



Excellence Chronicles

**Good Practices &
Success Stories**

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

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

For more than 52 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 first quarter of the year 2026. 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

First quarter 2026



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Leveraging Strong Networking with Hospitals for Free Medical Access for Street-Connected Children and Youth

Street-connected children and youth in Addis Ababa are often driven to the streets by family breakdown, homelessness, unemployment, and lack of social and economic support. Once on the streets, they become highly vulnerable to illness, injury, and exploitation, while poverty and lack of family support prevent them from accessing healthcare services. Biruk, a 17-year-old from Gurage Zone, was one of the children facing these circumstances. Following parental divorce, dismissal from military service due to epilepsy, and unstable living conditions, he migrated to Addis Ababa and survived through street vending. His situation worsened after a car accident caused a severe untreated fracture on his right hand, resulting in partial paralysis. Similar medical and psychosocial challenges were also observed among other street-connected children and youth supported through the Reaching Out to Children in the Streets Project.

In February 2025, SOS Children's Villages in Ethiopia, through the Reaching Out to Children in the Streets Project in Addis Ababa, introduced an integrated medical support approach by strengthening collaboration and networking with St. Paul's Hospital. Through continuous advocacy and relationship-building with hospital management and medical professionals, the project secured free specialized healthcare services for vulnerable children and youth in street situations. Support provided included MRI examinations, laboratory investigations, physiotherapy, neurology and orthopedic follow-up services, medication, and rehabilitation support valued at approximately 45,000 ETB for Biruk alone, while similar support was extended to other project participants based on their medical needs. The practice was implemented through a holistic case management approach. During enrolment and assessment, project staff identified urgent medical and psychosocial needs and used institutional networking to mobilize pro-bono healthcare services rather than relying only on limited project funds. Medical support was integrated with shelter services, counselling, psychosocial support, life-skills training, and continuous follow-up to ensure comprehensive rehabilitation. Strong coordination between social workers, healthcare professionals, and caregivers enabled timely referrals and continuity of treatment.

The initiative produced significant positive outcomes for Biruk and other street-connected children and youth. Biruk accessed specialized treatment and physiotherapy services that improved his physical condition and restored hope for recovery and reintegration. Other children and youth also benefited from free medical consultations, treatment, and follow-up care that improved their health, wellbeing, and participation in rehabilitation activities. The initiative reduced the financial burden on both beneficiaries and the project while preventing long-term disability and worsening health conditions. Strong collaboration with the hospital, consistent advocacy, and integration of medical care into broader rehabilitation services were key success factors. The experience demonstrates strong potential for replication across other SOS Children's Villages in Ethiopia Member Associations (MAs). Building strategic partnerships with hospitals and healthcare institutions can create sustainable access to quality healthcare services for vulnerable children without placing additional pressure on limited project budgets. The practice also introduced an innovative shift from project-funded referrals to a sustainable, zero-cost healthcare support model based on networking, advocacy, and institutional collaboration.



The sustainability of the practice depends on maintaining strong partnerships with hospitals, integrating the approach into standard operating procedures, documenting outcomes and cost savings, and strengthening referral systems with additional healthcare providers. Although challenges such as limited awareness among some healthcare providers and coordination across medical departments were encountered, these were addressed through persistent advocacy, regular follow-up, and active case management. The experience highlighted that strong institutional networking can unlock specialist healthcare services at little or no cost for highly vulnerable children and youth.

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



The Coffee Conversation: Using Cultural Rituals to Expand Community Awareness and Protection

In Harari Regional State, particularly in Amirnur and Sofi Woredas, Gender-Based Violence (GBV) and Harmful Traditional Practices (HTP) continue to affect the safety and wellbeing of women and children. To address these challenges, SOS Children's Villages in Ethiopia, Harar Program, launched the project "Strengthening the Resilience of Women and Girls to Live a Life Free from Violence in Harari Region" in 2025. While the project directly targets 350 women-headed households and 900 boys and girls by 2027, it also recognised the need to influence the wider community environment that shapes social norms and behaviours. As a result, the project introduced "Coffee Conversation" sessions to engage non-project beneficiaries and strengthen community-wide awareness and protection.

The initiative was implemented in four target kebeles in Amirnur and Sofi Woredas through collaboration with Kebele Health Extension Workers (HEWs), community leaders, and SOS Children's Villages in Ethiopia. Since the project began, 13 coffee conversation sessions have reached more than 520 community members. The sessions use the traditional coffee ceremony as a culturally familiar and trusted platform to discuss sensitive issues such as Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR), gender equality, child safeguarding, and violence prevention.

The project developed a Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) and trained Health Extension Workers to facilitate the discussions. Embedding awareness messages within a familiar cultural practice reduced resistance and created a relaxed environment where participants could openly discuss issues that are often considered taboo. A key success factor was the use of trusted local health workers as facilitators, which strengthened community acceptance and participation. The practice contributed to improved awareness of women's rights, child protection, and GBV prevention among community members. By involving non-beneficiaries, the initiative also created a stronger protective environment around direct beneficiaries, as neighbours and family members increasingly shared common values on violence prevention and child protection. Improved awareness on SRHR and education also contributed indirectly to household wellbeing and resilience.

The "Coffee Conversation" model demonstrates strong potential for replication because it is built on existing cultural traditions and requires minimal resources. The approach can easily be adapted to other contexts using locally respected social gatherings such as tea ceremonies or storytelling circles. Its sustainability is strengthened by the involvement of permanent government Health Extension Workers and by community ownership of the process. Rather than introducing external NGO-led activities, the project built on an existing social practice already embedded within the community.

One of the main challenges was ensuring discussions remained focused on the intended themes rather than shifting into general social conversations. This was addressed through regular follow-up support and refresher orientations for facilitators. The experience highlighted that culture can be a powerful tool for social change when used strategically. Integrating protection messages into familiar traditions significantly reduces resistance and increases community engagement, while involving non-beneficiaries strengthens the overall impact and sustainability of protection interventions.



**Project Title:- Strengthening the Resilience
Women and Girls to Live a Lifere
from Violence in Harar**

**Conversation Over Coffe:
Talking Gender-Based Vience,
Sexual & Reproduct
Health, and Child Prot**

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

Success Stories

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Brothers United to Build a Better Future

Having grown up in Hosaena Town's Sechduna neighborhood, brothers Hayelom, 23, and Wondimu, 24, understand what it means to struggle from an early age. After losing their father as children, the responsibility of supporting the family fell heavily on their mother, who worked tirelessly to provide for them. Despite her efforts, meeting daily needs remained difficult, and the family's livelihood was unstable. As the brothers grew older, they faced the harsh reality of limited opportunities. Hayelom was unemployed, while Wondimu worked in a mobile maintenance shop, earning only a small income that could barely support the household. Like many young people in similar circumstances, they lacked access to skills training, financial services, and opportunities that could help them build a better future. Still, they held on to the hope that their lives could change through hard work and determination. "We wanted to support our mother and improve our lives," the brothers recall. "But without support and opportunities, it felt difficult to move forward."

A turning point

Their journey began to change when they were selected to join the Action for Rights, Accountability and Development Assurance (ARADA) Phase Two Project, implemented by SOS Children's Villages in Ethiopia. Through the project, the brothers received training in saving and loan practices, employability and entrepreneurship, and life skills. They also benefited from business plan development guidance and continuous coaching, which helped them transform their ideas into a practical and achievable business plan. In addition, they became members of Arada Lelewt SACCO, gaining access to saving and loan services that opened new possibilities for them. With income-generating activity support from the project, combined with a loan, the brothers were able to launch their own mobile hardware and software maintenance business. "The training gave us confidence and direction," they explained. "For the first time, we felt we had the knowledge and support to build something of our own."

A new beginning

Today, Hayelom and Wondimu are successfully running their mobile maintenance business and earning a stable income to support their family. What once felt uncertain has now become a source of hope and progress. They are planning to expand their business further by introducing mobile phone sales and growing their maintenance services to reach more customers in their community. Beyond improving their family's livelihood, the brothers have also become a source of inspiration for their younger brother and other young people in their neighborhood. They encourage youth facing similar challenges to stay determined and use every opportunity available to them.

About the project

The Action for Rights, Accountability and Development Assurance (ARADA) Project, implemented from 2025 to 2027, aims to reach 11,500 people in and around the Hossana community. The project supports children and youth to grow up in caring and protective family and community environments by strengthening caregivers through parenting support, economic empowerment, and community-based child protection mechanisms. Hayelom and Wondimu's story is a powerful example of how access to skills, mentorship, and economic opportunities can help young people transform hardship into resilience, self-reliance, and hope for the future.



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

Starting Again with Hope

Bezunesh is a mother of four children, three of them girls. Life for her family has often been marked by hardship and uncertainty. Her income-generating activity was unstable, making it difficult to consistently provide for her children's basic needs, including food, education, and healthcare. Like many caregivers facing similar challenges, she carried the heavy responsibility of wanting a better future for her children while lacking the stable income and skills needed to achieve it. Over time, the pressure of daily survival also affected her ability to respond to her children's emotional and developmental needs in the way she wanted.

A turning point

Her situation began to change when she was selected to participate in SOS Children's Villages in Ethiopia's ARADA Phase Two Project. Through the project, she received positive parenting training, business development and savings training, and wider support aimed at strengthening household resilience. Her children also benefited from scholastic materials and community-based health insurance, improving their access to education and healthcare. One of the most important changes came in her parenting. Bezunesh began to better understand her children's needs and learned new ways of communicating with them in a more supportive and caring manner. She shares, "I no longer hit my children. I understand their needs, and now I communicate with them better and give them the care they need." At the same time, the livelihood training helped her build practical skills in managing money and planning for the future. She developed a habit of saving and started running a small shop where she sells basic commodities alongside injera, improving her family's financial stability.

Strengthening her family's future

Today, her children are attending school with the necessary materials, and the family can access healthcare services through their insurance coverage. These changes have contributed to greater stability and well-being for the household. The ARADA Project has played a key role in supporting this transformation by providing training, resources, and ongoing guidance. At the same time, Bezunesh's determination to apply what she learned has been central to rebuilding her family's confidence and resilience.

Expressing her gratitude, she shares, "Thank you for the change I am seeing in my life, giving my children the affection they need and starting my business in a new way. Thank you for investing in me and my family."



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

From Survival to Self-Reliance

Tigist's journey in the historic city of Harar was once defined by daily uncertainty and quiet resilience. At 46, her life revolved around her two children and a small butter trade that barely sustained her household. While her husband worked as a daily laborer, Tigist carried the responsibility of keeping her children in school and meeting the family's basic needs. For years, her business existed without stability or ownership. With no capital of her own, she relied on rural suppliers, collecting butter on credit and selling it in the market for a small commission. Each day brought effort, but little progress for her to rely on. The income was minimal, the dependence constant, and the possibility of growth in this area of work felt out of reach.

A turning point

Her situation began to change when Tigist was enrolled in the Strengthening the Resilience of Women and Young Girls to Live a Life Free from Violence project, implemented by SOS Children's Villages in Ethiopia in Harar. The project supports women-headed households across four kebeles through economic empowerment and protection-focused interventions. Through business management training, Tigist experienced what she describes as a "shift in perspective." For the first time, she began to see her work not as daily survival, but as a business she could plan, manage, and grow. She also received support to develop a business plan, which helped her better structure her goals and direction. To support this transition, she was provided with 44,000 ETB in seed capital. This support changed everything. Tigist was able to purchase butter directly using her own resources, moving away from credit-based dependency. For the first time, she owned her stock and had full control over her income. The constant pressure of debt disappeared, replaced by stability and confidence. She reflects, "The constant worry about what I owed used to keep me awake. Now, I sleep with a clear mind because I am finally the owner of my own work."

Building stability and growth

With time, Tigist's business began to grow. Her reliability and improved business practices helped her attract steady customers, strengthening her position in the local market. What was once a small, uncertain trade has now become a respected livelihood. Her progress is also reflected in her financial discipline. By joining a local Saving and Credit Cooperative Organization (SACCO), she now saves 500 ETB every month, building a foundation for long-term security. With growing confidence and a more stable income, Tigist is now planning to open her own small shop and expand into new traditional products. Today, Tigist is no longer just surviving day to day. She is building a future grounded in independence, dignity, and possibility, an example of how targeted support can transform vulnerability into self-reliance.

About the project

Strengthening the Resilience of Women and Young Girls to Live a Life Free from Violence project (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 of Harar. The project focuses on ensuring that women and girls fully 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 Who Endured Hardship and Rebuilt Her Family's Future

In Arbaminch, Chamo Kebele, Enanish once lived a life marked by conflict, hardship, and uncertainty. At home, frequent disagreements with her husband created a tense environment, and she struggled to raise her children with patience and care. In moments of stress and frustration, she sometimes resorted to punishment instead of guidance, leaving her feeling guilty and overwhelmed. Poverty made life even more difficult. With no stable income, the family often struggled to afford basic needs, including food, school materials, and uniforms. Eventually, her children dropped out of school. Enanish describes this period as one of deep hopelessness, where she felt unable to change her situation or see a way forward.

A new beginning

In 2024, Enanish's life began to change when she was identified and enrolled in the SOS Children's Villages in Ethiopia Family and Community Strengthening (FCS) Project in Arba Minch. Through the project, she received parenting training, business and entrepreneurship skills, and life skills support that helped her see new possibilities for herself and her family. The parenting sessions were especially transformative. For the first time, she learned how to understand her children's needs and respond with care and guidance rather than punishment. She also gained practical skills to improve communication and rebuild trust within her family. Her children were supported with school materials and financial assistance, enabling them to return to school. Seeing them in uniform again marked a powerful moment of renewal for the family. Enanish was also linked to a Savings and Credit Cooperative Organization (SACCO), giving her access to financial services for the first time. She took a loan of 7,500 birr, invested it carefully, and repaid it successfully. With a second loan of 28,000 ETB, she started a small traditional restaurant and engaged in sheep fattening, gradually building a more stable livelihood.

Rebuilding a stable future

Over time, Enanish's confidence grew. She now saves regularly and has built savings of 60,000 birr, something she once thought impossible. Her income also increased when she was given a part-time job as a cleaner at the SOS Children's Village Arbaminch programme location office, earning 3,500 ETB per month. This additional support strengthened her household stability and restored her sense of dignity. The changes went beyond income. The parenting training helped restore peace in her home and strengthened her relationship with her husband. They learned to communicate better, share responsibilities, and care for their children together. Today, their home is filled with understanding instead of conflict. Most importantly, her children returned to school, and Enanish herself resumed her education. She is now in Grade 12, a dream she once believed was lost forever. In December 2025, Enanish graduated from the FCS project, standing on her own as a self-reliant mother. Her family is now more stable, hopeful, and independent than before. Reflecting on her journey, she shares gratitude for the support that helped transform her life and restore her confidence, family unity, and future.

About the Project

The Arbaminch FCS project, launched in 2024, is a three-year initiative supporting underserved families like Amelework's. It aims to empower 992 individuals, including 637 children, while indirectly reaching over 11,000 people. With a holistic approach, the project promotes sustainable child development and family empowerment across the community.



For more information feel free to reach out to **Dagmawi Teshome**,
FCSP Coordinator, Arba Minch Standard Project
Dagmawi.Teshome@sos-ethiopia.org

From Street Connected Work to Self-Reliance

At just 17 years old, Samuel carries responsibilities far heavier than his age. Living in Adama, he has already experienced challenges that push many young people toward street situations, including family economic hardship, emotional stress at home, and the pressure of becoming “the man of the house” too early in life. When his family’s financial situation worsened, tension at home increased, and stability became difficult to maintain. As the eldest child, Samuel quickly understood that his family’s survival depended on him. He had once dreamed of continuing his education, but he was forced to drop out in Grade 8 due to financial constraints that made schooling and basic needs difficult to sustain. Despite the challenges, Samuel refused to give up. Out of necessity, he turned to daily labor in garages, carrying heavy loads and assisting drivers whenever work was available. The income was small and unreliable, but it was the only way he could support his family, even a little bit. Like many young people in street situations, this exposed him to instability, exhaustion, and overworking himself.

A turning point

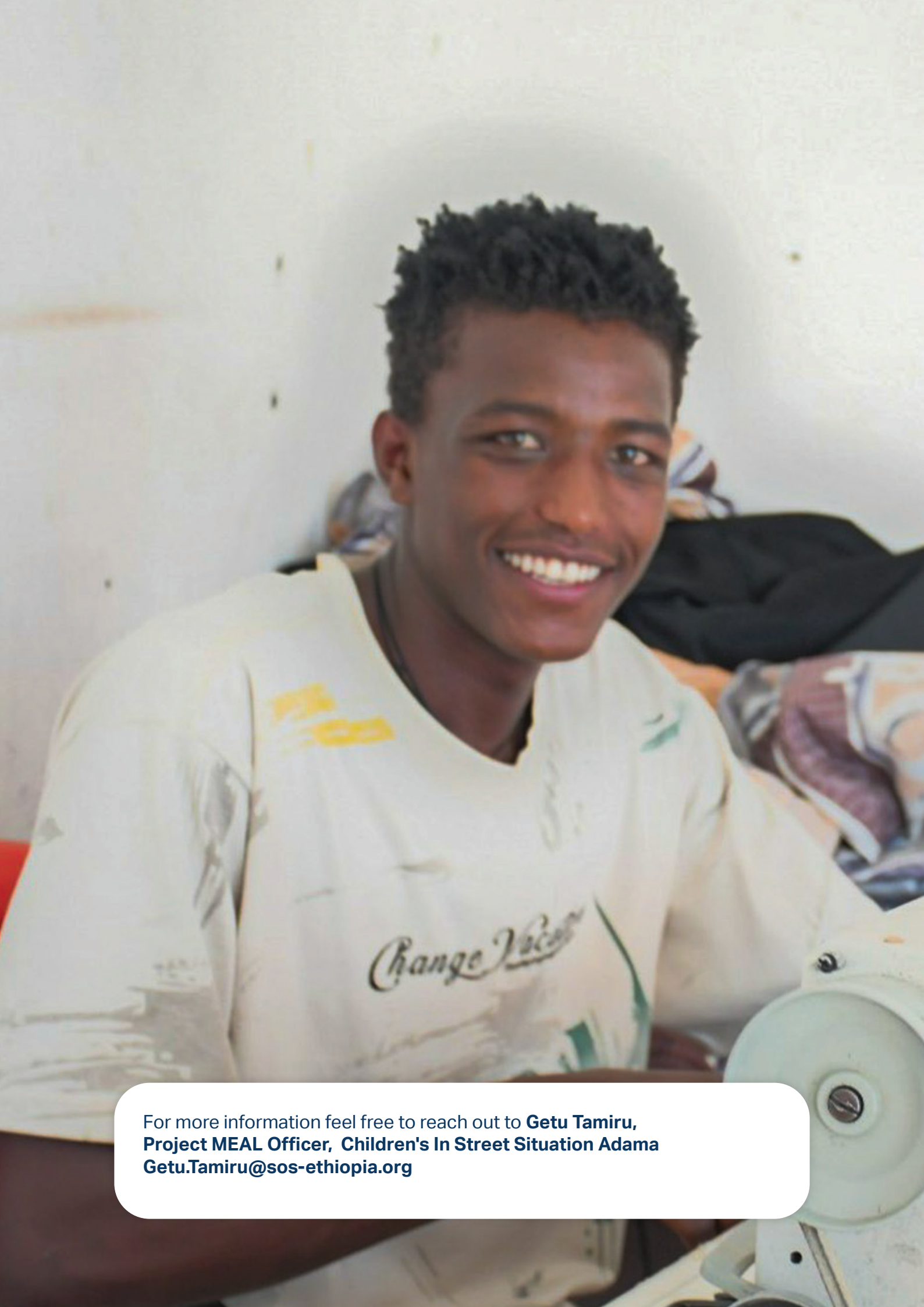
Samuel’s life began to change when he joined SOS Children’s Villages in Ethiopia’s Reaching Out to Children in the Streets Project in Adama. The project supports children and young people at risk of street involvement by helping them access skills, protection, and dignified livelihood opportunities. Through the project, Samuel first participated in a four-day life skills training that helped him reflect on his future and rebuild confidence. He was then given the opportunity to enroll in short-term vocational training in barbering and fashion design. After completing his training at Sara Fashion Design institution, Samuel was employed as a barber and fashion designer with an initial salary of 3,000 ETB. Over time, his performance improved, and his salary increased to 5,000 ETB.

Building stability

With his growing income, Samuel began managing his finances more intentionally. He started saving regularly and learned how to rotate his income to improve stability. “I started supporting my family by covering water and electricity expenses,” he shares. From having no stable income, Samuel has now managed to save over 40,000 ETB in the bank. His lifestyle has also changed significantly, from relying on transport services to owning a bicycle, which he uses for daily mobility. He also joined a local savings group, saving 1,000 ETB from his salary and additional income he earns from doing other part time jobs, strengthening his financial discipline and future plans. Today, Samuel is no longer defined by survival on the streets. He is building a stable livelihood, supporting his family, and planning for the future. He now hopes to open his own barber shop in an affordable location and expand his skills further. “I want to grow my work and become fully independent so I can continue supporting my family,” he says.

About the project

Samuel’s story reflects the impact of the Reaching Out to Children in the Streets 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 **Getu Tamiru**,
Project MEAL Officer, Children's In Street Situation Adama
Getu.Tamiru@sos-ethiopia.org

From Separation to Family Reunification

Esayas, Solomom, and Melkamu are brothers aged 11, 8, and 7 from Wolaita Zone. Born into a low-income farming family, their early life was shaped by economic hardship and limited opportunities. Over time, the pressure at home and influence from peers began to affect them deeply. Encouraged by friends who spoke of better opportunities in the city, the three brothers made a difficult decision to leave their village and travel to Adama. Their father, Adissu, recalls the moment with deep pain, saying he was unaware of their whereabouts and overwhelmed by the sudden loss of all three children at once. After leaving school, the boys joined their peers on the journey to Adama, hoping for a better life. However, upon arrival, reality was far from what they had imagined. Without shelter, food, or support, they found themselves living on the streets. To survive, they began begging around hotels and public areas. Over time, they were exposed to harmful environments and began engaging in substance use, further deepening their vulnerability.

A turning point

In 2025, months after they had disappeared, during outreach activities conducted by SOS Children's Villages in Ethiopia through the Reaching Out to Children in the Streets Project in Adama, the three brothers were identified among other children in need of support. Through the project, they were enrolled in drop-in center services, where they accessed food, shelter, clothing, recreation, and psychosocial counselling. These services provided immediate relief and safety, while also helping them begin the process of recovery and reintegration. For the first time in a long period, the children were in a safe and supportive environment. With continued counselling and follow-up, they made the decision to return to their family and resume their education.

Returning home and rebuilding stability

After reintegration, the three brothers returned to school. To support the family's long-term stability, the project also provided livelihood support, which the family later used to purchase sheep and establish a small source of income at home. In addition, parenting skills training was provided to the family and their wider community, helping to strengthen care, communication, and relationships within the household. Today, the three brothers are back with their family, continuing their education and rebuilding their childhood in a safer environment. They express a desire to remain close to their parents and support their family while pursuing their studies. "We are deeply grateful for the support we received. It helped reunite our family and restored hope after a long period of uncertainty and separation," said their father, Addisu, on behalf of the family.



For more information feel free to reach out to **Getu Tamiru**,
Project MEAL Officer, Children's In Street Situation Adama
Getu.Tamiru@sos-ethiopia.org



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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



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