



Excellence Chronicles

Success Stories

**First Quarter
2025**



**SOS CHILDREN'S
VILLAGES**

Introduction

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

SOS Children's Villages operates in seven regional states across Ethiopia, including Tigray, Addis Ababa, Amhara, Harari, Oromia, SNNP, and Somali. Through its comprehensive programs and services, SOS Children's Villages in Ethiopia continues to make a significant impact on the lives of vulnerable children and families, ensuring they have the support and resources they need to thrive.

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

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

We firmly believe that by sharing these inspiring 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 and young people 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.

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The Courage to Walk Through

Born in Ethiopia's lush and diverse Southern Nations, Nationalities and Peoples' Region, Meklit spent her early childhood enjoying the simple joys of family, school, and home. But everything changed after she turned 6. Her parents, no longer able to care for her, sent her to live with her aunt in Dire Dawa, a city far from the world she once knew.

In Dire Dawa, Meklit's aunt made a modest living selling street food. With limited resources and no other support, Meklit quickly had to step in to help. School was no longer an option. Her days became defined by long hours at the food stall, harsh heat, and a growing sense that her childhood and her dreams had been left behind. By the age of 17, Meklit had come to accept this life. While her friends moved forward with school and plans for the future, she remained caught in a daily cycle of survival.

Then one morning, as she prepared to open the stall, everything began to change. She was approached by an outreach team from the Children in Street Situation Project, implemented by SOS Children's Villages in Ethiopia. Through their support, Meklit was invited to join life skills and business training tailored to young people like her, youth who had been forced to grow up too fast, too soon.

Drawing from her experience helping at the stall, Meklit embraced the training wholeheartedly. She balanced long days of work with learning sessions. Upon completing the training, she received a startup grant of 8,600 ETB, her first real chance at self-reliance. With that capital, Meklit launched her own small business. No longer on the side of the road, she was able to rent a small shop tucked into the corner of a busy street. There, she began selling water, soft drinks, snacks, and other essentials. It was not easy. Like any new entrepreneur, she faced setbacks, but Meklit had learned to manage. Her shop grew steadily, and so did her vision.

Still, something tugged at her heart: the dream of going back to school. Despite the years that had passed, Meklit made a bold decision. She enrolled in evening classes, managing her shop during the day and studying at night. Her commitment to both business and education reflects her strength, and her belief that it is never too late to rewrite your story. "I never imagined I would have the chance to go back to learning. For a long time, that dream felt impossible," she says.

Meklit now saves a portion of her income daily, showing remarkable financial discipline and a drive to grow. She hopes to expand her shop and become fully independent while advancing academically. Meklit is one of 85 young people in Dire Dawa who, through the Children in Street Situation Project, have received tailored support to rebuild their lives. But Meklit's story reminds us: while support can open the door, it is the courage to walk through it that changes everything.

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When Strength Meets Support

At just 20 years old, Muna became the head of her family. After losing their mother, Muna stepped into the role of caregiver for her 5 younger siblings, a responsibility far beyond her years. With no one else to lean on, she made the difficult decision to put her own education on hold so she could work and support them. Despite her best efforts, meeting their daily needs proved overwhelming. The pressure of caring for a family alone weighed heavily on her, both emotionally and financially.

"I had no time to think about myself," Muna reflects. "All I could focus on was keeping everyone else okay."

When she feared things could only get harder, Muna was introduced to the Action for Right Accountability and Development Assurance (ARADA) project, implemented by SOS Children's Villages in Ethiopia. The initiative supports 1,000 children, 50 youth, 240 caregivers, and a range of community-based organizations, and for Muna, it came as a lifeline.

Through the project, she gained access to a loan from a local Savings and Credit Cooperative (SACCO), which helped her stabilize her family's income. She found employment at a nearby market, and with the security of a steady job, things slowly began to shift. The project's support did not stop there. Muna also received training in child healthcare, hygiene and sanitation, positive parenting, and emotional support for teenagers, skills that became essential in her role as a young caregiver.



With her new knowledge and emotional insight, she was able to reconnect with her teenage brother who had previously left home, helping him return and reunite with the family. All her siblings went back to school, supported by educational materials and tutoring provided through the project. This gave Muna much-needed peace of mind. Their home was also renovated, creating a safe and stable environment for her family. A real home, not just a shelter from hardship.

With her family better, Muna began to turn her attention back to her own dreams. She resumed her education and is now attending college. She has also emerged as a leader in her community, regularly taking part in neighbourhood initiatives like local coffee ceremonies, where she connects with other caregivers, shares experiences, and strengthens her support network.

Despite growing up far too fast, and shouldering burdens no young woman should have to carry alone, Muna has built a loving, stable home. Her determination and resilience have turned crisis into opportunity, not just for her, but for her siblings too. Muna's journey is a testament to what is possible when strength meets support. Projects like ARADA don't create heroes but remind them of the power they already hold.

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A Prayer Answered

Genet, a devoted mother of 4 from Idget Ber in Arba Minch, carried the weight of her family's survival on her shoulders. Though unemployed, she did everything she could to care for her children while her husband worked as a daily labourer. But his income was barely enough to cover basic needs, let alone provide a future.

There were days when their children went to school on empty stomachs. As their hunger grew, so did their absence from class. School supplies became a luxury they simply could not afford. Genet worried constantly. She dreamed of a different future for her children, one where education could lead them down paths, she and her husband never had the chance to take. "We faced scary food scarcity, and we could not give our studies priority," recalls her eldest daughter, Hewan.

That future felt out of reach, until Genet was introduced to the Family and Community Strengthening (FCS) project by SOS Children's Villages in Ethiopia. The support came like an answered prayer. Through the project, Genet received capacity-building support in areas that touched every part of her family's life. Care, education, health, protection, and financial empowerment. Years of financial strain had made it difficult for Genet and her husband to focus on anything beyond daily survival. But now, equipped with knowledge, training, and support, she began to rebuild their lives.

Without wasting a moment, Genet put her new skills to work. She rented a small shop in her neighbourhood and began selling everyday essentials like convenient goods that were always in demand. Her income grew steadily, and for the first time, she could provide her children with three meals a day and meet their school needs. Beyond financial support, Genet also received training in parenting and child protection, transforming her approach to caregiving.

The loan of 10,000 ETB from the local Savings and Credit Cooperative Organization (SACCO) helped stabilize her family. Genet even gave up her daily coffee ritual, a small but meaningful sacrifice that allowed her to save more. This shift in mindset, rooted in the training she received, reinforced her growing confidence and independence.

Today, Genet's children go to school well-fed, their books in hand, and their hearts a little lighter. The Arba Minch FCS project, launched in 2024, supports families like Genet's in Chamo and Idget Ber kebeles. Over three years, it aims to directly empower 992 individuals, including 637 children while reaching 11,000 people indirectly. Fostering a holistic, sustainable approach to child development and family empowerment in Arba Minch.

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Empowered Communities, Safe Havens for Children

In the quiet village of Edget Ber Ketena, lived Tariku, a kind 65-year-old man, and his wife Abeba, 56. Their home once echoed with the voices of their 6 children, two sons and four daughters but now, with most of them grown and living on their own, the house had fallen into a calm stillness.

Abeba often reminisced about the old days, when small footsteps filled their home and laughter was a daily sound. She missed those years, not just the noise and energy, but the deep purpose that came with nurturing life. Then, one Sunday morning, news of something unexpected broke the stillness of the day. A mother had entrusted her four-month-old baby to a stranger, saying she would be right back. But she never returned. The village was shaken, but they knew who to turn to.

Tariku had always been a respected figure in the community, known for his wisdom and compassion. When the local leaders and child protection committee brought the situation to him, he did not hesitate. One look at the child, and he felt a connection. Alongside Abeba, he made the decision to welcome the baby into their home, naming him Matios. Following an assessment by local government and community leaders with the support of the Family and Community Strengthening (FCS) project implemented by SOS Children's Villages in Ethiopia, the family was deemed fit to care for Matios.

At the hospital, they learned that Matios was HIV positive and would require ongoing medical attention. For many, this news might have caused hesitation. But not for Tariku and Abeba. With quiet strength, they chose love again. They received guidance from medical professionals on how to care for him, determined to give the child not just a home, but a chance at a healthy and hopeful life. Through the FCS project, the couple received additional training in caregiving, health, child protection, and family resilience. With this support, they were not alone. They were equipped to provide the care, structure, and love Matios needed.

Their story is not only one of personal courage, but also a reflection of how communities, when supported and empowered can become safe havens for children with no one else to turn to. The Arba Minch FCS project, launched in 2024, is working to empower 992 individuals including 637 children across Chamo and Idget Ber kebeles. Aiming to foster safe, nurturing environments and community-led child protection systems over the next three years.

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Building from the Ground Up

Tigist's story is one that many girls and women in Ethiopia can relate to. A young girl forced into marriage at just 15, after losing her mother at a young age. With 3 children to care for and a husband who tragically passed away after a car accident, Tigist was suddenly burdened with the full responsibility of raising her family alone. Determined to provide a better life for her children, she moved from her home in Aleta Wondo District to the city of Hawassa, hoping to find work that would help her cover the costs of living and ensure her children's education. But city life proved more challenging than she had imagined.

Despite her best efforts, Tigist struggled to make ends meet. She took on a small vegetable and fruit business, but it barely covered her family's needs. Then, her life took a turn when she became involved with the Grow Equal Project through SOS Children's Villages in Ethiopia.

The project offered Tigist the support she needed to change the trajectory of her life. She received critical training in business and financial literacy, which enabled her to create a solid business plan based on her skills and prior experience. With a seed grant of 12,000 ETB and assistance with her children's schooling, she began to see a real difference. Tigist also benefited from community-based health insurance, which provided the peace of mind that her family would have access to medical care when needed.

Determined to improve her situation, Tigist made a smart investment in a donkey cart, to sell water in areas with scarcity. This new venture provided her with a consistent income, and she quickly began expanding her business. But Tigist's challenges did not end there. She had been silently battling cervical cancer, and when the condition worsened, she had to be hospitalized for three months. Thanks to the medical support through the project's health insurance, Tigist was able to receive life-saving surgery and medical treatment worth over 50,000 ETB. "I am more thankful to SOS Children's Villages in Ethiopia more than my own parents," she said, "It saved my life, not only once, but twice, through medical support."

With her health restored, Tigist is more determined than ever to build a secure future for her family. Her next goal is to expand her donkey cart business with her eldest son and eventually open a multi-purpose shop to increase her income and stability. Through the Grow Equal Project, Tigist not only overcame immense challenges but also reclaimed her right to a sustainable and dignified life.

The Grow Equal Project, launched in 2024 and running through 2027, aims to empower women and girls in towns like Hawassa and Jimma. This initiative aims to reach 456 individuals directly, the majority of whom are women, including 100 young girls and 139 female-headed households through efforts to build communities that promote equal rights, opportunities, and access to resources, particularly focusing on green economic opportunities and social protection.

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