

# Excellence Chronicles

## Good Practices & Success Stories

Second Quarter 2026

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 1974 famine. Since then, we have been committed to ensuring that every child grows up with the bonds they need to become their strongest self. To achieve this, our work focuses on strengthening families and communities, providing quality alternative care, promoting youth empowerment and employment, and supporting quality education and early childhood development. Our programmes also focus on strengthening child protection systems and health services, expanding support for children in street situations, promoting disability inclusion, and providing life-saving humanitarian assistance to communities affected by conflict, drought, and other crises, with particular attention to the needs of women and children.

Today, we operate across nine regions of Ethiopia: Tigray, Amhara, Oromia, Harari, Afar, Sidama, South Ethiopia, Central Ethiopia, and Somali, as well as the city administrations of Addis Ababa and Dire Dawa. Through our comprehensive programmes and services, we continue to make a meaningful difference in the lives of children, young people, families, and communities, particularly those who are underserved, by helping to ensure they have the support and opportunities they need to thrive.

Throughout our interventions, we have consistently communicated our impact, achievements, and challenges to internal and external stakeholders through annual reports, showcasing good practices, and sharing success stories. As part of our ongoing commitment to transparency and accountability, the Success Whisperers team, comprising members from Programme Development and Quality Assurance, Brand and Communications, Sponsorship, Programme Implementation, and MEAL, has compiled a collection of success stories and good practices from the second quarter of 2026.

These stories and good practices serve as a powerful testament to the impact and effectiveness of our work, highlighting the positive changes and improvements brought about through our programmes and initiatives. By documenting and sharing these experiences, we aim to promote learning, inspire engagement, and strengthen understanding of the work taking place across our programmes.

We believe that sharing these inspiring best practices and success stories can motivate stakeholders to engage with and support our work, while building trust and credibility, strengthening relationships, and creating opportunities for further collaboration and support.

Together, we can continue to make a meaningful difference in the lives of children, young people, their families, and communities across Ethiopia.

# Good Practices

## Second quarter 2026

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# Peer Mentorship for Young People Transitioning to Independent Living

Transitioning from alternative care to independent living can be challenging for many young people. They often face uncertainty around education, employment, financial management, relationships and adapting to life after care. While formal training provides important knowledge, many young people also need practical guidance from those who have experienced the same journey. Recognizing this need, SOS Children's Villages in Ethiopia introduced a Career Guidance and Mentorship initiative connecting young people in the Supervised Independent Living (SIL) programme with care leavers who had successfully transitioned to independent living. The main beneficiaries were young people in the SIL programme preparing for independent adulthood. SOS Children's Villages in Ethiopia organized and facilitated the sessions, while caregivers coordinated and supported the young people throughout the process. Care leavers voluntarily served as mentors, sharing their personal journeys, challenges, achievements and lessons learned. Their involvement created a safe and supportive environment where young people could openly discuss their concerns and receive practical advice from people with first-hand experience.

The initiative followed a participatory approach focused on dialogue and experience-sharing rather than classroom-style lectures. Care leavers shared their experiences of education, employment, financial management, independent living and overcoming challenges after leaving care, while young people were encouraged to ask questions and discuss their concerns. Because the number of available care leavers was limited, one-to-one mentoring was not possible, so young people were grouped in twos and threes. Two sessions were organized for each group, allowing sufficient time for discussion, reflection and individual support. The approach produced positive results. Young people gained practical career guidance and answers to many of their concerns about education, employment, financial management and life after care. The sessions also helped them recognize that many of their challenges are common and can be overcome through determination and proper planning. Trust and communication between the SIL young people and care leavers improved, with some relationships continuing beyond the sessions. Caregivers also observed increased confidence and motivation among participants, while care leavers were empowered to become positive role models by sharing their experiences with the next generation.

What made the initiative different was its shift from theoretical career guidance to practical, experience-based mentorship. Young people were able to learn directly from peers who had faced similar challenges, creating a level of trust and relatability that formal training alone may not provide. The experience showed that care leavers can be an important source of knowledge, encouragement and peer support for young people preparing to leave care. The practice can be replicated within other SOS Children's Villages in Ethiopia programmes and adapted by organizations working with young people in alternative care. Existing community structures and youth networks could also be engaged to expand mentorship opportunities. For successful replication, programmes would need to identify willing care leavers, provide clear coordination and create small-group settings that allow meaningful interaction.

The main challenges were the limited number of available care leavers and caregivers' heavy workloads, which made one-to-one mentoring and scheduling difficult. These were addressed by grouping two or three young people with each mentor and organizing two sessions per group. The experience also demonstrated that involving care leavers as volunteer mentors and integrating mentorship into existing SIL activities can make the practice sustainable and cost-effective. The key lesson is that young people preparing for independent living need more than information and training; they benefit greatly from hearing directly from people who have successfully navigated the same transition. Practical experience-sharing builds trust, encourages young people to seek support, and enables care leavers to become positive role models and long-term mentors for the next generation.

For more information feel free to reach out to **Sintayehu Habtamu** ,
**MEAL Coordinator, Addis Ababa Standard Project**
**Sintayehu.Habtamu@sos-ethiopia.org**



# Beyond Project Boundaries: A One-Programme Approach to Expanding Livelihood Opportunities for Children and Young People with Disabilities

Children and young people with disabilities in Dire Dawa often face multiple barriers to achieving sustainable livelihoods and economic independence. While the Advancing the Rights of Children and Young Adults with Disabilities project successfully addressed rehabilitation, inclusion and protection needs, livelihood support such as vocational training and income-generating opportunities was beyond its scope. This created a gap for young people who had made progress through the project but were not yet able to move towards economic independence. To address this gap, the SOS Children's Village Harrar programme location adopted a "One Programme" approach, linking eligible participants from the Disability Inclusion Project with complementary livelihood services under the Children in Street Situations Project. Rather than creating new activities, the two projects worked together to make better use of existing services, expertise and resources. The primary beneficiaries were children and young people with disabilities who were ready to pursue livelihood opportunities, while their caregivers also benefited from improved prospects for household resilience and self-reliance.

The practice was implemented through a structured referral and case management process. The Disability Inclusion Project identified eligible young people through regular assessments and individual case management, while the Children in Street Situations Project provided appropriate vocational training and start-up support. Project coordinators and caseworkers jointly planned referrals, matched participants with opportunities based on their interests and abilities, and maintained regular communication and follow-up. As a result, two young people with disabilities enrolled in vocational skills training and three received start-up capital to establish income-generating activities. The collaboration expanded opportunities that would otherwise have remained inaccessible through a single project. Participants gained practical skills and resources to strengthen their employability and move towards economic independence, while also experiencing increased confidence and social inclusion. At programme level, the approach improved coordination, reduced duplication and strengthened case management by viewing beneficiaries as the wider programme rather than of individual project.

A key innovation was the shift from project-specific service delivery to a shared responsibility for beneficiary outcomes. The practice demonstrated that innovation does not always require additional funding or new projects; stronger collaboration and strategic use of existing resources can address service gaps and produce better results. Its success was supported by clear referral procedures, regular communication, joint planning, dedicated staff and the availability of complementary services across projects. The experience also highlighted some challenges, particularly the initial effort required to establish referral procedures, clarify responsibilities and coordinate between project teams. Regular coordination meetings, continuous follow-up and clear communication helped address these challenges and made the process increasingly efficient over time.

The approach is highly replicable across other SOS Children's Villages in Ethiopia programmes, with complementary services. Replication would require mapping available services, establishing clear referral procedures and focal persons, integrating referrals into case management, and maintaining regular coordination between teams. External service providers and community structures could also be included to expand opportunities further. The sustainability of the practice lies in its use of existing programme resources rather than additional infrastructure or significant financial investment. Continued institutional commitment, staff coordination and integration of referrals into routine case management can help maintain the approach beyond individual project cycles.

The key lesson is that stronger collaboration across projects can significantly expand support for underserved children and young people without substantial additional resources. By breaking down project boundaries and adopting a One Programme perspective.

For more information feel free to reach out to **Assegid Hailu, MEAL Coordinator, Harar Standard Project Assegid.Hailu@sos-ethiopia.org**



# Institutionalizing Community-Led Cross-Border Peace Committees for Sustainable Peace

The border areas of Afar, Oromia and Somali Regional States have experienced recurring conflict driven by competition over natural resources, boundary disputes, livestock theft and cycles of retaliation. These conflicts have resulted in displacement, loss of livelihoods and weakened social cohesion, while exposing children and families to violence, family separation, interrupted education and limited access to essential services. Recognising that emergency responses alone could not address these underlying causes, SOS Children's Villages in Ethiopia launched the three-year, European Union-funded Practice Peace and Live in Tranquillity project in 2025. The project introduced a community-led approach that institutionalizes Cross-Border Peace Committees to prevent conflict, facilitate dialogue and promote peaceful coexistence. The practice brings together women, young people, children and conflict-affected communities across eight bordering woredas in Afar, Oromia and Somali. At its centre are eleven Cross-Border Peace Committees, with one hundred thirteen members operating at woreda and zonal levels. The committees bring together traditional clan leaders, religious leaders, community representatives and local government officials. Traditional and religious leaders provide cultural legitimacy and support indigenous conflict-resolution mechanisms, while government representatives provide institutional recognition and technical support.

The intervention used a participatory social and behaviour change communication approach that combined traditional conflict-resolution practices with formal governance structures. Rather than waiting for conflicts to escalate, the project established permanent local mechanisms for prevention and early resolution. Eleven committees were established, eight at woreda level and three at zonal level, with each committee comprising nine members: six community representatives, including clan elders, women and youth, and three local government representatives. Each committee developed and formally endorsed its own bylaws, defining roles, decision-making processes, mediation procedures and accountability mechanisms. Committee members also received training in mediation, negotiation, inclusive dialogue, conflict analysis, human rights and peaceful dispute resolution. These structures were then used through intra- and inter-community peace dialogues, supported by continuous community awareness activities at kebele level.

The practice has produced encouraging results. Communities increasingly used dialogue rather than violence to resolve disputes. For example, dialogue between Afar and Oromo communities in Halaydage and Anano led to the peaceful return of stolen cattle and camels and agreement on traditional compensation (Guma) for lives lost in previous conflicts. Similar dialogue between Oromo and Somali communities in Ifadin and Ruki resulted in the return of stolen livestock and the settlement of longstanding grievances. Local stakeholders have also reported reduced retaliatory attacks and cattle theft in areas where the committees are actively functioning. Beyond resolving individual disputes, the initiative has strengthened trust and collaboration between neighbouring communities and local authorities. Reduced violence and displacement have contributed to a safer environment for children, women and older people, helping families remain together and supporting children's continued access to education and essential services.

A key lesson is that sustainable peacebuilding requires permanent, locally owned mechanisms rather than temporary responses to crises. The experience also showed that inclusive participation makes peace agreements more durable, while early engagement with government authorities and traditional leadership is essential when establishing similar structures in politically and administratively sensitive environments. The practice was designed to continue beyond the project period. The committees operate under formally adopted bylaws and are recognised within local administrative structures, while strong community ownership and the skills developed through capacity building provide a foundation for continued conflict prevention. Because the approach relies largely on existing community structures and local leadership, it is also relatively cost-effective. The model has strong potential for replication in other pastoralist and border areas affected by resource competition, administrative disputes and historical tensions. Its combination of indigenous conflict-resolution mechanisms with formal government structures allows it to be adapted to different contexts. SOS Children's Village Harar programme location plans to document the committee bylaws and implementation process as a practical toolkit to support wider replication and inform peacebuilding efforts.

For more information feel free to reach out to **Assegid Hailu, MEAL Coordinator, Harar Standard Project**
**Assegid.Hailu@sos-ethiopia.org**



# Integrated Identification, Referral, Psychosocial Support and Follow-up for GBV Survivors

Gender-Based Violence (GBV) remains a significant barrier to the wellbeing, dignity and empowerment of women and girls. Survivors may experience prolonged psychological distress due to delayed identification, stigma and limited access to appropriate support. To address this challenge, the Grow Equal: Her Right to a Sustainable Life project integrated GBV identification and follow-up into routine community engagement, enabling staff and community structures to recognize possible cases and connect survivors with appropriate services. The practice focused on strengthening the capacity of project staff and community-level structures to identify different forms of GBV, including sexual violence, intimate partner violence, economic abuse, and emotional and psychological violence. Through regular household follow-up, observation and confidential engagement with participants, six survivors were identified and referred for professional psychosocial support at Alamura Primary Hospital in Hawassa. The survivors included two adolescent girls, one young woman and three adult women.

The approach was survivor-centred and confidential, with the project team maintaining regular follow-up throughout the counselling process. Professional counsellors documented survivors' progress, observations, recommendations and recovery status, which informed coordinated case management while respecting confidentiality. This ensured that referral was not treated as a one-time intervention, but as part of a continuous support process. The practice contributed to positive outcomes for all six survivors. One young woman demonstrated an excellent recovery prognosis, while the other five showed positive psychological improvement and were assessed by counsellors as having good recovery prognoses. Regular follow-up and professional documentation also strengthened case management and enabled the project team to respond appropriately to survivors' ongoing needs.

A key strength of the practice was the collaboration between the community-based project and Alamura Primary Hospital, supported by qualified counsellors and consistent communication between health professionals and project staff. The trust established between project staff and community members also helped create an environment where survivors could disclose their experiences and access support. The combination of early identification, professional counselling and continued follow-up made the approach more comprehensive than referral alone. The experience demonstrated that regular observation and engagement can help identify GBV cases that might otherwise remain hidden, while multi-sectoral collaboration improves the continuity and quality of survivor support. Professional documentation of counselling outcomes also provides valuable evidence for case management, monitoring and future programming.

The practice can be sustained by integrating routine GBV identification and follow-up into existing community outreach and case management systems, while maintaining strong referral partnerships with health facilities and psychosocial service providers. It can also be replicated in other SOS Children's Villages in Ethiopia programmes by strengthening the capacity of frontline staff and community volunteers, establishing clear referral pathways, and ensuring access to confidential, survivor-centred services. The main lesson is that effective GBV response requires more than identifying and referring survivors; it requires continued, confidential and coordinated support throughout the recovery process. Strengthening community-level identification, professional psychosocial services and consistent follow-up can improve survivors' wellbeing while creating a more responsive and protective support system.



For more information feel free to reach out to **Lemma Shallo, MEAL Coordinator, Hawassa Standard Project**
**Lemma.Shallo@sos-ethiopia.org**

# Success Stories

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SOS CHILDREN'S VILLAGES



# When Persistence Bears Fruit: Zelalem's Journey

At 29, Zelalem is determined to build a stable and independent future for himself and his younger siblings. Living in Addis Ababa City, he faced significant financial challenges while trying to establish his career and contribute to his family's livelihood. After graduating with a bachelor's degree in accounting and finance, Zelalem spent more than two years searching for employment. He submitted applications to numerous organizations but struggled to secure a suitable position. Limited practical experience and difficulties demonstrating his strengths during interviews made the search particularly challenging. To support himself and his younger siblings, he took on part-time and temporary jobs. Although these provided some income, they were irregular and offered little long-term security. Rather than giving up, Zelalem remained determined to strengthen his skills and find a sustainable path into employment.

## From training to opportunity

A turning point came through the SOS Children's Villages in Ethiopia Sustainable Training for Employment Promotion (STEP) project. The project provided Zelalem with a package of employment support designed to strengthen his workplace skills and help him transition into the labour market. He first completed life and employability skills training, developing competencies in communication, teamwork, problem-solving, time management, and professional ethics. The project then facilitated an internship at a Savings and Credit Cooperative Organization (SACCO), giving him an opportunity to apply these skills in a real work environment. During his internship, Zelalem received ongoing coaching and mentoring to help him navigate workplace challenges, strengthen his professional abilities, and build confidence. His commitment and performance ultimately opened the door to permanent employment.

## An opportunity that changed everything

Following his internship, Zelalem was offered a position at the same SACCO he was interning in, as a Junior Saving and Credit Expert, earning a monthly salary of ETB 18,100. For Zelalem, the opportunity meant more than a regular income. It has given him greater financial stability and the ability to contribute to household expenses, pay rent, support his younger siblings' education, and meet essential needs. With stable employment, he can now look beyond immediate financial pressures and set new personal and professional goals. Reflecting on his journey, Zelalem says: "The STEP project has completely changed the direction of my life. It gave me the skills, confidence, and opportunity to prove my potential and secure a stable job. Today, I can support my family, continue my education, and plan for a better future."

## About the project

The Sustainable Training for Employment Promotion (STEP) project supports young people in Addis Ababa and Adama to overcome barriers to employment and build pathways towards sustainable livelihoods. Through vocational and employability skills training, entrepreneurship coaching, internships, and business support, the project helps young people develop practical skills, gain work experience, connect with employment opportunities, and strengthen their ability to earn a sustainable income. Between 2024 and 2027, the project aims to reach 3,500 young people, supporting them to become more economically independent and active contributors to their families and communities.



For more information feel free to reach out to **Sintayehu Habtamu** ,
**MEAL Coordinator, Addis Ababa Standard Project**
**Sintayehu.Habtamu@sos-ethiopia.org**

# The Beginning of Something New: Eleni's Journey

For nearly a decade, Eleni has carried the responsibility of raising her children alone. A mother of two living in Adama City, Eleni lost her husband nine years ago and was left to provide for her children with very limited means. She earned a living washing clothes as a daily labourer, but the income was rarely enough to cover even the family's basic needs. At times, she had no choice but to rely on relatives for support. As financial hardship deepened, her two children eventually dropped out of school. Yet, even through the hardest years, Eleni refused to lose hope. Her determination to provide a better future for her children kept her moving forward.

## A turning point

Eleni' life began to change when she met the outreach team of SOS Children's Villages in Ethiopia's Children in Street Situations project. Since its launch in 2022, the project has supported underserved children and families by addressing some of the root causes that can push children into street situations, including poverty and limited access to education and livelihood opportunities. Through the project, Eleni received entrepreneurship and business management training, along with start-up capital to establish an injera-making business. For Eleni, the support was more than financial assistance. It was an opportunity to build something of her own and create a more stable source of income for her family.

## Turning opportunity into stability

Eleni began supplying up to 200 injeras a day to local shops, earning approximately ETB 4,000 per day. Determined to make the most of her new income, she began saving ETB 1,000 each week through an Ekub, a community-based savings group. Over time, her savings grew to ETB 12,000, giving her the opportunity to take another step forward. With the money, Eleni opened a small grocery shop in front of her home, creating an additional source of income for her family. Her progress also began to change things for her children. With support from the project, her children received scholastic materials that enabled them to return to school.

## About the project

Eleni's story reflects the impact of the Children in the Streets Situation project, implemented from 2022 to 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-based care, education, and economic empowerment, supporting children and youth to move toward safety, dignity, and lasting opportunity.



For more information feel free to reach out to **Sintayehu Habtamu** ,
**MEAL Coordinator, Addis Ababa Standard Project**
**Sintayehu.Habtamu@sos-ethiopia.org**

# Choosing to Go Beyond What is Expected: Hiwot's Journey

For 25-year-old Hiwot living in Addis Ababa City, completing her Level IV qualification in accounting was an important achievement. But like many young graduates, she soon faced a challenge. Having the right qualifications did not necessarily mean having the practical experience employers were looking for. Hiwot knew that turning her classroom knowledge into a career would require more than a certificate. She needed an opportunity to step into the workplace, gain practical experience, and build the confidence to navigate her professional future. That opportunity came when Hiwot joined the Green Growth: Empowering Youth for a Green Future project, implemented by SOS Children's Villages in Ethiopia. The project began by equipping her with life skills and employability skills training, helping her strengthen her communication, confidence, professional behaviour, and other skills needed to navigate the workplace. For Selam, the training was an important first step. But the real learning began when she entered the workplace.

## Learning by doing

Following the training, Hiwot was placed in a three-month internship at Commercial Bank, where she gained firsthand experience working in a busy financial services environment. Under the guidance of experienced staff, she became familiar with banking operations and supported customers with a range of banking services. Each day brought new responsibilities and opportunities to learn. But for Hiwot, the most valuable lessons went beyond banking procedures. The internship taught her how to manage her time, take responsibility for her work, communicate professionally with colleagues and customers, and provide quality customer service with confidence and respect. "The internship gave me much more than work experience. It helped me believe in my own abilities. Every task I completed increased my confidence, and every interaction with customers taught me something new. I now understand what it means to work professionally and serve people with commitment. This opportunity has opened my eyes to many possibilities for my future," Hiwot says.

## Creating more than one path

Hiwot's ambitions extend beyond finding employment in the financial sector. Recognizing the importance of developing diverse skills and income opportunities, she also completed professional training in decor. The additional skill has opened another pathway for her to pursue self-employment while continuing to work toward her career goals in banking and finance. By combining her accounting background, workplace experience, and entrepreneurial skills, Hiwot is building a future with more than one possibility. Today, Hiwot continues to pursue opportunities in the financial sector while using her decor skills to explore additional income-generating opportunities. Her journey shows how practical experience can help young people bridge the gap between education and employment. With the right skills, opportunities, and encouragement, young people can build the confidence to take charge of their careers and create pathways toward economic independence.

## About the project

The Green Growth: Empowering Youth for a Green Future Project, supported by the Government of Canada through Global Affairs Canada and implemented by SOS Children's Villages in Ethiopia, aims to equip underserved young people with the skills, knowledge, and opportunities to participate in the green economy. Running from 2025 to 2030, the project will be implemented in Addis Ababa, Adama, and Dire Dawa, focusing on urban and peri urban communities. It aims to reach more than 7,000 young people, including 60% women and at least 5% youth living with disabilities, helping them build sustainable livelihoods and contribute to a greener future.



For more information feel free to reach out to **Sintayehu Habtamu** ,
**MEAL Coordinator, Addis Ababa Standard Project**
**Sintayehu.Habtamu@sos-ethiopia.org**

# Finding His Way Back: Yohannes's Journey

At just 11 years old, Yohannes had already experienced a loss that changed the course of his childhood. Growing up in Addis Abeba City with his mother and younger sister, he lost his father in a tragic car accident. The loss left the family facing both emotional pain and growing economic hardship. As life at home became increasingly difficult, Yohannes eventually left and found himself living on the streets of Addis Ababa. Away from the safety of his family and familiar surroundings, he was exposed to trauma, insecurity, and the many risks associated with life on the streets.

## Finding a way forward

Yohannes's situation changed when he was identified through street outreach services provided by social workers from Tilahunen Charity Association, an implementing partner of SOS Children's Villages in Ethiopia's Children in Street Situations project. Following the outreach intervention, Yohannes was enrolled in the full center service rehabilitation programme, where he received the care and support he needed to begin rebuilding his life. He had access to safe shelter, food, medical care, counselling, psychosocial support, life skills training, and recreational activities. With consistent care and guidance, Yohannes gradually began to recover from the experiences he had faced on the streets. He regained his confidence, developed a renewed sense of hope, and began looking toward a future beyond street life.

## Finding his way home

While Yohannes was receiving support, efforts were made to trace and assess his family. These efforts eventually led to his reunification with his mother and reintegration into his community. Returning home meant more than simply having a safe place to live. It gave Yohannes the opportunity to reconnect with his family, return to school, and continue growing up in a stable and supportive environment. Today, Yohannes is living safely with his family and continuing his education as a Grade 3 student in Primary School. He is making encouraging progress in his studies and actively participating in school and social activities. His family has also received support to strengthen their livelihood. Through economic strengthening assistance provided by the project, Yohannes's mother was able to start a small vegetable-selling business, helping improve the family's income and stability. Yohannes's journey shows what can become possible when children in street situations are met with more than immediate assistance. Through outreach, rehabilitation, family tracing and reunification, education, and economic support for families, children can be given an opportunity to return to safety and continue building their futures.

## About the Project

Yohannes's story reflects the impact of the Children in the Streets Situation project, implemented from 2022 to 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-based care, education, and economic empowerment, supporting children and youth to move toward safety, dignity, and lasting opportunity.



For more information feel free to reach out to **Sintayehu Habtamu** ,
**MEAL Coordinator, Addis Ababa Standard Project**
**Sintayehu.Habtamu@sos-ethiopia.org**

# Growing Beyond the Craft: Tewodros's Journey

For Tewodros, making leather products is more than a skill; it is the foundation of his livelihood. The 34-year-old entrepreneur from Adama City has spent three years building Tewodros Banchigize and Their Friends Leather Products PLC, producing belts, shoes, bags, wallets, and other leather goods. While Tewodros had strong practical skills and a business with growth potential, managing and expanding the enterprise was challenging. He lacked structured business practices, including proper bookkeeping, had limited access to finance, and struggled to reach new markets.

## Finding the right support

Tewodros's journey began to change when he joined the Green Growth: Empowering Youth for a Green Future project in Adama. Following an assessment by business development service experts, a tailored business development plan was developed to address the specific needs of his enterprise. He received scale-up business training and four rounds of personalized, on-the-job coaching, allowing him to put new knowledge into practice. The support helped him strengthen his approach to managing the business and understand that producing quality products was only one part of building a successful enterprise. "The coaching helped me look at my business differently. I began to understand that producing good products is only one part of running a successful business; managing the business properly is just as important." Tewodros says.

## Turning knowledge into practice

One of the most important changes was in Tewodros's financial management. He began keeping proper financial records, giving him a clearer picture of his income and business performance. He also improved the cleanliness, organization, and presentation of his shop, creating a more professional environment for customers. Tewodros diversified his product range to respond to customer preferences and changing market demand. The project also linked him with a Savings and Credit Cooperative Organization (SACCO), where he began saving regularly and building a pathway towards accessing finance for future expansion. The project also facilitated Tewodros's participation in a business fair, where he showcased his leather products, connected with potential customers, and built new business relationships. The experience strengthened his confidence and gave him a clearer vision for growing his enterprise.

Today, Tewodros is preparing for his next step. He has applied for a ETB 300,000 loan through the partner SACCO to support his business expansion. Tewodros's journey shows that a strong product is only the beginning of a successful enterprise. With business knowledge, coaching, financial services, and connections to markets, young entrepreneurs can strengthen their businesses, build more sustainable livelihoods, and contribute to local economic growth.

## About the project

The Green Growth: Empowering Youth for a Green Future Project, supported by the Government of Canada through Global Affairs Canada and implemented by SOS Children's Villages in Ethiopia, aims to equip underserved young people with the skills, knowledge, and opportunities to participate in the green economy. Running from 2025 to 2030, the project will be implemented in Addis Ababa, Adama, and Dire Dawa, focusing on urban and peri urban communities. It aims to reach more than 7,000 young people, including 60% women and at least 5% youth living with disabilities, helping them build sustainable livelihoods and contribute to a greener future.



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**MEAL Coordinator, Addis Ababa Standard Project**
**Sintayehu.Habtamu@sos-ethiopia.org**

# Finding Value in What She Knew: Meseret's Journey

Meseret is a primary caregiver to her kin child living in Addis Ababa City, carrying the responsibility of providing a safe and stable home while navigating significant financial hardship. Meeting everyday needs, from rent and food to education and other essentials was a constant struggle. With limited employment opportunities and no reliable source of income, balancing caregiving with the need to earn a living became increasingly difficult. Yet Meseret had something valuable that had long been part of her life, the knowledge of traditional herbal remedies for healthy hair care. She knew how locally available ingredients could be combined to create natural hair-care products. What she lacked was not knowledge or determination, but the resources and business skills to turn that knowledge into a livelihood.

## A knowledge waiting for an opportunity

Her circumstances began to change when she was selected to participate in a livelihood support initiative through SOS Children's Villages in Ethiopia's Direct Family Empowerment/Kinship Care Programme. She received small business management training and start-up capital, giving her both practical skills and the confidence to turn an idea into a business. Drawing on what she already knew, Meseret began producing natural and herbal hair oil using locally available ingredients, including onion, rosemary, black seed, and other herbal extracts traditionally used for hair care.

Starting the business was only the first step. Meseret understood that producing a good product would not be enough, customers also needed to trust it. She therefore invested in attractive packaging and professionally designed labels, giving her products a distinctive and professional appearance. The improved presentation helped her products stand out among other small-scale producers and gave customers greater confidence in what she was selling. But perhaps her greatest strength was her determination to make the business work. Meseret turned everyday opportunities into moments for marketing. Whether attending the organization's caregivers' meetings and training sessions, visiting local markets, or joining social gatherings, she carried her products in her handbag. Whenever she met someone who might be interested, she introduced them to her products. Slowly, her efforts began to pay off. Customers who initially tried her products began returning, while others came through recommendations. Word of mouth became one of her most powerful marketing tools.

## From income to greater stability

Today, Meseret has built a growing home-based microenterprise producing natural hair food and herbal hair oil. What began as an effort to turn traditional knowledge into an income source has become a more sustainable livelihood. The additional income has helped strengthen her household's financial stability. She is now better able to meet everyday household expenses, contribute to her kin child's education, and provide other essential needs that will allow her child grow up happy, healthy and cared for. Meseret's journey illustrates what can happen when caregivers are supported to build on the strengths they already possess. The SOS Children's Villages in Ethiopia Direct Family Empowerment/Kinship Care Programme provided her with training, business skills, and start-up support, but she brought the knowledge, determination, and persistence needed to turn those opportunities into something lasting. "I realized that my traditional knowledge had value. With the support I received and my determination to succeed, I was able to turn that knowledge into a business that now supports my family and gives me hope for the future." She shared happily.




For more information feel free to reach out to **Sintayehu Habtamu** ,
**MEAL Coordinator, Addis Ababa Standard Project**
**Sintayehu.Habtamu@sos-ethiopia.org**

# The Hard Work Behind the Realized Dream: Tamiru's Journey

For Tamiru, preparing for life after university began long before graduation. A young and hardworking public relations graduate, Tamiru grew up in SOS Children's Village Addis Ababa programme location, where he learned the value of hard work, independence, and taking responsibility for his future. While pursuing his university studies, he knew that a degree alone would not guarantee the future he wanted. He wanted to gain practical experience, earn an income, and, eventually, build something of his own. Like many young people approaching graduation, Tamiru faced uncertainty about employment opportunities and had limited financial resources to start the small business he had in mind. Rather than waiting for the right opportunity to come along, he began preparing for it himself.

## Preparing for independence

For two consecutive years, Tamiru spent his university summer breaks working part-time. He deliberately took on different types of work to gain practical experience, understand different workplace environments, and, most importantly, save money for his future business. At the same time, he explored his interest in food services and participated in several food-related training programmes to strengthen his skills and knowledge. His preparation took another step forward when he participated in entrepreneurship training through SOS Children's Village Addis Ababa programme location's youth development and employability support initiatives. The training introduced him to business planning, financial management, opportunity identification, and self-employment, helping him turn his idea into a more practical business plan.

## Turning savings into a business

With his savings and training, Tamiru began researching where his business could have the greatest potential. He identified a location around Addis Ababa University and a hospital near it, where there was a steady demand for affordable food. He used his accumulated savings to launch a small food business offering affordable fast foods, flavoured instant noodles, and fresh juices to students, hospital visitors, and other members of the surrounding community. Starting with limited resources meant that Tamiru had to make careful decisions about what to offer, how to manage his money, and how to respond to what customers wanted.

Today, Tamiru's enterprise provides affordable food options to people in the surrounding community while giving him an income and a stronger foundation for his future. The entrepreneurship support he received helped him develop the confidence, planning skills, and business mindset to take the step into self-employment. But Tamiru's journey was also shaped by his own determination. His willingness to work during university breaks, learn from different jobs, save consistently, and invest in his idea played an equally important role in turning his plans into reality. For Tamiru, starting a business was not about waiting until he had everything he needed. It was about making the most of what he had and building from there.

## Looking ahead

Tamiru is already thinking beyond his first business. He hopes to expand his services, create additional employment opportunities, and continue growing his customer base within the university community and beyond. His journey demonstrates how young people can combine skills development, practical experience, personal savings, and the right support to create their own pathways to economic independence. For Tamiru, entrepreneurship is not simply an alternative to employment. It is a way of taking greater control of his future. "I didn't wait until I had a lot of money to start. I started with what I had, learned along the way, and now I am planning to grow." Tamiru shared.




For more information feel free to reach out to **Sintayehu Habtamu** ,
**MEAL Coordinator, Addis Ababa Standard Project**
**Sintayehu.Habtamu@sos-ethiopia.org**

# From Speaking Out to Taking Action: Halima's Journey

Halima, a 46-year-old caregiver living in Harar City, has always believed that women and children deserve to live free from violence. She had long spoken out against harmful traditional practices and stood up for women's rights whenever she could. But through SOS Children's Villages in Ethiopia's Strengthening the Resilience of Women and Girls to Live a Life Free from Violence project, Halima gained the knowledge and confidence to turn her convictions into action. Her journey began with Gender-Based Violence (GBV) prevention training, where she learned to recognize different forms of violence, understand child safeguarding, and identify referral pathways for survivors. For Halima, the training strengthened not only her knowledge, but also her sense of responsibility to protect others. "After participating in the project trainings, I not only know how to identify different forms of Gender-Based Violence but also guide survivors to referral pathways. I actively collaborate with relevant stakeholders to fight against GBV in our community." Halima shared. She began sharing what she had learned with women in her local savings group, encouraging them to recognize abuse, speak openly about violence, and seek help when necessary.

## When knowledge became action

Halima soon faced a situation where her new knowledge could make a real difference. She learned of a case of sexual abuse involving a young girl in her neighborhood. The survivor was traumatized and afraid to speak out, while those around her were unsure how to respond. In this moment, Halima knew she could not remain silent. She immediately reported the case to the appropriate frontline service providers and helped ensure that the girl was referred to the local one-stop centre. There, she received emergency medical care, psychosocial counselling, legal assistance, and specialized protection services. For Halima, this was more than reporting a case. It was about making sure that a young girl in need was heard, protected, and connected to the support she needed.

## A voice for her community

Halima's action helped protect one young girl, but the impact went beyond that single case. By speaking out, she challenged the silence that often surrounds gender-based violence and showed others that they, too, have a role to play in protecting women and children. Today, Halima is recognized in her community as a trusted advocate for women's rights, child protection, and the prevention of GBV. "I am determined to report any incident to the relevant government authorities in my locality. I want to ensure they receive accurate information so they can take legal action and protect the most underserved members of our community, our women and children. I am truly proud of this work." Halima shared with confidence. Halima's story shows how awareness can be turned into action, and how one person, equipped with the right knowledge and support, can help make a community safer.

## About the project

The Strengthening the Resilience of Women and Girls to Live a Life Free of Violence project running through 2025–2027 aims to support 350 women-headed households and their 977 children, including 465 girls, as well as 30,000 indirect participants in the wider community. The project focuses on ensuring that women and girls understand their rights and can access safe, inclusive services related to Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (SGBV), Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR), child protection, and women's empowerment.



For more information feel free to reach out to **Assegid Hailu, MEAL Coordinator, Harar Standard Project**
**Assegid.Hailu@sos-ethiopia.org**

# A Mother's Will to Keep Going: Sumeya's Journey

After a painful divorce and a prolonged kidney illness, Sumeya's life changed dramatically. A single mother of three and caregiver to a young relative in Dire Dawa City, she spent her savings on medical treatment and was eventually forced to close the small food preparation business that had supported her family for years. Without an income, even meeting basic needs became a daily struggle. School expenses became impossible to cover, and eventually, one of her daughters dropped out of school and began collecting discarded plastic bottles to help the family survive. Exposed to the dangers of street situations, the young girl faced increasing risks of exploitation and violence. "I had lost hope. I could no longer provide for my children or see a way to rebuild our lives," Sumeya recalls.

## A turning point

Everything began to change when SOS Children's Villages in Ethiopia, together with local government partners, identified the family through the Children in Street Situations project. Following a needs assessment, Sumeya's daughter was enrolled in the project's drop-in centre, where she received meals, shelter, education support, healthcare, counselling, psychosocial support, and life-skills training. But the project also recognized that supporting the child meant strengthening the family around her. Sumeya received parenting and child protection training, business management support, and ETB 15,000 in start-up capital to revive her livelihood. Ongoing business coaching helped her rebuild her confidence alongside her income.

## Rebuilding together

With the support, Sumeya restarted her food preparation business. As her income grew, she was once again able to provide regular meals, healthcare, clothing, and educational support for her children. Slowly, the family began to regain the stability they had lost. Her daughter's life also took a new direction. She became more confident and emotionally secure and, most importantly, returned to school, replacing the uncertainty of street life with renewed hope for her future. The change extended into their home. Communication improved, trust was restored, and the relationship between mother and daughter became more supportive and nurturing. Although Sumeya still faces challenges, she remains determined to expand her business, strengthen her family's financial security, and ensure that all her children complete their education. Looking back, she says, "The support I received from the project came at the darkest time in my life, when I had lost hope and felt completely broken. It gave me the strength to move forward, believe in myself again, and never give up."

## About the project

Sumeya's story reflects the impact of the Children in the Streets Situation project, implemented from 2022 to 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-based care, education, and economic empowerment, supporting children and youth to move toward safety, dignity, and lasting opportunity.



For more information feel free to reach out to **Assegid Hailu, MEAL Coordinator, Harar Standard Project Assegid.Hailu@sos-ethiopia.org**

# Building What She Once Had to Leave Behind: Mahlet's Journey

Mahlet, a 33-year-old mother of three daughters living in Lalibela Town, has spent much of her life carrying responsibilities beyond her years. She finished Grade 10 with real promise, but after losing both her parents, her path to higher education came to an end. Instead, she took on the responsibility of raising her younger brother and sister while building a family of her own. For years, Mahlet depended entirely on her husband's small salary to meet the family's needs. But as inflation drove up the cost of living, his income became increasingly insufficient. When the school year began, it brought the same worry. School fees, uniforms, exercise books, and bags became expenses she could no longer afford without borrowing. "It was a really challenging time for me. My husband's salary was so small, and the inflation was growing high by the day. Every school year, I had to borrow money from others to buy school materials. At times, people even refused to lend me some thinking I may not repay them." Mahlet recalls.

## A turning point

Mahlet's circumstances began to change when she joined SOS Children's Villages in Ethiopia's Family Strengthening and Child Development phase I project in Lalibela. For the first three years, the project helped ease one of her most immediate burdens by providing school uniforms, exercise books, bags, and other essential materials for her children and younger siblings. But the deeper change came through skills and livelihood support. Mahlet participated in training on child protection, hygiene and sanitation, saving practices, and business development. Alongside 196 other caregivers, she completed vocational skills training, and she was among 17 participants who chose to start a retail goods shop. With a commercial weighing scale and a wooden ladder provided by the project, Mahlet rented a small shop along the main highway and opened her business. To start and later expand the shop, she took two loans from the local Savings and Credit Cooperative Organization (SACCO), established with support from the project.

## A new beginning

Today, Mahlet's shop sells edible oil, food items, and other household goods, generating approximately ETB 17,000 in monthly income. She saves regularly, repays her loans, covers the rent for both her home and shop, and is now close to completing construction of her family's own house. The benefits have reached the next generation as well. Mahlet's younger sister has completed high school, and she is determined to support her through higher education. Her eldest daughter, Blen, also ranked first in her Grade 3 class and third across the entire primary school, earning two certificates in recognition of her achievement. For Mahlet, the change is about more than owning a business. She has gained greater financial independence and, with it, the ability to provide her children and siblings with opportunities she once had to give up herself. Mahlet's journey shows how targeted support, combined with determination and hard work, can help a family move from financial uncertainty towards stability and hope.

## About the project

The first phase of the Family Strengthening and Child Development project in Lalibela, implemented from 2023 to 2025, has supported 900 children and 450 caregivers like Mahlet, providing access to education, health services, livelihood opportunities, and child protection. Mahlet's journey is a powerful reminder that, with the right support, even the most difficult circumstances can be transformed into a story of resilience, dignity, and hope.



For more information feel free to reach out to **Abera Gobie** ,
**MEAL Coordinator, Bahir Dar Standard Project**
**Abera.Gobie@sos-ethiopia.org**

# Breaking the Silence: Tigist's Courageous Journey

Tigist is a Grade 7 student from Amhara Region. Like many adolescent girls, she once struggled with the challenges of managing menstruation at school. Discriminatory social norms, cultural taboos, poverty and limited access to basic services and menstrual hygiene products can make it difficult for girls to attend school during their periods. Tigist used pieces of old cloth during menstruation and often missed school because she feared leakage and embarrassment. She also witnessed girls being teased and excluded by classmates when menstrual accidents occurred. Some girls would miss school for days, sometimes even a week. At the time, few students understood that this was more than teasing, that humiliating or excluding girls because of menstruation could be a form of violence and discrimination.

## Learning to speak up

In 2025, Tigist' school partnered with SOS Children's Villages in Ethiopia through the Building Beyond Conflict (BBC) project. Through the project, Tigist joined her school's Girls' Club and received training on menstrual hygiene management, reusable menstrual pad preparation, life skills, and School-Related Gender-Based Violence (SRGBV) prevention and response. The training gave her practical skills, but it also changed how she understood the experiences she and other girls faced. "During the training, I learned how to prepare reusable menstrual pads using locally available materials and how to clean, dry and safely store them. I also learned about School-Related Gender-Based Violence, including the different forms of violence that can occur in and around schools, how to identify warning signs and where to seek support." Tigist shared proudly. When Tigist returned to school, she and other trained Girls' Club members began sharing what they had learned with their peers. Through weekly peer-to-peer sessions, they demonstrated how to make and care for reusable menstrual pads and created opportunities for girls to talk openly about menstruation, dignity, safety and their rights. The Girls' Club, supported by teachers, also helped girls understand where they could seek support and how to report harassment, bullying, intimidation or abuse.

## From learning to leadership

The change was not only in what Tigist knew, but in how confidently she could use that knowledge to support others. Reflecting on her experience, Tigist said "Before the training, I thought missing school during my period was normal, and I did not know that teasing girls because of menstruation was harmful. Now, I can make reusable pads by myself, teach other girls how to use them, and encourage my friends to report violence and support one another. I feel confident and proud to help other girls stay in school." With the support of the Girls' Club coordinator and female teachers, the trained members now help lead discussions with around 120 students, providing a safe space where girls can ask questions and discuss menstruation and protection concerns without fear of judgement. The impact is becoming visible. Girls are attending classes more regularly during menstruation, speaking more openly about menstrual health and becoming more willing to seek support when they experience violence or harassment. For Tigist, what began as a personal challenge has become an opportunity to help others. Her experience shows that when girls have the knowledge, practical resources and safe spaces they need, they can not only stay in school but become advocates for other girls to do the same.

## About the project

The Building Beyond Conflict (BBC): Integrated Early Recovery and Humanitarian Response in Education, Protection, Livelihood & Well-being project, running from 2025 to 2027, is supporting conflict-affected communities across North Wollo and Waghimera zones of the Amhara region. The project is designed to reach 29,711 direct participants and more than 89,000 indirect participants, providing support in education, child protection, livelihoods, mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS), nutrition, and multi-purpose cash assistance.



For more information feel free to reach out to **Abera Gobie** ,
**MEAL Coordinator, Bahir Dar Standard Project**
**Abera.Gobie@sos-ethiopia.org**

# Building Security Where There Was Once Uncertainty: Hodan's Journey

Living in Kelafo Town, Hodan knew all too well what it meant to worry about tomorrow. As a mother of four, she had few opportunities to earn a stable income and struggled to meet her family's basic needs. Without access to affordable credit or the resources to invest in a livelihood, building a secure future for her children often felt out of reach as she only depended on her husband's income.

## A chance to start again

When all hope seemed to have been lost, Hodan was identified through SOS Children's Villages in Ethiopia's Kelafo Family and Community Strengthening phase IV project. Through this opportunity came life changing opportunities that Hodan knew she could not miss. The support started with need-based training in entrepreneurship, financial literacy, agriculture, parenting, and life skills. More importantly, she was connected to a Saving and Credit Cooperative Organization (SACCO), where she became a member and gained access to credit. Her first loan of ETB 6,000 helped her buy two goats. Hodan cared for the animals and waited for the right opportunity to sell. When she eventually sold them for ETB 10,000 each, she repaid her loan and saw for the first time what a small investment could do for her family.

## From two goats to a growing livelihood

Encouraged by her first success, Hodan took a second loan of ETB 20,000 and added ETB 10,000 from her profits. With ETB 30,000 in hand, she invested in cultivating one hectare of maize. The harvest changed everything as she was able to produce 25 quintals of maize. Five quintals were kept to feed her family, helping reduce the household's food expenses, while the remaining 20 quintals were sold for ETB 120,000. Instead of spending the money on immediate needs, Hodan looked ahead. She invested in petty trade, expanded her farming activities, and later accessed another SACCO loan to grow her maize and sesame production. Her livelihood is now no longer dependent on a single source of income. She farms, runs a small trade business, raises livestock, and owns four cattle. Assets that now give her family greater security when difficult times come.

## A different future for her children

For Hodan, however, the greatest measure of success is not the money she has earned or the assets she has built. It is seeing her children in school, all four of her children are now enrolled in education. Two attend Grade 4, while her two other daughters are in Grades 8 and 10 in Gode Town. Because the area she lives in does not offer education beyond primary school, sending her daughters to Gode was a major decision for the family. But Hodan and her family chose to invest in their girls' education, determined that distance should not prevent them from continuing their studies. It is a decision that reflects just how much her priorities have changed. Looking back on how far her family has come, Hodan shared "Before joining the project, I had very limited opportunities to support my family. The training, SACCO membership, and access to loans helped me start businesses and invest in farming. Today, I can provide food for my family, send all my children to school, and plan for a better future." Hodan's journey is a reminder that sometimes transformation begins with something small, a few lessons, a first loan, or even two goats. With the right opportunity and the determination to make it count, those small beginnings can grow into a more secure livelihood, greater confidence, and a brighter future for an entire family.

## About the project

The Kelafo Family and Community Strengthening phase IV project running from 2024-2026 aims to reach nearly 40,000 families and their children directly and indirectly by 2026, improving the well-being of children by empowering families and strengthening communities across the Somali Region



For more information feel free to reach out to **Tarmidi Abdulahi, FCSP Coordinator, Kelafo FS Project**
**Tarmidi.Abdulahi@sos-ethiopia.org**

# Growing Beyond What She Thought Was Possible: Selam's Journey

At 34, Selam was raising her three daughters in Hossaena Town. Like many mothers, she wanted to provide a secure and peaceful life for her children. But with the family largely dependent on her husband's income, financial difficulties were a constant source of pressure. The strain also affected life at home. Selam had limited knowledge of positive parenting and found it difficult to manage her emotions during disagreements with her husband or when the family was going through difficult times. At times, this made it hard for her to communicate with her children with the patience and care she wanted to show them. With limited financial independence and few opportunities to earn her own income, Selam felt the weight of providing for her family while trying to care for her children.

## A chance to grow

In 2025, Selam became part of the SOS Children's Villages in Ethiopia's Action for Rights, Accountability and Development Assurance (ARADA) phase II project. The project offered her more than financial support. Through positive parenting, business development, and saving and loan training, she began gaining the skills and confidence to strengthen both her family and her livelihood. She joined a Savings and Credit Cooperative Organization (SACCO), where she developed the habit of saving and learned how to manage money more effectively. Her three daughters also received scholastic materials, helping them attend school with greater confidence and without the worry of not having the supplies they needed. For Selam, however, some of the most important changes began inside her home. The parenting training encouraged Selam to look differently at how she communicated with her children. She began practicing greater patience and care, creating a home where her daughters could more comfortably express their needs and feelings. The change also helped improve the relationship between Selam and her husband. With greater stability and a better understanding of how their relationship affected their children, the family became more peaceful, and the children began doing better at school and communicating more openly about what they needed. "The project helped me become a better mother and improve my livelihood. I hope other families will have the same opportunity to change their lives," Selam says.

## Turning skills into opportunity

The changes did not stop at home. Before joining the project, Selam had baked and sold injera, but she had stopped. The business training encouraged her to take up the activity again and showed her how she could use her skills to create an income of her own. She also discovered a new opportunity in something she already loved, traditional handicrafts. Inspired by the skills she gained through the project; Selam began turning her passion for woven basket-making into an income-generating activity. Through village coffee ceremony discussions organized by the project, she continues to learn from other caregivers, exchange experiences, and build her confidence. Today, Selam is not only working to improve her own family's future; she is helping other women do the same. She teaches women in her community how to make traditional woven baskets, giving them practical skills they can use to earn their own income. Her journey reflects a change that began with learning how to communicate differently with her children, manage money, rebuild her livelihood, and recognize the value of her own skills. Today, her family is more peaceful, her children are more confident at school, and Selam is helping other women discover that they, too, can build a livelihood of their own.

## About the project

Building on the achievements of the ARADA phase I project, implemented from 2022 to 2024 in Hossaena Town, the current phase continues from 2025 to 2027 to address the unmet needs of children, young people, caregivers, and the wider community. The project aims to directly support 1,300 children, 100 young people, and 300 caregivers, while indirectly reaching an additional 1,200 caregivers, 5,200 children, and 3,400 young people. Through these efforts, the project seeks to strengthen families and communities, expand opportunities, and create an enabling environment where children and young people can thrive.




For more information feel free to reach out to **Lemma Shallo, MEAL Coordinator, Hawassa Standard Project**
**Lemma.Shallo@sos-ethiopia.org**

# Building What She Once Waited For: Aster's Journey

At 23, Aster had already achieved something many young people work hard for. She graduated from Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) in her chosen field. But earning a certificate alone did not guarantee her a job. Living with her family in Hossaena Town, Aster found herself unemployed and struggling financially. She had the determination to build a better future, but she lacked the practical skills, guidance, and resources to turn her abilities into an income. "I wanted to change my life, but I did not know where to start," Aster recalls.

## A new beginning

That began to change in 2025, when Aster joined SOS Children's Villages in Ethiopia's Action for Rights, Accountability and Development Assurance (ARADA) phase II project. Through the project, she received training in life skills, entrepreneurship, saving and loan management, as well as one-to-one business coaching. The support did more than teach her how to run a business, it helped her build the confidence to believe that she could. With income-generating activity support from the project, Aster opened a traditional coffee house, selling coffee and tea in her community. What began as an opportunity to earn an income gradually became a foundation for greater independence. Later, once her small business was up and running Aster also joined a Savings and Credit Cooperative Organization (SACCO), where she began saving regularly. As her confidence and savings grew, she accessed a loan to strengthen and expand her business. The coffee house has since become more than a source of income. It has become a source of stability for Aster and her family. Today, she earns a stable income, contributes to her family's livelihood, and has even created employment for her younger sister. For a young woman who once struggled to find an opportunity, Aster is now creating opportunities of her own.

## A shared success

But Aster's transformation does not stop with her business or her family. She is also using what she has learned to support other girls in her community. She trains members of girls' clubs to use sewing machines to produce dignity kits, helping them develop practical skills while building their confidence. For Aster, success is no longer only about earning an income. It is about helping others discover what they are capable of doing. Looking back on how far she has come Aster says, "The project gave me the confidence and opportunity to start my own business. Today, I am supporting my family, creating opportunities for others, and proving that young women can succeed when they are given the chance,". Aster's journey shows what can happen when determination meets the right support. Training gave her knowledge, coaching helped her turn that knowledge into a plan and the start-up support gave her the means to begin, while access to savings and credit helped her grow. From an unemployed young woman uncertain about her next step, Aster has become a business owner, an employer, a role model for her younger sisters, and a mentor to girls in her community.

## About the project

Building on the achievements of the ARADA phase I project, implemented from 2022 to 2024 in Hossaena Town, the current phase continues from 2025 to 2027 to address the unmet needs of children, young people, caregivers, and the wider community. The project aims to directly support 1,300 children, 100 young people, and 300 caregivers, while indirectly reaching an additional 1,200 caregivers, 5,200 children, and 3,400 young people. Through these efforts, the project seeks to strengthen families and communities, expand opportunities, and create an enabling environment where children and young people can thrive.



For more information feel free to reach out to **Lemma Shallo, MEAL Coordinator, Hawassa Standard Project Lemma.Shallo@sos-ethiopia.org**

# Bringing Back What Hardship Had Taken Away: Desta's Journey

Desta is a courageous single mother of five boys living in Woliso Town, whose life was once marked by hardship and uncertainty. Living in difficult conditions with other families, she worked as a daily labourer to meet her children's basic needs. Two of her children were eventually forced to live on the streets, while none were attending school, a situation that deeply worried her. Despite these challenges, Desta was determined to create a better future for her children. A community leader referred her to SOS Children's Villages in Ethiopia's Woliso Educare project, identifying her family as underserved and in need of support. Following an initial needs assessment, Desta began participating in the project's training and support.

## Strengthening her role as a parent

One of the first and most transformative steps was parenting skills training. Desta learned about positive communication, nurturing her children's emotional and physical wellbeing, positive discipline and the importance of education. Inspired by the training, she took action to bring her children back home. Working closely with project staff and volunteers, she overcame the challenges of reunifying her family. Eventually, her children returned home, safe and cared for. With the family reunited, education became an important priority. The project provided scholastic materials, including books, and uniforms, helping remove some of the barriers to school attendance. Today, Desta's children are attending school and actively engaged in their learning. Their improved academic performance is a source of pride for their mother and a powerful sign of the positive changes in their lives.

## Building financial independence

Desta's journey towards stability also included strengthening her ability to support her family financially. Through training in business management and income-generating activities, she gained the knowledge and confidence to start a small business. With start-up capital and materials provided through the project, Desta began a petty trade business. This new source of income has brought greater financial stability to her household and reduced her reliance on unpredictable daily labour. She also became an active member of a Savings and Credit Cooperative Organization (SACCO). Through regular saving and access to loans, she has been able to expand her business. Her commitment to repaying her loans each month reflects her growing financial responsibility and independence.

## A family looking towards the future

Today, Desta and her children live in a rented home that offers greater privacy and comfort than before. The worry and uncertainty that once defined their lives have gradually given way to happiness, stability and hope. Desta's story demonstrates what can happen when families receive the right support and are empowered to build on their own strengths. Through parenting support, education, economic empowerment and community engagement, she has not only brought her children home but also created new opportunities for her family.

## About the project

The Woliso EduCare project, running from 2025 to 2027, is a Family and Community Strengthening initiative supporting 1,200 underserved children, 400 women caregivers living in extreme poverty, five public schools serving around 8,000 school-going children, and one local community-based organization. The project also indirectly benefits more than 6,384 community stakeholders, including community members, religious and opinion leaders, savings groups, NGOs, community-based organizations, service providers and local government offices, through awareness-raising, capacity building, system strengthening and improved access to services.

For more information feel free to reach out to **Amelework Tamiru, MEAL Coordinator, Jimma Standard Project**
**Amelework.Tamiru@sos-ethiopia.org**



# Building the Life She Once Hoped For: Rahel's Journey

When Rahel joined the Foster Family Care Programme at SOS Children's Village Jimma programme location in 2013, she was an active young girl with dreams for a brighter future. What she lacked was the opportunity, support, and encouragement to turn those dreams into reality. From the moment she joined the programme, Rahel received holistic support tailored to her needs, including food, healthcare, clothing, educational materials, and psychosocial support. She also participated in capacity-building training that helped strengthen her confidence, resilience, and life skills.

## Turning determination into achievement

Throughout her school years, Rahel remained committed to her education. She understood that learning could open the door to the future she envisioned, and she approached her studies with dedication and discipline. Her hard work eventually earned her a place at university, where she pursued a degree in Journalism and Communication. Driven by her passion for storytelling and communication, Rahel embraced every opportunity to learn and grow. In mid-2025, her determination paid off when she graduated with a cumulative GPA of 3.47 and successfully passed her national exit examination with an impressive result. Graduation marked the beginning of a new chapter. As Rahel prepared to transition into independent living, SOS Children's Village Jimma programme location continued to support her journey. She participated in entrepreneurship training, CV-writing workshops, and other employability initiatives that helped her develop practical skills and prepare for the world of work. These opportunities gave Rahel not only practical knowledge but also greater confidence as she took her first steps into professional life.

## Building the future she dreamed of

Today, Rahel is living the future she once imagined. She works as an Associate Communication Officer at a private company in Addis Ababa, where she is building a promising career in the field she studied. More importantly, Rahel is now living independently, with the confidence and skills to shape her own future. Her journey is a powerful reminder of what can happen when determination is met with the right support and opportunity. Through tailored care, education, encouragement, and preparation for independent living, Rahel has grown into a confident young professional, turning the dreams she carried as a child into a future she is building for herself.



For more information feel free to reach out to **Amelework Tamiru, MEAL Coordinator, Jimma Standard Project**
**Amelework.Tamiru@sos-ethiopia.org**

SOS CHILDREN'S VILLAGES

SOS Children's Villages in Ethiopia
info@sos-ethiopia.com
sos-ethiopia.org
+251-116-6116-55
**P.O. Box:** 3495
Addis Ababa

SOS Children's Villages in Ethiopia