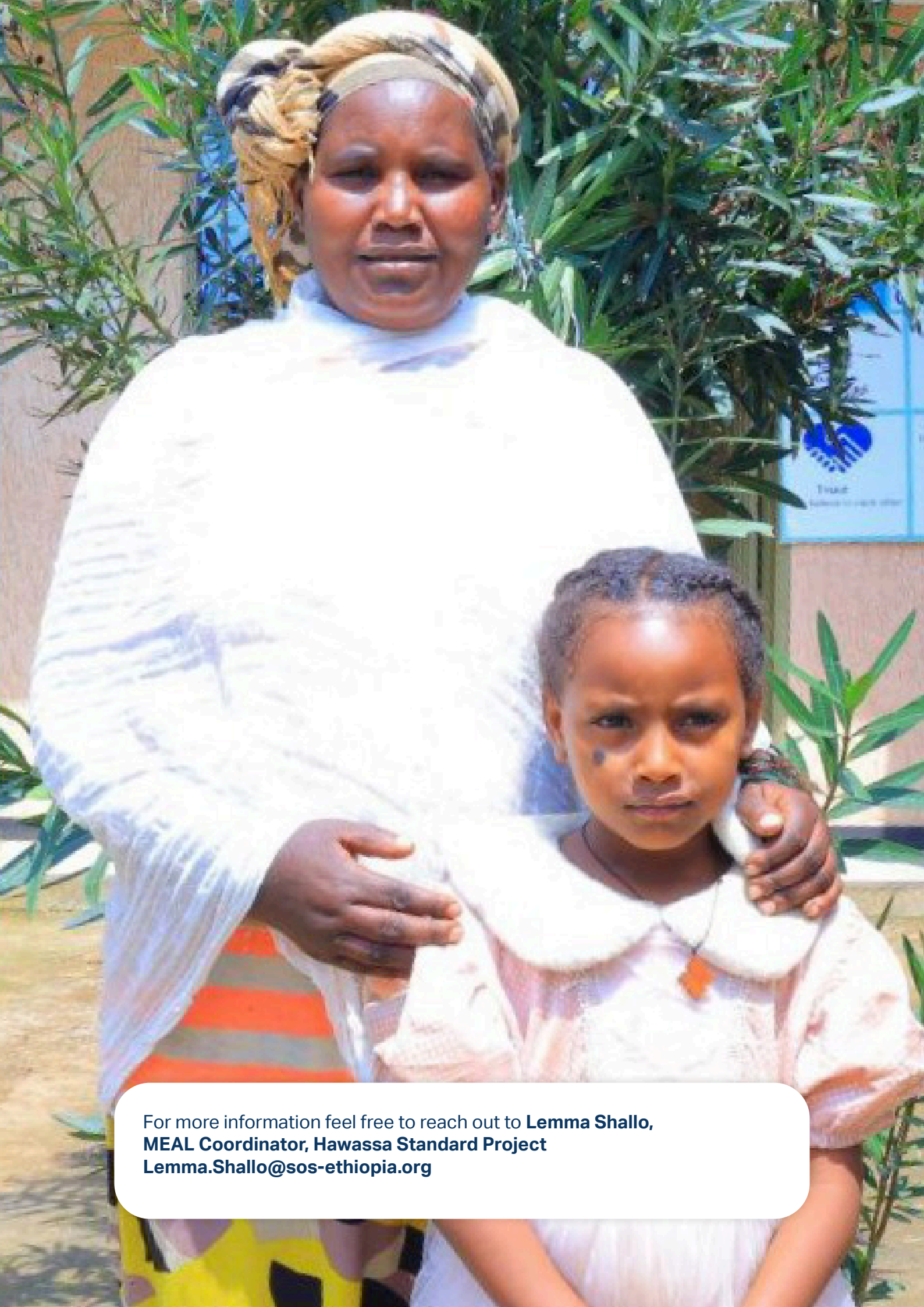
A new chapter

When Frehiwot was introduced to the ARADA project implemented by SOS Children's Villages in Ethiopia, her story began to change. The project offered her a second chance by equipping her with practical skills, emotional strength, and meaningful connections. She received training in positive parenting, which helped her build a healthier relationship with her children. For the first time, she began to understand the emotional needs of her kids and how to meet them with love and respect. She also participated in business development training, which introduced her to ideas and strategies she had never been exposed to. Alongside this, she learned about hygiene and health management, which brought improvements to how her household functioned day-to-day. One of the most life-changing moments was when she received access to community-based health insurance. For the first time in years, Frehiwot could prioritize her own health without fearing the cost. This regular medical care began to restore not only her physical strength but also her confidence. Slowly, she began to step out of isolation and rejoin community life with renewed energy.

Rebuilding with dignity

As her health improved, so did her determination. Through the income-generating activity support offered by the project, Frehiwot started a small vegetable-selling business. She used her newly learned customer service and entrepreneurial skills to grow it steadily. Her business quickly became a stable source of income, allowing her to better support her children and feel pride in her work. She also joined a local savings and credit cooperative, where she began saving money for the first time in her life. Through this network, she not only built financial stability but regained a sense of belonging. Frehiwot was no longer just surviving; she was rebuilding her life with intention.

Today, Frehiwot's home looks and feels different. Her children attend school regularly and come home to a mother who is healthier, more present, and hopeful. The once overwhelming fear of how to survive the next day has been replaced by the quiet confidence of a mother who knows she can provide. Her children are proud of her. The strength she has shown is no longer hidden beneath layers of hardship; it shines in the way she runs her business, manages her household, and shows up for her family.



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A Childhood not Fully Lived

Biruk is a 16-year-old boy living with his mother, Worknesh, and his siblings. Life changed drastically after he lost his father at a young age. As the eldest child, Biruk assumed the emotional and practical responsibilities of the household far before his time. The loss left the family into grief and financial insecurity. Eventually, they were displaced from their home, and Biruk found himself spending time on the streets.

With no stable income, Worknesh struggled to raise her children alone. Biruk dropped out of school. Health issues further complicated their lives as Biruk developed a noticeable eye condition that made him the target of bullying, and one of his sisters faced a disability that required care. Through all of it, Biruk remained grounded.

A life-changing opportunity

Through a chance encounter, Biruk and his family were selected to join the ARADA project, implemented by SOS Children's Villages in Ethiopia. It was a turning point. The project became a lifeline, offering more than just material support; it brought knowledge, confidence, and hope. Biruk participated in a life skills program that helped him rebuild his self-worth. He learned to manage emotions, lead with empathy, and build healthier relationships. Training on child abuse prevention taught him how to recognize and respond to harmful behavior, something he deeply connected with from his own experiences. He also took part in sessions on personal hygiene and environmental sanitation, which gave him valuable tools to improve his own health and help his family stay safe and clean.

One of the most transformative moments in Biruk's journey was receiving treatment and eye surgery. Restoring his health not only eased his discomfort; it restored his confidence. Later, equipped with school supplies and a fresh start, he returned to school.

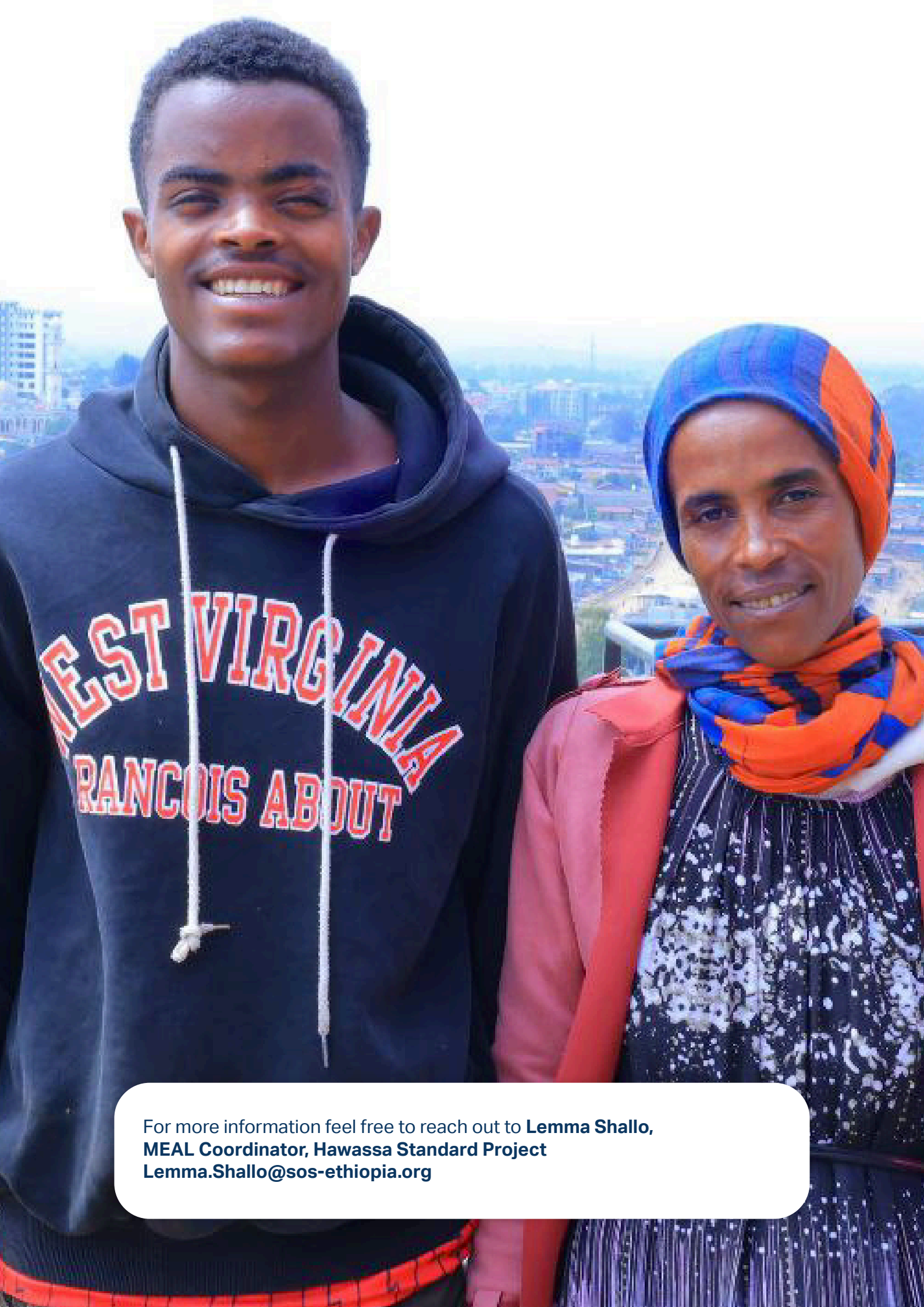
The strength of a mother

For his mother, the transformation was just as meaningful. Worknesh received training in positive parenting that helped her feel more connected to her children and more confident in her role as a caregiver. She was also given support to start a small vegetable business, which became a reliable source of income. Health and education support for all her children lightened the emotional weight she carried every day. Reflecting on the journey, she shared, "My children faced health problems. After we joined the ARADA project, SOS Children's Villages in Ethiopia was there for me like family. They helped with medical costs and school support. Without them, I wouldn't have made it." Now, she proudly says, "I work, I provide, and I give back."

A young leader with a vision

Biruk did not just return to school; he stepped into leadership. He became active in multiple student clubs, taking part in charity drives to support students with disabilities and organizing donations for street-involved children. Through disability inclusion efforts and student parliament, he advocates for equity and student voice. In the literature club, he encourages others to express themselves and connect through reading and writing.

Outside school, Biruk also earns part-time income by delivering goods with a donkey cart. He balances his schoolwork, job, and family responsibilities with maturity beyond his years.



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