

# DECENT WORK AND SOCIAL PROTECTION FOR YOUNG PEOPLE LEAVING CARE

GAPS AND RESPONSES IN 12 COUNTRIES WORLDWIDE



SOS CHILDREN'S VILLAGES INTERNATIONAL



Institute of Education



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## IMPRINT

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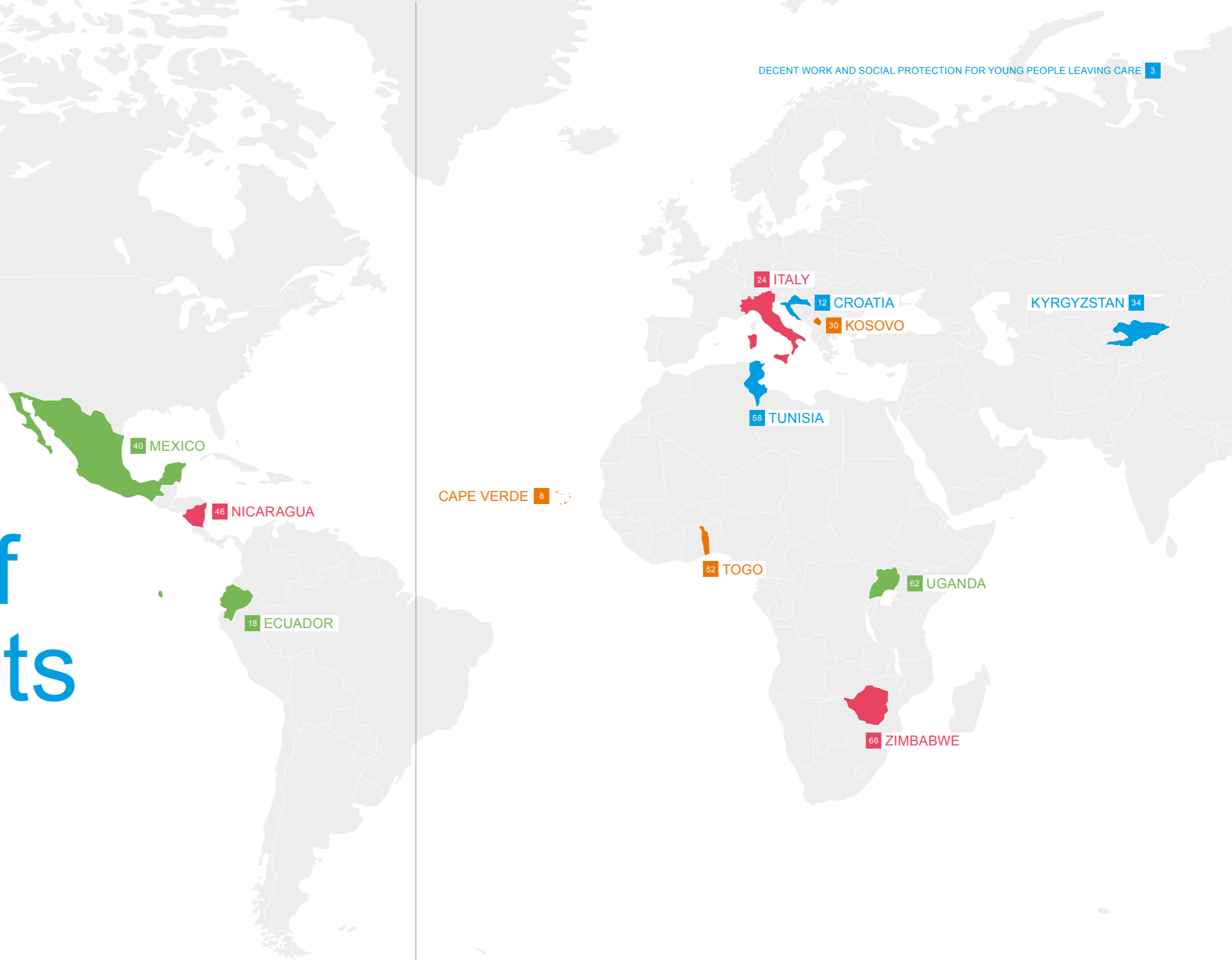
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\* All country mapping reports follow the same structure.  
 \*\* Online data last retrieved in February 2018.

## FOREWORD

Nothing is easy about leaving care.

We have a full baggage that other young people who have been living with their families usually do not have when they turn 18. A baggage that is supposed to be full of tools and skills that we have acquired to become autonomous over the years, but for us that same baggage is also made up of thoughts and feelings that need to be dealt with. If not, that baggage can become a heavy burden rather than a set of useful tools.

We need to find a house, to manage the relationship with our families (when we have one), to find a job and keep it, to learn all those practical skills in so many areas (how to pay bills, how to get a prescription from the doctor, etc.), and succeed in working through our own experiences. These are just a few of the tiles that we have to uncover and slot in. So how are we supposed to put all these pieces together? Nothing is easy about this.

Turning 18 and having to leave care happens to come at a time when almost none of us are ready. It takes years, sometimes decades, to get that baggage ready with everything we are going to need. This counts for anyone, including people who have not been in care, so it is clear how difficult it can be for people who do not have a supportive background and therefore struggle on this path. The difference and sad reality is the fact that we have to be ready at 18.

What, then, are the tools that a care leaver would want to have, in order to smoothen this transition to independent living? To trust one's caregivers can seem obvious as a first option, but while writing this, it is the first thing that pops into my head when I recall how it was for me. We need someone to trust and with whom we can establish a meaningful, informal relationship, as we live with them and their support is the background upon which we can build our future. Social workers play a fundamental role in planning, but this comes after the daily work that allows us to pack our baggage. Autonomy comes from the smallest things, for the tree grows from the plant that grows from the seed...

What about work? How is it supposed to improve our situation? Why is it considered a fundamental step in the process of leaving care? A job is the number one tool that allows a young person to start creating a future and to succeed in life, not to mention to support ourselves.

So, what kind of support are care leavers entitled to? In my country, generally speaking, a care leaver can access trainings or courses only when social services are in charge of their case. In my experience, I have found that these kinds of courses have been useful for me to acquire basic skills to prepare me for work, such as learning how to respect rules and time. They also helped in developing a network and making contacts in my small town, and in finding opportunities to start building my work experience.

There is nothing easy about this. We need to learn to seize opportunities. We stumble a lot when we walk. We ask you to support us in our journey and support us to become stronger. We will be able to reciprocate someday.

Nothing is easy about leaving care; but it is possible.



**Etienne Fabio Caillaud**  
Care leaver and member of  
SOS Children's Villages Italy's  
Young Experts Group

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## INTRODUCTION

Young people are the future of a country and crucial to its development pathway. Today, the world is home to more than 1.8 billion people aged 10 to 24, most of them living in lower and medium income countries; half of the world's population is under 30<sup>1</sup>. Never before there has been such potential for economic and social progress, and yet everywhere young people are disproportionately excluded from opportunities to become active members of society. They are three times more likely than adults to be unemployed, with 70.9 million young people estimated to have been unemployed in 2017<sup>2</sup>. Even in higher income countries, the transition from school to work is difficult: 15% of 18-24 year-olds in OECD countries are neither employed nor in education or training<sup>3</sup>.

Young people are heavily reliant on families for support in their twenties. For example, on average, across the European Union, young people tend not to leave the parental household before the age of 26<sup>4</sup>. However, not everyone can rely on a supportive home or have social networks to turn to for help. Around the world, children and young people become separated from their family, either temporarily or permanently, and are placed in an alternative care arrangement such as residential or foster care, following an administrative decision or an emergency situation. Little is known about the opportunities for decent work and social inclusion of young people who grow up outside of their family care, and less so about their outcomes.

The report 'Decent Work and Social Protection for Young People Leaving Care: Gaps and Responses in 12 Countries Worldwide', coordinated by SOS Children's Villages International and UCL Institute of Education, collates evidence from four regions of the world, detailing the ways in which young people with care background cope with the challenges of becoming self-reliant and are supported by the State and other actors in their path towards decent work and social inclusion<sup>5</sup>.

Young people leaving care are often socially disadvantaged, compared to their peers who did not spend time in care. Nevertheless, the problem is insufficiently recognized and documented. Statistically, young people who are leaving or have left care are virtually invisible in many social protection systems, so it is difficult to monitor their outcomes in terms of decent work and social inclusion, and to ensure that their human rights

are upheld. Without information on their particular circumstances it is difficult to quantify the problem, identify the main challenges, and design adequate policy responses to best reach out to these young people, so that they do not fall through the cracks of the system and are left behind. The current dearth of official data makes it hard to evaluate the impact of the provisions granted to them during their childhood and adolescence, and measure the social return on investment in the different alternative care arrangements.

The aim of this report is to increase the knowledge and understanding of the needs and rights of young people ageing out of alternative care around the world, in order to inform strategies, policies and services to improve their life chances and outcomes through appropriate preparation for leaving care as well as after-care support<sup>6</sup>. The specific objectives of the research were to highlight facts and figures (or in some cases, lack thereof) on the experiences and challenges of young people leaving care, including through their own voice and the testimony of experts to complement existing data and literature sources. Overall, the report brings together information on the legal and policy frameworks, the organization of services, promising practices and proposals in development, but also gaps that need to be addressed in order to offer a preliminary analytical overview of this social phenomenon and recommendations to spark positive change.

## STRUCTURE OF THE COUNTRY REPORTS

The research focused on twelve countries from across Africa, Central and Latin America, Europe and Central Asia: Cape Verde, Croatia, Ecuador, Italy, Kosovo, Kyrgyzstan, Mexico, Nicaragua, Togo, Tunisia, Uganda, and Zimbabwe. The findings are outlined in a standard format for each country chapter, listed alphabetically and covering the following points:

- ➔ a snapshot of the country context, outlining the main population details and information about the care system;
- ➔ a mapping of the legislative and policy framework;
- ➔ a description of the education, training and employment situation;
- ➔ youth support measures to access decent work, discussing the concept of decent work within the national context and in relation to young people;

- ➔ specific programmes and services targeting young people ageing out of alternative care;
- ➔ conclusions with discussion over systemic gaps and opportunities for reform.

We are very aware that we have condensed and synthesised information for the purposes of the report. Some study country teams have published, or plan to publish, their research findings in their own language<sup>7</sup>.

## METHODOLOGY

The research was carried out during 2016 and 2017. Study countries were selected to achieve maximum diversity in administrative social protection systems and approaches to 'decent work', across continents and cultural contexts. Field research in the study countries was organised through key contacts in SOS Children's Villages' member associations and local research consultants. Fieldwork teams collected the necessary data using the research tools and methodological guidance of the Thomas Coram Research Unit at UCL Institute of Education. These included: research guides for conducting a literature review and proformas for collecting data, training webinars and videos to support research interview processes, phone calls and email correspondence. Whenever possible, the research tools were translated into relevant languages to ensure clear understanding of the fieldwork. SOS Children's Villages International has project-managed the research, facilitating coordination among different research teams.

There were four main strands of data collection:

- ➔ Mapping of the key laws, policies and actors responsible for the protection and well-being of children in care and young people leaving care. Specific focus was on: care placement options, legal definitions, national legislation and standards, policies, programmes and services around education, training and employment, recognition of/reference to the term 'decent work', identification of key stakeholders to interview.
- ➔ Collection of statistics on children and young people in and ageing out of care, their education, employment and training, and comparable statistics for the general population of young people.
- ➔ Literature review. Specific focus was on the trajectories of young people leaving care and access to decent work and social protection.

- ➔ Interviews with experts to fill data gaps that emerged from the desk research. Interviews were carried out with: (i) public sector, academic and NGO stakeholders with national or regional oversight of child care and protection, education and skills, employment and social protection; (ii) key actors in local delivery of services, like alternative care professionals, employment services, etc.; (iii) advocacy experts in policies and services to support care leavers.

Moreover, some fieldwork teams organised youth participation activities, like focus groups, and collected inputs from young people who were in care programmes or had aged out of them; and from care leavers who are part of youth groups co-organised by SOS Children's Villages. Quotes from these young people were used in this report to further illustrate problems and solutions based on their knowledge of the situation.

Few of the study countries have made the issue of young people leaving care a priority. One consequence is the difficulty to obtain data and statistics on young people ageing out of care each year and sometimes even on the population of children in the alternative care system. In some cases, such data and statistics were available but not necessarily reliable, and yet they were included in the country reports to give access to figures as a first step to understanding the problem. Throughout the study, the phrase 'data not found' signals this challenge, and means that data and statistics were either inexistent; or existing but not accessible; or fieldwork teams were unable to identify them at the time of writing.

1 UN DESA, Population Division. 2017. World Population Prospects. The 2017 Revision. <https://esa.un.org/unpd/wpp/DataQuery/>

2 ILO. 2017. Global Employment Trends for Youth.

3 OECD. 2017. Education at a Glance 2017. OECD Indicators.

4 Eurostat. 2017. Estimated average age of young people leaving the parental household (year 2016). <http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat>

5 The report builds on previous research by SOS Children's Villages International. For further reference: SOS Children's Villages International. 2010. Ageing Out of Care. From Care to Adulthood in European and Central Asian Societies. Edited by Véronique Lerch with Mike Stein; SOS Children's Villages International. 2012. When Care Ends. Lessons From Peer Research. Edited by Mike Stein and Raluca Verweijen-Slannescu; SOS Children's Villages International. 2016. Leaving Care and Employment in Five European Countries: An Undocumented Problem? Edited by Claire Cameron.

6 The needs and rights of children deprived of or at risk of losing parental care are set out in the international Convention on the Rights of the Child. In 2009 the United Nations General Assembly welcomed the Guidelines for the Alternative Care of Children, in order to enhance the implementation of the Convention and other regulations related to the protection and well-being of these children, including reference to supported transitions from the care setting to assume self-reliance and integrate fully in the community.

7 For more information regarding the publication of national country reports, please send an email to [info@sos-childrensvillages.org](mailto:info@sos-childrensvillages.org) or visit [www.sos-childrensvillages.org](http://www.sos-childrensvillages.org).

## COUNTRY MAPPING REPORT

## Cape Verde

## Total population

520,502 (2015)<sup>9</sup>

## Child population (ages 0-18)

186,000 (2015) (35.7% of the total population)<sup>9</sup>

## Population of children in alternative care

Data not found.

## Numbers ageing out of care each year

There is no national official figure, but information collected by SOS Children's Villages Cape Verde showed that in 2016 there were 109 children living across the two SOS Children's Villages, and 152 in the Cape Verdean Institution for Children and Adolescents' residences across the country.

## Total unemployment

10.6% (2016)<sup>10</sup>

## Youth unemployment (ages 15-24)

17.4% (2016)<sup>11</sup>

## Young people not in education, employment or training (NEET)

Data not found.

## Options for alternative care placements

Children and young people who are not able to live with their birth parents or extended family are usually placed in residential care. There are two main service providers that are responsible for children and young people in care: the Cape Verdean Institution for Children and Adolescents, a government institution that implements national policies around the protection of children and adolescents, and SOS Children's Villages, which provides social protection and support to children and young people in care and transitioning out of care.

## LEGISLATIVE AND POLICY FRAMEWORK

## STATE PROVISIONS FOR CHILDREN UP TO THE AGE OF 18

The 2013 Child and Adolescent Statute (Estatuto da Criança e dos Adolescentes) is the broad legal framework covering the rights of children and adolescents in general and up to the age of 18 years. There is no specific legislation focused on provisions for children in care.

## STATE PROVISIONS FOR LEAVING CARE AND AFTER-CARE SUPPORT

There is no national data, legislation or policy on care leavers. After the age of 18, young people in care are no longer entitled to special assistance or social protection. There are no national government targets or standards relating to care leavers and the government is not signed up to any international frameworks for care leavers.

## EDUCATION, TRAINING AND EMPLOYMENT SITUATION

There is no national data available on the school leaving qualifications of young people leaving care. However, data from a 2015 survey conducted by the National Institute of Statistics on all young people found that 74% of young people (15-24) had completed or were enrolled in secondary education and 9% had completed or were enrolled in higher education<sup>12</sup>.

Similarly, data is not publicly available on the main activity (employment, education or training) of care leavers after they have left compulsory schooling. In relation to all young people aged 15-24, data from the National Institute of Statistics for 2015 shows that 33% of employed young people were working in the primary sector (e.g. agriculture, fisheries), around 10% were working in the manufacturing industry sector, and 11% in the tourism sector.

## NUMBER OF YOUNG PEOPLE LEAVING CARE WITH QUALIFICATIONS

Data not found.

## MAIN ACTIVITY OF YOUNG PEOPLE LEAVING CARE

Data not found.

## PATHWAYS IN EDUCATION, TRAINING AND EMPLOYMENT

No official national data was found. Data from SOS Children's Villages shows that as of 2016, of 203 care leavers, 102 were employed, 59 in education and 42 seeking employment. The Tracking Footprints study<sup>13</sup> is the only identifiable research on care leavers that investigated the socio-economic situation of 60 young adults who had been in the care of an SOS Children's Village in one area of Cape Verde. The report found that:

- 36.7% of respondents had completed their primary schooling, 58.3% had completed secondary school, 2% had reached higher education (university degree) and 1% had not finished any school qualification;
- 60% of respondents had accessed professional training, but only 56% had completed this training;
- The unemployment rate within this group of care leavers was 21.7% (similar to the national figures for that time).

In general, the types of employment that young people leaving care in Cape Verde can find include general technician, computer technician, accountant, maintenance technician and bartender. Despite the lack of specialized legislation for care leavers, study participants report that there is integration of care leavers in society as a result of the significant cooperation that is taking place between the care centres (such as SOS Children's Villages) and other institutions such as universities, vocational centres and other partners which enables care leavers to find jobs in different areas.

## YOUTH SUPPORT MEASURES TO ACCESS DECENT WORK

Unemployment is a critical issue for young people in general in Cape Verde. In order to prepare young people for the labour market, a set of national programmes have been established over the past decades as well as two institutions whose remit it is to address this; these are the Institute for Professional Training and Employment (IEFP) and the Agency for Innovation and Enterprise Development (ADEI). The ADEI works to promote entrepreneurship and self-employment as tools to address youth unemployment and the IEFP is a public institution that is responsible for the execution of policies on employment, entrepreneurship and technical education. Through their centres, it is estimated that these institutions have been able to support more than 20,000 young people in the last five years. It must be noted however, that the IEFP and ADEI are national institutions with a national vision that operate programmes for all young people in the country; they do not have a specific focus on, or have particular programmes for, young people leaving care. This is typical of the current position in terms of support and services for care leavers in Cape Verde; they are subsumed within generic legislation, policies and programmes for the whole population of young people.

**Decent work:** There is no national legal definition of 'decent work' in Cape Verde but the country follows the guidelines defined by the International Labour Organization (ILO) that is 'work that provides a fair income and social protection'. Cape Verde has been working closely with the ILO and has been implementing a national plan regarding decent work entitled 'Programa País de Trabalho Decente Cabo Verde (PPTD)'.

## SPECIFIC PROGRAMMES AND SERVICES TARGETING CARE LEAVERS

### STATE RESPONSES AT THE NATIONAL LEVEL

None identified. As stated previously, there is a lack of specialized national policy to tackle potential issues faced by care leavers; they are subsumed into the wider population of young people when it comes to services and programmes of support around employability and decent work. Some progress has been made at the national level, for example with the introduction of a statutory labour code and minimum wage law. A national 'Technical and Vocational Education and Training programme' (TVET) has been established in Cape Verde but, as with other programmes, these are generic for all young people rather than specifically targeting care leavers. The opportunities for support with employment and housing are the same as for all other young people.

**Proposals in discussion:** The Cape Verdean Institution for Children and Adolescents, which is responsible for national implementation and monitoring of policies regarding children and adolescents, is starting to focus specifically on the situation of care leavers and is starting to implement a set of different agreements with universities, vocational training schools and specialized service centres in order to provide better employment conditions and opportunities for care leavers.

A set of new fiscal programmes are being implemented by the government, funded by international partners, to give economic incentives to young entrepreneurs wanting to set up their own small businesses. There are plans to establish policies to promote greater engagement of women in the labour market, e.g. via a system of care for children to enable maternal employment as well as greater job security and a more robust social security system.

### STATE RESPONSES AT THE LOCAL LEVEL

None identified.

## NON-STATE RESPONSES

There are some ad hoc responses to care leavers provided by non-state actors, such as SOS Children's Villages Cape Verde. However these are rare.

More broadly, there needs to be a consideration of what constitutes 'decent work' for young people and a policy and practice focusing on ensuring that care leavers are able to access this standard of employment.

## CONCLUSIONS

The positive aspects of the current situation in Cape Verde are that there appears to be an integration of care leavers in the wider society and cooperation is taking place between the care centres and other institutions such as universities, vocational centres and other partners which is enabling care leavers to find jobs in different areas.

However, there is a lack of national data on children in care and care leavers, their educational attainment, progress and pathways out of care and into education, employment or training. There are many institutions and associations with information about their own children and young people, but no central data collection. Therefore, there is a need for a national, integrated tracking system.

There is no specific legislation or policy that focuses on the particular situation of children in care and care leavers, and the government currently has no remit or responsibility to provide social support or protection for young people who have been in care once they reach 18 years of age.

Systematic data collection by government on children in and leaving care is needed, as well as a specific focus in government legislation on care leavers with the setting of targets and standards for children and young people in and leaving care.

Attention is required at the national level with regard to raising the educational participation of children in care and a need for specific policies and programmes to support care leavers into further education, employment or training. According to one interviewee, a specialist in the national Department for Social Inclusion, focus should be given to establishing a programme of vocational training specifically for care leavers to promote their access to the labour market.

8 World Bank database. 2015. Population, total. <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.POP.TOTL?locations=CV&view=chart>

9 UNICEF. 2016. State of the World's Children. Downloaded from: <https://www.unicef.org/sowc2016/>

10 ILOSTAT database. 2016. Unemployment, total (% of total labor force) (modeled ILO estimate). <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SL.UEM.TOTL.ZS>

11 ILOSTAT database. 2016. Unemployment, youth total (% of total labor force ages 15-24) (modeled ILO estimate). <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SL.UEM.1524.ZS>

12 National Institute of Statistics (INE). 2015. <http://www.ine.cv/publicacoes/anuario-da-educacao-2015-2016/>

13 SOS Children's Villages International. 2010. Tracking Footprints. <https://www.sos-childrensvillages.org/getmedia/f94f96ac-0e37-4e9c-ad1c-6ec24962b12b/100624-TF-GlobalReport2010-final-en.pdf?ext=.pdf>

## COUNTRY MAPPING REPORT

## Croatia



## Total population

4.2 million (2015)<sup>14</sup>

## Child population (ages 0-18)

775,000 (2015) (18.5% of the total population)<sup>15</sup>

## Population of children in alternative care

3,500<sup>16</sup>

## Numbers ageing out of care each year

There is no national official figure, but according to the 2016 Office of the Ombudsman for Children's Annual Report (data as of 31 December 2015), 482 children and young people left care in the one-year period. 136 were just transferred to other type of care (i.e. from foster care to institutional care).

## Total unemployment

13.5% (2016)<sup>17</sup>

## Youth unemployment (ages 15-24)

33% (2016)<sup>18</sup>

## Young people not in education, employment or training (NEET)

24.2% (2015)<sup>19</sup>

## Options for alternative care placements

Children without parental care up to 18 years of age live either in a permanent placement (State children's homes, family care or semi-independent living which encompasses NGO care, foster care or kinship care) or a temporary placement in an institution (on weekly, daily, or half-day basis). More than half of the children without parental care are placed in 18 residential homes (there are 14 homes funded by the Republic of Croatia and four non-State homes)<sup>20</sup>. The total capacity of the homes is 1,665 beneficiaries. In addition to homes for children without parental care, there is accommodation in homes for children with behavioural problems and in 26 social welfare homes established by the Republic of Croatia, which provide care for children with special needs. SOS Children's Villages is registered as a non-governmental children's home, providing care for 250 children and young people in 31 SOS families and four youth programmes.

## LEGISLATIVE AND POLICY FRAMEWORK

## STATE PROVISIONS FOR CHILDREN UP TO THE AGE OF 18

According to the Social Welfare Act 2015 (NN 157/13, 152/14, 99/15, 52/16), a child without adequate parental care has the right to short-term or long-term placement in alternative care. The Act has a broad definition of the circumstances under which children can be removed from their families, which includes the possibility to place children in alternative care due to family poverty, contrary to a fundamental principle of the UN Guidelines for the Alternative Care of Children. The Act establishes the obligation of providing services in accordance with the Social Services Quality Standards. The Standards define the complaints and appeals procedures, including an obligation for providers to respond to complaints. They also provide procedures for preventing abuse and exploitation, and safeguarding children's rights. The Social Welfare Act only recently prescribed the obligation that Centres for Social Welfare (which have the authority to make decisions in the process of separation and placement) create individual care plans based on an assessment of children's needs and outcomes. The Ombudsman's Office in Croatia highlighted that not all Centres complete these.

The provision of child care in 'family homes' was only enabled in 2007 by the Social Welfare and the Foster Family (NN 103/15) Acts, which limited the number of children in foster families to three. Foster families that care for a larger number of children are now registered as a 'family home' - non-institutional care that allows placement of four to ten children. The National Plan of De-institutionalization and Transformation of Social Welfare Institutions 2011-2016 set out ambitions to reduce the proportion of children in institutional care in favour of family-based care. While the targets set have not been achieved, this has had an impact on children in care; with a reduction in residential care placements children are often staying longer in the family home before separation takes place.

Other relevant legislation includes the Juvenile Court Act (NN 84/11, 143/12, 148/13, 56/15) and

the Foster Care Act (NN 90/11, 78/12). Article 41 of the Foster Care Act legislates that foster carers must prepare the care recipient for departure from the foster family to start an independent life, return to biological family or transfer to another type of alternative care.

## STATE PROVISIONS FOR LEAVING CARE AND AFTER-CARE SUPPORT

18 years is the legal age when young people in care are no longer entitled to care placement/special assistance, after which they have the same rights as any adult who is in need of social services from the State.

The literature review identified multiple sources that highlighted inadequacy in the support available for young people leaving care<sup>21</sup>. These include young people not being provided with the necessary life skills to find housing and employment, for independent living and to integrate into society.

## EDUCATION, TRAINING AND EMPLOYMENT SITUATION

Croatia has the lowest percentage of young people leaving education early of all countries in the European Union: 2.8% in 2015<sup>22</sup>. While there are some questions around the reliability of the supporting data here, contributors to this research indicate that schools delivering three-year vocational and education programmes make particular allowances for problematic or low achieving students (e.g. permitting taking of exams despite non-attendance). While this bolsters overall participation rates, it could be seen to have a negative impact in other areas, such as labour market integration.

## NUMBER OF YOUNG PEOPLE LEAVING CARE WITH QUALIFICATIONS

58% of all young people leave school with 'Advanced' school leaving qualifications (e.g. qualifications for university entrance), compared to 26% of young people leaving care. In contrast, 69% of



young people leave care with 'Basic' school leaving qualifications (e.g. compulsory school certificate), as compared to 41% of all young people<sup>23</sup>.

### MAIN ACTIVITY OF YOUNG PEOPLE LEAVING CARE

There is no official national data. Study interviews suggest there are various young people with care background who are unemployed, completing unregistered work, and/or work in the construction or the service industry. They are typically in low-paid, unstable positions within the private sector.

### PATHWAYS IN EDUCATION, TRAINING AND EMPLOYMENT

The limited published data presents some illustrative findings which show care leavers are more likely to undertake vocational secondary education (compared to attending more academic high schools) and to study subjects such as personal services, commerce and engineering<sup>24 25</sup>. Of those students that did go on to higher education, the vast majority received scholarships (73% as compared to 16% of the general population). Following graduation, employment was likely to be in the hospitality, commerce or service industry. Interviews for this study confirmed that young people in and leaving care are encouraged to undertake vocational training due to historical academic underachievement, and perceptions that vocational qualifications will secure a job more quickly than academic qualifications. However, this is not the case for those opting to undertake the three-year vocational education and training (VET) programmes for occupations in low demand.

Children in care have more school absences and subsequently have to repeat grades, leading to academic underachievement. Some young people are inappropriately streamed in special needs adapted programmes and are grouped with children with learning disabilities and disorders. Those in foster care are also seen to be disadvantaged, as carers tend to have lower levels of education and are therefore unable to provide support for their children's development. The Regulation on School Admissions makes special provisions for young people in care, enabling them to receive additional points

following an interview with the Croatian Employment Service (CES) that can be used to gain admission to secondary schools.

Pathways do exist for care leavers to access employment, but this is usually informal or temporary work. It is also highly likely to be poorly paid. Employment opportunities are further limited by a lack of foreign language competencies, skills such as being able to drive, and relatively small social networks. Care leavers can face discrimination and stigmatisation in the workplace, leading many to hide their care history from employers. Many care leavers return to being unemployed following participation in active labour market programmes.

Care leavers face a considerable challenge in accessing higher education as "the right to housing and the right to higher education are limited under the current system in terms of both age and continuing education. Specifically, a young person who exercises his or her right to study on a scholarship will lose the right to housing at the same time. Young people who attend colleges in their home town are denied the right to college dormitory accommodation<sup>26</sup>." As such, the financial constraints severely limit care leavers' opportunities to engage in further education and training. Care leavers from foster families also face similar issues in finding housing as, despite coming from a family surrounding, very few remain in contact or receive support from foster families once they leave the family home.

### YOUTH SUPPORT MEASURES TO ACCESS DECENT WORK

There are a number of national strategies to support employment, including the Industrial Strategy, Strategy of Science, Education and Technology, Strategy of Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion and Guidelines for the Active Labour Market Policy.

Young care leavers usually enter employment directly from education, but can also find themselves being directed to the CES and active labour market programmes, as a means of getting them involved in employment, but not in a sustainable manner. Such programmes are predominantly targeted towards the

long-term unemployed and do not seek to find permanent employment, but rather to activate the job seeking process. Consequently, young care leavers who are directed towards these interventions do not receive a type of support that could bolster their labour market chances in the long run.

As a European Union Member State, Croatia joined the Youth Guarantee, a European Union initiative to tackle youth unemployment which ensures that all young people under 25 – whether registered with employment services or not – receive a 'good-quality' job offer within four months of their leaving formal education or becoming unemployed. Croatian authorities decided to extend entitlements to the Youth Guarantee up to the age of 29, following an assessment of the labour market conditions in the country.

A study to evaluate the implementation of the Youth Guarantee in Croatia for care leavers found different effects in the short and long term<sup>27</sup>. In the short term, care leavers considered in the sample of the study presented improvement in terms of psychological well-being and understanding of the labour market. The development of new skills, such as communication skills, and increased chances of finding employment at the end of the scheme were observed as long-term results of the Youth Guarantee. Care leavers participating in the study who benefitted from the scheme said the main benefit of the Youth Guarantee was the financial security linked to regular payments, as they struggled financially after leaving care. However, they declared feeling stigmatised in the work environment because of their care background and thus asked for stricter personal data protection rules. They also found themselves doing low skilled jobs unrelated to their educational attainment.

**Decent work:** While the term 'decent work' is not referred to explicitly, the relevant elements of the decent work agenda (minimum wage, social protection in case of redundancy, protection of workers' dignity, right to representation and collective bargaining, workplace safety) are present in the Croatian legislative and policy framework (specifically the Labour Act). However, interviewees highlighted that legally guaranteed rights are often breached within the private sector, minimum wages fail to secure a decent livelihood and collective agreements are generally weak and poorly enforced.

## SPECIFIC PROGRAMMES AND SERVICES TARGETING CARE LEAVERS

### STATE RESPONSES AT THE NATIONAL LEVEL

The CES provision is available to a very broad category of 'young people with no work experience' which includes young care leavers. CES enables such young people to access active labour market programmes more easily, and they are also provided a special employment advisor who can give information about the labour market conditions and advice on seeking employment. CES also offers financial incentives to employers to retain hard-to-employ individuals for at least one year. However, no quotas are specified for the different categories of young people, despite calls to introduce them. CES works with children in care within residential facilities, but not with those in foster care, unless there are accompanying learning or behavioural difficulties. There is no monitoring and evaluation of social provisions aimed at supporting care leavers.

According to the Social Welfare Act, care leavers have to leave alternative care at the age of 18. While a number of providers have services which enable care leavers to remain in various forms of housing after the age of 18, particularly if still engaged in education, this is not a legal national standard. For those young people who finish their education before 18 – which is often the case for those undertaking vocational training – they are required to leave residential care within a year of graduation.

As a preparation for leaving residential care, each care leaver should develop an individual plan of care with their designated social worker, which includes short-term and long-term objectives. Care leavers are not entitled to receive unemployment benefit, but do receive a basic social benefit (which is extremely low), one-off financial support from the Centre for Social Welfare and subsidised accommodation. Each municipality also has the option to introduce local financial support and additional rights to supplement those available at the State level.

## STATE RESPONSES AT THE LOCAL LEVEL

Though limited detail was provided by interviewees, it appears that the City of Zagreb provides a wider range of support to vulnerable individuals, including care leavers, than is available in other areas. In the strategy of the City of Zagreb, there is an article that defines that children from care should be positively discriminated in the employment selection process of the City of Zagreb's local administration and public firms owned by the City.

Care providers take responsibility for supporting young people leaving care, including the provision of counselling services and advice on finding employment and continuing education. Beyond this there are no specific standards to adhere to and, therefore, standards of support differ. In some cases no support is provided at all. Some service providers (including SOS Children's Villages Croatia) have flats available for young people to go to immediately after they leave care until they are 21. If they attend university, they can use the service until they are 26. There are currently around 30 organized housing units with a total capacity for 165 care leavers.

## NON-STATE RESPONSES

There are many localised examples of promising practices involving children's homes and NGOs (e.g. Association 'Play' from Zagreb, and Association 'MoSt' from Split), but these are limited in the range and nature of work they undertake. Nonetheless, some of these initiatives have helped young people gain IT skills, languages, driving licences, etc., which has then helped them in their search for employment.

The Croatian Youth Network recently accessed EU funding, in collaboration with other NGOs (including SOS Children's Villages Croatia), to undertake research, advocacy and awareness raising activities around care leavers' employment. During the interviews, this was seen as a positive step, but one which requires more of a strategic follow-through to lead to tangible outcomes.

SOS Children's Villages Croatia, in partnership with Association 'Play' and Children's home 'Mae-

stral' from Split developed the manual 'Okvirko' to serve as a practical guidance document – aimed at care leavers, professionals and policymakers – to support care leavers' transition out of care.

## CONCLUSIONS

Croatia has a relatively comprehensive legislative framework in place for children without parental care, but there is no legal definition of 'care leaver' and there are no special provisions for children who age out of the care system. Young people leaving care face a wide range of barriers. While many care homes do support young people throughout compulsory education, there is little preparation/planning for the transition out of care. Family homes/children's homes could do more future orientated planning and provide more support for the transition process. Furthermore, while there is a push towards de-institutionalisation of placements, the support available to those in foster homes is more limited than those available in residential homes.

According to the interviews, many young people transitioning out of alternative care keep in contact with their biological family. In some cases, they actually go back to their family to help overcome family issues, instead of starting to live alone and independently. Thus, more consideration should be given to supporting care leavers as well as their family during the transition period.

*“Sometimes they (care leavers) are the ones taking care of their problematic families.”*

Professor at the Centre for Social Care of the University of Zagreb, interviewee

Academic underachievement and lack of financial stability mean that most care leavers are directed toward VET programmes which enable faster access to the labour market. Robust analysis provided by Matković in 2011 clearly indicates that education level is a good predictor of all positive labour market outcomes: job-seeking duration, wage, stability, progress opportunities<sup>28</sup>. As a group, they appear to go through a cycle of employment via active labour market programmes and unemployment once terms come to an end. Lack of adequate preparation for

life beyond care and lack of affordable housing stifles ambitions. Once they have left care, care leavers are not monitored or followed up and so very little is known about their outcomes.

There is little coordination between the different key actors, at all levels, and their areas of responsibilities. The system is therefore fragmented with many cracks for young people to fall through.

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## COUNTRY MAPPING REPORT

## Ecuador

## Options for alternative care placements

Children and young people in care may be placed in foster homes or different forms of institutional care (mainly temporary) which fall under three categorizations: a) direct care (offered by the government); b) attention agreement (offered by legal persons that have an agreement with the government); c) care without agreement (legal persons who have no agreement with the government). In all cases the governing and supervisory body for placements is the Ministry of Economic and Social Inclusion.

## Residential care can take the form of:

→ Family houses providing temporary refuge where it has been assessed that the parents and extended family are not able to provide safe and adequate care for the child/young person and there is no possibility of foster care. These houses accommodate a maximum of eight children and young people aged from 0 to 17 years and eleven months of age. These houses have interdisciplinary professional teams who work with children, adolescents, their families and the community.

→ 'Foster care centres' that temporarily take in children and adolescents aged from 0 to 17 years and eleven months of age. These centres have multidisciplinary teams that work to preserve, improve, strengthen or restore the child/young person's family ties until the situation which led to institutional care is resolved.

According to a former official from the Ministry of Economic and Social Inclusion that was interviewed for this research, foster care is prioritized by the State as the best and preferred option in terms of placement for children and young people in care, with institutional placements seen as a last resort. Foster care can be either kinship if a suitable extended family can be identified, or non-kinship in which case a family is selected according to the needs presented by the child or adolescent.

## Total population

16,144,363 (2015)<sup>29</sup>

## Child population (ages 0-18)

5,588,000 (2015) (34.6% of the total population)<sup>30</sup>

## Population of children in alternative care

3,491 children and young people in formal alternative care in 2015, out of which 2,511 in institutional care<sup>31</sup>.

## Numbers ageing out of care each year

Data not found.

## Total unemployment

4.7% (2016)<sup>32</sup>

## Youth unemployment (ages 15-24)

11% (2016)<sup>33</sup>

## Young people not in education, employment or training (NEET)

18.4% (2016)<sup>34</sup>

## LEGISLATIVE AND POLICY FRAMEWORK

## STATE PROVISIONS FOR CHILDREN UP TO THE AGE OF 18

In Ecuador, the State is responsible for children and adolescents who can no longer live with their biological parents or extended family. This responsibility is exercised primarily through the Ministry of Economic and Social Inclusion. Other agencies and organizations also have a remit in providing social protection and support to young people in and leaving care, including the Judicial Council, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Education, Decentralized Autonomous Governments (GADs), provincial governments, municipalities, parish councils, as well as the private sector and NGOs.

While there is no specific legislation governing children and young people in care, there is a Code for Children and Adolescents and standards such as the 'Technical Standard for Special Protection of Institutional Care' and the 'Special Technical Standard Protective Foster Care'. These codes and standards, combined with the general principles around social protection in the national constitution, form the legal framework.

## STATE PROVISIONS FOR LEAVING CARE AND AFTER-CARE SUPPORT

There is no specific legal framework that governs young people leaving care and there is no specific legal term used for 'care leavers'. There is no legal age for leaving care. However, most institutions and departments have interpreted that the maximum age of leaving care should be the same as the maximum age of entry to care which is: 17 years and 11 months, but this is at the discretion of individual institutions. Preparation for transitioning from care usually starts at age 15 and is termed as 'Life Project'.

There are no specific government standards or targets for care leavers and the government is not signed up to any specific international frameworks on care leavers. As such, there is no legislative obligation for the provision of support to care leavers.

It is presumed that once a young person reaches the age of majority at 18, they are considered to be self-sufficient. In practice, the institutions that provided care to these young people often continue mentoring them after they have left care. The only statutory obligation in relation to leaving care is that young people should be informed of educational or training options that they can access for free (Article 403, Code of Childhood and Adolescence).

## EDUCATION, TRAINING AND EMPLOYMENT SITUATION

In Ecuador, education is mandatory and free of charge throughout high school. The average number of years of schooling of adults is seven years. Article 14 of the Youth Law (2001) which applies to those aged 18-29 years states that education policies aimed at young people must: "improve professional young people's basic education, technical training, training and craft, prevent, punish and eradicate all forms of violence and practices in education, promote educational scholarships at all levels giving priority access to poor people and vulnerable groups and promote internships in the public and private sectors."

Underemployment is a key issue in Ecuador. This is the condition where someone is employed for fewer hours than they would like, perform a job with a lower qualification level than they have or are in employment that does not meet their economic needs. This results in the reduction of the worker's income below the level that they would be able to achieve if they were employed in work that matches their training and qualifications and which covers the full number of hours that they are available to work.

Data from June 2016 shows that the rate of underemployment was 16.8% for men and 15.7% for women; of these underemployed people, 54.1% were paid a salary and 45.9% were self-employed.

Data from the child labour survey conducted by the National Institute of Statistics and Census (INEC) in 2012 showed that 19.8% of the child population are working<sup>35</sup>. Of these, 4.3% are in urban areas and

15.5% are in rural areas. Of adolescents aged between 15 and 17 years, 15.7% were in work. Data on the general population of young people aged 15-18 years in Ecuador drawn from the 2010 National Survey of Employment, Unemployment and Urban and Rural Underemployment (ENEMDUR) shows that 65% were in education, 20% were employed full time, 9% were in education and work and 7% neither studied nor worked.

Data was not available on the education, training or employment of care leavers or on the types of employment that they can find. The country researchers commented that the Ministry of Economic and Social Inclusion is highly protective over the data they possess, and despite formally requesting, they were unable to access this data.

### NUMBER OF YOUNG PEOPLE LEAVING CARE WITH QUALIFICATIONS

Data not found.

### MAIN ACTIVITY OF YOUNG PEOPLE LEAVING CARE

Data not found.

### PATHWAYS IN EDUCATION, TRAINING AND EMPLOYMENT

There is no national information on the kinds of education, employment or training available for young people leaving care and no statistical data for this particular group. Care leavers face an adverse social context in Ecuador with few job opportunities, difficulties in accessing higher education due to unaffordability and lack of qualifications, and with little or no support from extended family or wider social networks.

The main areas of employment for young people in general are: domestic work, small businesses (with fewer than 10 employees) and employment requiring lower qualifications such as construction, trade, hotels and restaurants, farming and manufacturing. Since care leavers are likely to be in an even more

precarious situation with regards to their education and qualifications than their peers not in alternative care, the types of employment they might be able to access will largely be low skilled, in the informal sector and poorly paid.

A report by the Ministry of Economic and Social Inclusion (2013) on research with teachers and caregivers found that care leavers had pursued training in industrial mechanics, carpentry, hairdressing, first aid and dressmaking, but that it was common for these courses to be low level and short, with a focus on finding immediate job placements. There were very few reports of teachers and care leavers promoting micro-enterprises or the tertiary education route with care leavers.

According to key actors in organizations with a remit for children in care and for preparing young people for leaving care, the main focus for work with care leavers is promoting their autonomy. Education and training for care leavers largely consists of short courses focused towards technical or craft careers such as beauty, carpentry and mechanics, with the aim of obtaining an immediate job placement that allows them to be self-sufficient and autonomous. There is far less focus on the promotion of micro-enterprises, access to tertiary education and obtaining university degrees. A former official from the Ministry of Economic and Social Inclusion stated that care leavers are 'the missing ones', and that generic approaches and programmes that are intended to help young people into employment, but do not specifically target care leavers, like the 'My First Job' programme, may not be serving or reaching care leavers.

*"I think the truth is, it is not happening, I think there are many problems with children who turn 18 in a reception space [care leavers], I think there are no answers either by the reception centres or by the State. I think these are the missing ones."*

Former official from the Ministry of Economic and Social Inclusion, interviewee

## YOUTH SUPPORT MEASURES TO ACCESS DECENT WORK

A former official from the Ministry of Economic and Social Inclusion who was interviewed for this research stated that the most significant problem young people encounter when looking for employment is lack of work experience. Those without this experience are generally stereotyped very negatively by potential employers who view them as unprofessional, immature and unreliable. To try and address this, a State programme was developed called 'My First Job', which aims to help young students and university graduates gain work experience in public or private settings through paid internships, to improve their employability in the professional field. While this is a nationwide State programme, responsibility for its implementation and operation is held at local government level and is inconsistent.

Youth employment has also been promoted by the State through the 'Organic Law for the promotion of youth work' (March 2016) which sets out regulations on working hours, unemployment and unemployment insurance and business internships. The State has introduced into legal vocabulary the term 'youth employment contract' for young people between 18 and 26 years of age.

There are a few local, municipal-level initiatives to support young people into employment. For example, the municipality of Quito has established the Metropolitan Ordinance 0007 (August 2014) on Youth Employment which aims to support young people to get into the labour market. This local initiative promotes the development, professionalization and modernization of the skills and abilities of young people to promote their employment and self-employment through training.

The above programmes and initiatives are open to all young people; they are not specifically targeted at young people leaving care.

**Decent work:** There is no official definition of 'decent work' in Ecuador but the concept exists and is referred to in legislation. For example, the Constitution of Ecuador, Article 276 sets out the requirement to: "build an economic, fair, democratic, productive, supportive and sustainable system based on the equal distribution of the benefits of development, of the means of production and the generation of decent and stable work."

Article 328 states: "The compensation will be fair, with a living wage that covers at least the basic needs of the worker and those of his family." In relation to young people specifically, Article 39 says: "The State shall promote their assignment in fair and decent conditions, with emphasis on training, ensuring access to employment and promoting their entrepreneurial skills."

## SPECIFIC PROGRAMMES AND SERVICES TARGETING CARE LEAVERS

### STATE RESPONSES AT THE NATIONAL LEVEL

None identified. The opportunities for support with employment and housing are the same as for all other young people.

**Proposals in discussion:** The 2013 report by the Ministry of Economic and Social Inclusion identifies the lack of, and need to, develop a comprehensive programme which provides technical and methodological guidelines to better promote care leavers' autonomy and independence upon leaving care. It goes on to say that such a programme should include a high level of interagency coordination and cooperation agreements that facilitate accessibility, optimization and prioritization of State services including health care, housing and education.

### STATE RESPONSES AT THE LOCAL LEVEL

Data not found.

## NON-STATE RESPONSES

There are some ad hoc responses to care leavers provided by non-state actors, such as SOS Children's Villages Ecuador. However these are rare.

## CONCLUSIONS

This research found that there is almost a complete lack of information or statistical data on young people who have left care. The country researchers suggest this is due to a weak tracking and monitoring system resulting from the limited human resources and financial and technical personnel of the government institutions and departments concerned.

Generally, Ecuador is very focused on constitutional and fundamental rights that apply to all but, as several of the officials and stakeholders who were interviewed have recognized, this approach has meant that particularly vulnerable groups such as care leavers, who are in need of additional and more specific help, are overlooked. Some national government programmes are operating to address youth employment and decent work but these are generic for all young people. There is an urgent need for legislation and policies specifically aimed at care leavers, particularly supporting their educational attainment, training and access to decent work.

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30 UNICEF. 2016. State of the World's Children. Downloaded from: <https://www.unicef.org/sowc2016/>

31 Ministry of Economic and Social Inclusion. 2015. (% of total labor force) (modeled ILO estimate). <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SL.UEM.TOTL.ZS>

32 ILOSTAT database. 2016. Unemployment, total (% of total labor force) (modeled ILO estimate). <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SL.UEM.TOTL.ZS>

33 ILOSTAT database. 2016. Unemployment, youth total (% of total labor force ages 15-24) (modeled ILO estimate). <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SL.UEM.1524.ZS>

34 ILO - Key Indicators of the Labour Market database. 2010. Share of youth not in education, employment or training, total (% of youth population). <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SL.UEM.NEET.ZS?locations=EC>

35 Sometimes this is paid employment. However, child employment is against the law in Ecuador. In most cases where children work, it is in informal employment such as street sales.

## OMAR: A YOUNG MAN CHASING HIS DREAMS

Omar, 26, is a young man from the city of Portoviejo in the province of Manabí, Ecuador. From the age of 11, he grew up in an SOS Children's Villages' alternative care programme, where he stayed for six years, together with his sister Mayra Angela. The siblings came to the programme after the death of their parents, as they had no extended family that could take care of them.

Omar is currently studying his last semester of journalism at the Universidad Técnica Particular de Loja. For the last eight years, he has worked as a cameraman, sound engineer and camera director for the midday and primetime news, and for a sports programme on one of the largest television channels in Manabí, Manavisión. He considers his career is important, and loves his work and everything related to it because "journalism decisively influences the transcendent formation of a person and the society."

Omar recognises that the training and preparation for independent living provided by professionals working with children and young people in care at SOS Children's Villages were decisive for him to be able to take advantage of the opportunities he has had until now.

Still, he thinks that access to the labour market is challenging for young people. It is therefore necessary that more organisations and the State create opportunities for young people, as the problem of youth unemployment is very pressing in Ecuador. Addressing this issue, providing young people with access to decent work and eradicating poverty, is now among the main priorities of public policy.

Omar believes that the State can and should put in place a number of actions to reduce unemployment among young people who have not been able to grow up with the care of their families: "In addition to employment opportunities, the State should think of support measures for young people to start a business on their own, in terms of training and access to credit. Currently, young people face big challenges in accessing loans and finding guarantors."

Further, Omar urges organisations providing alternative care like SOS Children's Villages to continue to promote and protect the rights of young people so they can have better employment and educational opportunities, they can finish their university studies and, in this way, can develop better skills and compete effectively in the workplace.

Finally, Omar has a message for other young people who grew up in alternative care like him: "We should not conform, and we should be able to take advantage of the opportunities that we have, because if we do not do it and we believe that things will fall from the sky, we are wrong. It is important to be aware that what comes easily is also easily lost. We must strive to follow the right path, however hard it may be. We must not give up hope but instead unite to improve our opportunities."

## COUNTRY MAPPING REPORT

## Italy



## Total population

60,730,582 (2015)<sup>36</sup>

## Child population (ages 0-18)

9,870,000 (2015) (16.3% of the total population)<sup>37</sup>

## Population of children in alternative care

28,449 (living in foster homes and children's homes, 2012)<sup>38</sup>

## Numbers ageing out of care each year

3000<sup>39</sup>

## Total unemployment

11.7% (2016)<sup>40</sup>

## Youth unemployment (ages 15-24)

37.7% (2016)<sup>41</sup>

## Young people not in education, employment or training (NEET)

19.8% (2016)<sup>42</sup>

## Options for alternative care placements

Foster care (approximately 50% of children in care) and residential care (50%). NGOs and private sector associations, in partnership with social service departments in the municipalities, are usually involved in the placement of children and young people (in residential care homes) and in providing services to support children, biological families and foster care families.

## LEGISLATIVE AND POLICY FRAMEWORK

## STATE PROVISIONS FOR CHILDREN UP TO THE AGE OF 18

Article 30 of the Italian Constitution sets out that the State (national government and local/regional governments) is duty bound to provide care, protection and assistance to children and young people who can no longer live with their biological parents or extended family up to the age of 18. Since the year 2000, greater responsibility has been apportioned to municipalities and local government and it is the remit of local social services to care for and support these children and young people.

Key legislation includes: Law 184 (1983) which relates to adoption and fostering; Law 328 (2000) which established an integrated system of intervention and social services and brought together social care and health; and Law 173 (2015) which established children and young people's rights to care continuity in foster care.

The Juvenile Court has the power to intervene with measures to protect children and young people (under the age of 18) when they are deemed to be at risk. The Juvenile Court can require violent or neglectful parents to receive particular treatments, or to collaborate with social services. It can ask for a care order to be assigned to the Local Authority and for the child's removal from the family. It can also remove from parents their "parental responsibilities towards their children."

## STATE PROVISIONS FOR LEAVING CARE AND AFTER-CARE SUPPORT

There is no legal definition of leaving care. There are no national targets or standards set by the government in relation to care leavers and the government is not signed up to any international frameworks regarding care leavers.

The administrative sector of the Juvenile Court is responsible for young adults (from 18 to 21 years old) who do not achieve the necessary level of in-

dependence and autonomy<sup>43</sup> (e.g. before the age at which they are meant to leave care).

While there is no specific legislation that refers to young people leaving care, Articles 25-29 of the law that establishes the competencies and functioning of the Juvenile Court provide the possibility for the Court to act and provide care for young people until the age of 21 (in some specific circumstances).

**Proposals in discussion:** Proposals for two new pieces of legislation to support care leavers have been put forward to the Italian Parliament by the Care Leavers Network (Emilia Romagna Region, 2014) and members of the Association Agevolando, supported by the CNCA Network (Coordinamento Nazionale Comunità di Accoglienza) and other associations that work with children and young people in care such as SOS Children's Villages Italy, but these have not been adopted yet:

- ➔ Law proposal number 64 (2013) 'Measures to support young people leaving care';
- ➔ Law proposal number 2500 (2014) 'Measures to support young people in alternative care'.

These pieces of legislation would establish financial support for education and training, treatment plans and programmes to facilitate access to employment for care leavers.

They would also include some provisions to support care leavers' transition to independence within the recent labour market reform (Jobs Act) such as interest-free loans, scholarships, and health interventions such as psychotherapy.

## EDUCATION, TRAINING AND EMPLOYMENT SITUATION

Compulsory schooling ends at age 16. Young people may stay in upper secondary education up to the age of 19, at which point they can take an exam to graduate high school. This gives them the option to try and access university or to enter into employment as this exam meets the basic requirements for a large number of jobs in Italy.

## NUMBER OF YOUNG PEOPLE LEAVING CARE WITH QUALIFICATIONS

Data not found.

## MAIN ACTIVITY OF YOUNG PEOPLE LEAVING CARE

Data not found.

## PATHWAYS IN EDUCATION, TRAINING AND EMPLOYMENT

Surveys that include data on children and young people leaving care exist but do not differentiate between those ageing out of care and those leaving care for other reasons and therefore the data about destinations for those ageing out of care is not reliable. The disparate state of data is noted by the 9th Report on the Implementation of the CRC in Italy<sup>44</sup> and further notes that urgent action is required to develop and implement specific actions and policies to support care leavers in order to better support their future lives and individual care plans.

There is some evidence from young people leaving care that their educational experiences while in care were difficult and their completion and qualification rates were lower than their peers who had not been in care. For example, in a study<sup>45</sup> of 123 young people aged 20-31 in the Venice region who had been in residential care and foster care as children, only six percent successfully completed high school (typically, classical or scientific high school, that in Italy is called 'liceo'). The employment rate of those who studied was 79%, 10% of which were self-employed, 21% were in apprenticeships, 38% were in low skilled work, 18% were skilled workers, 7% had an executive type of employment and 16% were in professional employment (e.g. teaching).

A further study of care leavers aged 18-28, this time in Emilia Romagna region, similarly found low levels of completion of education and difficulties obtaining employment or decent work (Aibi, 2008<sup>46</sup>; Zanuso, 2011<sup>47</sup>). Of this group of 24, 33.3% had completed compulsory school and 37.5% of these had continued with a two-year vocational school

(e.g. computer technician, shop assistant, pastry chef, catering). Just seven (29.2%) completed high school and three (12.5% of the total) went to university. Employment was found through informal contacts rather than public employment centres. Informal contacts were mainly through cooperatives and associations providing residential services for children and young people that actively support young care leavers with specific projects.

All available evidence suggests that care leavers require longer transition periods and more intensive support than other young people in order to realise their educational and employment ambitions (ISFOL, 2014<sup>48</sup>; Premoli, 2009<sup>49</sup>). Key challenges faced by care leavers include<sup>50 51</sup>:

- ➔ school drop-out due to the end of care (residential or foster care) and difficulty in accessing tertiary education (university);
- ➔ young people often arrive in care at 16 years or older, and it is difficult for them to readapt to their new situation in a short period of time;
- ➔ interruption of care (at the age of 18) before the completion of the individual care plan (problem of financial resources);
- ➔ lack of a reference person, a 'tutor', to support young people during the care leaving process, for example in finding or keeping a job;
- ➔ difficulty in finding decent and affordable accommodation;
- ➔ lack of knowledge of home economics (household management) and lack of autonomous financial management competence. Little in the way of autonomous budget planning currently takes place and care leavers face a lack of money to pay for things such as rent deposit, means of transport, start-up for their own business;
- ➔ insufficient integration of services available in their region (orientation, work placement, housing, etc.);
- ➔ lack of guaranteed access to free health care (especially for the care leavers that came in Italy as unaccompanied minors) and psychological support.

## SPECIFIC PROGRAMMES AND SERVICES TARGETING CARE LEAVERS

### STATE RESPONSES AT THE NATIONAL LEVEL

None identified. The opportunities for support with employment and housing are the same as for all other young people. Currently, there is the 'Garanzia Giovani' (Youth Guarantee), a national programme with European funding that aims to guarantee jobs, training or work experience to young unemployed people.

### STATE RESPONSES AT THE LOCAL LEVEL

Some regional or local programmes for care leavers are in operation. In Sardinia, for example, the regional government, under Regional Law Number 4 (2006), gives young people aged 18 to 25 who were living in residential or foster care the opportunity to participate in a three-year-funded project specifically focused on the social inclusion of young people in transition to independence from care. Under this project, a care leaver, with the help of their educators and social workers, can present a three-year plan to be financed by the Sardinian regional government up to a maximum of 18,500 euros for the first year, 15,000 euros for the second and 15,000 euros for the third year. The three-year plan can cover a range of costs including rent for accommodation, university fees, training fees and other personal expenses such as the costs involved in getting a driving license. The plan can also cover the costs of a tutor (called a 'social intermediation' tutor) who will be a reference person and source of support for the young care leaver. This tutor will help the young care leaver in finding accommodation, a job or training and also monitors the implementation of the three-year individual plan. A director of a social cooperative in the Lombardy region of Italy, who was interviewed for this research, described a local programme which includes a focus on care leavers that offers training and employment to young people, building and developing links and networks with companies and foundations to create new jobs and training opportunities.

In the population of children and young people in care and leaving care is a subgroup, that of unaccompanied asylum seeking children, who face particular difficulties. On arrival, this group is legally protected as minors, but this expires at the age of 18, and their status changes to 'foreigner', which has more restrictive legislation. If they do not meet the requirements e.g. having employment and decent accommodation, they can be deported. There are no national programmes for this group to help them adjust to their new country, despite the serious trauma endured during their migration journeys.

## YOUTH SUPPORT MEASURES TO ACCESS DECENT WORK

There are acute socio-economic difficulties facing young people in Italy and wide inequalities in opportunities between young people in general and young care leavers:

*"This is a particularly difficult time for many people in our country, especially for young people. Our country is facing great suffering, young people now have fewer opportunities than their parents had in the past, and perhaps this is happening for the first time in the history of our country. Undoubtedly, it's hard to be a young person today. Many studies show that the long-term expected income of a young person is lower than their parents'. Therefore, the role of the family of origin is very important today from an economic point of view, but also in terms of opportunities and possibilities."*

Social statistician, interviewee

**Decent work:** The term 'decent work' is not referred to in policy papers or national programmes in Italy, but is a term that is recognized and used by the International Labour Organization (ILO), which works with the Ministry of Labour in Italy<sup>52</sup>.

## NON-STATE RESPONSES

Projects that support care leavers are funded and managed locally by private sector actors, in collaboration with sympathetic local authorities who are sensitive to the needs of care leavers. These care providing organizations, many of whom lack the support of institutional and local authorities, do their best to help care leavers, often without any economic contribution (Premoli, 2009). For example, residential care providers usually try to identify possible regional funding or national projects which can support young people who are leaving their care, such as the Youth Guarantee scheme.

In 2010, Agevolando was established as the first Italian association with a specific focus on supporting young people leaving care. It also collects useful information about their housing and employment. Agevolando runs flats for care leavers where they can live independently paying a subsidised rent (a monthly contribution of about 50 euros for expenses). The only condition to enter these flats is to have a job or an internship and the association works to help care leavers to find a job through establishing links and collaborations with companies who will offer opportunities for internships. The same association runs another project in the Emilia Romagna region that aims to support the inclusion and the employability of young care leavers, called 'Più in là ragazzi'. This project provides paid internships to 15 young people every year.

The project aims to help companies to be inclusive towards young people leaving care, to give support, with the help of a tutor, to these young people during their internship (skill assessments, training sessions with the group of trainees) and to draw up a 'pact of friendship' between the association and each company. In this pact, the company agrees to consider extending the period of internship or to employ the young person and Agevolando commits to support these young people with the help of a tutor.

In one SOS Children's Village in Italy, a social cooperative called 'Idea Nostra' was established to provide employment and work experience to young people who have been in its care to improve their employability and access to decent work. The cooperative operates a bakery, bar and shop and employs

young people as bakers and as well as in customer service roles.

In 2014, the Care Leavers' Network stated that 18 is too early to leave care and that it is vital that care leavers have the opportunity to finish school, find a job and accommodation, and that the help of educators is essential (Care Leavers Network, 2014)<sup>53</sup>. Educators could provide tutoring, continuity from their care placements, and someone who can help them in the practical aspects of everyday life, such as managing their finances, looking for work and getting a driving license.

## CONCLUSIONS

Italian legislation and data collection does not provide a national picture of the employment pathways of care leavers. At the regional and local level there are examples of projects to support this group, but these inevitably only reach a proportion of the care leaver population. There are inequalities of access to employment and decent work both between regions and between care leavers and those never in care.

Available research shows a need for better support, including:

- ➔ financial support: a minimum income that guarantees young people their economic independence and maybe the possibility to access university for those who want to keep studying;
- ➔ employment and accommodation to be identified before leaving care, to ensure young care leavers have a successful transition into autonomy. Internships are not enough for care leavers: they are no guarantee for a future job. Issues such as employability and access to decent work must enter strongly in alternative care paths/plans;
- ➔ the maintenance of some of the relationships built during the period of care (especially for those who do not have kinship networks);
- ➔ the creation of relationships and networks outside the care facility.

*"We are asking them to be adults before being so... you can't just assume that they will succeed. They need to be accompanied because most of them have no social or family networks outside the care facility."*

Social Statistician, interviewee

Much inspiration can be drawn from the local projects that exist. One interviewee stated:

*"Every Region should find a way to support young care leavers in the transition from care to adulthood as the Sardinia Region did with the introduction of a specific regional law that gives young care leavers the possibility to join a three year funded project that aims at social inclusion of young people in transition to autonomy."*

Director, Social cooperative supporting care leavers, interviewee

Care leavers need more support than their peers, this interviewee said, such as initiatives to encourage employers to give them work. One example would be providing tax relief measures for companies that employ care leavers and that this could be particularly focused on local businesses and entrepreneurs who are usually more sensitive to and engaged in local social projects.

Finally, there is a need to rethink the school system and how young people in care navigate it. If young people had the option to choose work-linked training opportunities instead of the traditional vocational school, this might better support their position and ambitions.

36 World Bank database. 2015. Population, total. <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.POP.TOTL?locations=IT&view=chart>

37 UNICEF. 2016. State of the World's Children. Downloaded from: <https://www.unicef.org/sowc2016/>

38 Moretti, E. and Gaballo, E. 2014. Affidamenti familiari e collocamenti in comunità al 31.12.2012. Rapporto finale, Quaderni della ricerca sociale n. 31. Istituto degli Innocenti di Firenze and Ministero del lavoro e delle politiche sociali. (National Government Report)

39 Joint NGOs report. 2015. L'Italia ha un patrimonio di giovani "fuori famiglia" da valorizzare. [https://www.senato.it/applicazione/xmanager/projects/leg17/attachments/documento\\_evento\\_procedura\\_commissione/files/000/002/843/AG\\_176-177-178-179\\_Memorie\\_Federazione\\_Isperanza.pdf](https://www.senato.it/applicazione/xmanager/projects/leg17/attachments/documento_evento_procedura_commissione/files/000/002/843/AG_176-177-178-179_Memorie_Federazione_Isperanza.pdf)

40 ILOSTAT database. 2016. Unemployment, total (% of total labor force) (modeled ILO estimate). <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SL.UEM.TOTL.ZS>

41 ILOSTAT database. 2016. Unemployment, youth total (% of total labor force ages 15-24) (modeled ILO estimate). <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SL.UEM.1524.ZS>

42 ILO - Key Indicators of the Labour Market database. 2015. Share of youth not in education, employment or training, total (% of youth population). <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SL.UEM.NEET.ZS?locations=IT>

43 As the young person approaches the age of 18, he/she must formally ask the Juvenile Court to keep providing for them if they still need support e.g. needing to finish high school education, lacking job prospects, etc. The Juvenile Court has to agree with the request. This means that the request, even though valid and legitimate, can be denied. The request must be submitted before the age the young person needs to leave care, for example when they turn 17 if they are due to leave care at 18.

44 Gruppo CRC. 2016. 9° Rapporto di aggiornamento sul monitoraggio della Convenzione sui diritti dell'infanzia e dell'adolescenza in Italia. <http://www.gruppoCRC.net/-pubblicazioni-del-gruppo-crc->

45 Belotti, V., Milani, P., Ius, M., Satta, C., Serbati, S. 2011. Crescere fuori famiglia. Lo sguardo degli accolti e le implicazioni per il sociale. Regione del Veneto.

46 Aibi. 2008. Report 2008. Child abandonment: an emergency. Franco Angeli, Milano.

47 Zanuso, R. 2011. I care leavers. Giovani a rischio di esclusione sociale, in: Mutamento Sociale, 33. <http://www.synergia-net.it/it/magazine/i-care-leavers-giovani-a-rischio-di-esclusione-sociale-mag220.html>

48 ISFOL. 2014. Disagio psichico, minori e recupero, in: I libri del Fondo Sociale Europeo, 200. <http://bw5.cilea.it/bw5ne2/opac.aspx?web=ISFL&opac=Default&ids=20168>

49 Premoli, S. 2009. Verso l'autonomia. Percorsi di sostegno all'integrazione sociale dei giovani, Franco Angeli, Milano.

50 Barbarotto, M. and Zanuso R. 2011. Giovani care leavers e inclusione sociale. Linee Guida. <http://www.synergia-net.it/our-books/linee-guida-di-inclusione-sociale-dei-giovani-care-leavers-pbs180-71.html>

51 Zullo, F. 2012. La reintegrazione nella comunità sociale dei bambini/ragazzi fuori famiglia, accolti nei contesti residenziali: consolidare i risultati del percorso di cura, in: Minorigiustizia, 1, 287-294.

52 ILO Roma website: <http://www.ilo.org/rome/ilo-cosa-fa/lavoro-dignitoso/lang--it/index.htm>; Italian Ministry of Labour website: [www.lavorodignitoso.org](http://www.lavorodignitoso.org)

53 Care Leavers Network. 2014. Le 10 Raccomandazioni del Care Leavers Network dell'Emilia Romagna. <http://www.agevolando.org/blog/2014/presentate-le-raccomandazioni-del-care-leavers-network-dellemiliana-romagna/>



## COUNTRY MAPPING REPORT

## Kosovo

## Total population

1,801,800 (2015)<sup>54</sup>

## Child population (ages 0-18)

506,305 (2014) (28.1% of the total population)<sup>55</sup>

## Population of children in alternative care

752<sup>56</sup> - 1285<sup>57</sup>

## Numbers ageing out of care each year

Data not found.

## Total unemployment

32.9% (2015)<sup>58</sup>

## Youth unemployment (less than 25 years old)

57.7% (2015)<sup>59</sup>

## Young people not in education, employment or training (NEET)

30.1% (2016)<sup>60</sup>

## Options for alternative care placements

Foster care (10%), residential care (12% children), and kinship care (78%)<sup>61</sup>.

## LEGISLATIVE AND POLICY FRAMEWORK

## STATE PROVISIONS FOR CHILDREN UP TO THE AGE OF 18

The Family Law of Kosovo – Law Nr. 2004/31 sets out the basic principles of comprehensive protection for families and their members, including guardianship and protection of children without parental care. The Law on Social and Family Services – Law Nr. 02 L-17 defines the area of providing family and social services and care for persons in need and regulates the provision of social and family services.

The Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare (MLSW) developed guidance for the placement of children in alternative care in 2002.

Centres for Social Work (CSW) are municipal-based local institutions providing social and family services and social assistance. CSW social workers act as the ‘legal guardian’ for all children who do not otherwise have a member of their extended family to carry out this role. Kosovo, unlike most of its neighbours in the region, does not have any large-scale care institutions. All the residential facilities currently in use are small-scale and relatively new.

Children in alternative care have both a legal guardian and a second social worker (case manager). Regulations require that a social worker cannot be both the legal guardian and the case manager for the same child. Guardianship can be undertaken by a member of the extended family in the case of kinship care.

## STATE PROVISIONS FOR LEAVING CARE AND AFTER-CARE SUPPORT

There is no specific legal framework that governs young people leaving care and there is no specific legal term used for ‘care-leavers’.

## EDUCATION, TRAINING AND EMPLOYMENT SITUATION

No information is available on the education of children in care.

## NUMBER OF YOUNG PEOPLE LEAVING CARE WITH QUALIFICATIONS

Data not found.

## MAIN ACTIVITY OF YOUNG PEOPLE LEAVING CARE

Data not found.

## PATHWAYS IN EDUCATION, TRAINING AND EMPLOYMENT

Young people leaving care face many of the same challenges as the wider youth population, only without the emotional and financial support of families. They also often face the disadvantage of not starting the schooling process at the appropriate age, and so they have to complete accelerated education programmes. Hence, their level of preparation for the labour market is generally lower than the rest of young people.

## YOUTH SUPPORT MEASURES TO ACCESS DECENT WORK

Unemployment is very high for young women (65.4%), less so but still high for young men (47.2%)<sup>62</sup>. Long-term unemployment and inactivity rates among young people are high. In 2016, 30.1% of young people were recorded to be not in education, employment or training (NEET)<sup>63</sup>. There are no specific statistics for care leavers.

The Kosovan economy is growing, but there are acute problems in generating employment. The education system is perceived as insufficient in delivering the training and skills needed within the market-

place with few employment opportunities for young people. Employment frequently has poor working conditions. Greater uptake and prominence of vocational education and training is needed to support young people to gain employment.

**Decent work:** Study interviewees understood 'decent work' to relate to fair pay, job security, equal opportunities, safety, and work in organizations which implement labour law. These conditions do not prevail: interviewees noted low salary levels, long working hours, poor job security, and no social or health security, all of which severely reduces the availability of decent work. Decent work can be found in public sector organizations, where the opportunities are rare, and in a small number of private companies. Two initiatives to promote decent work were identified:

➔ A two-year regional project (2011-2012) financially supported by the European Union (EU): 'Decent Work Balkan Network – putting equality and solidarity at the heart of EU integration'. The project gathered all relevant regional actors that are actively promoting economic and social rights, in order to strengthen oversight over the implementation of existing laws and advocate for the adoption of new ones, to encourage greater respect of economic and social rights.

➔ UN agencies in Kosovo are currently finalising their joint strategic support programme, amounting to US\$ 6 million for a period of 36 months. 'Kosovo: from Migration Options to Decent Work for Youth' identifies the promotion of employment opportunities in depressed areas and among vulnerable groups as one of the joint strategic outcomes.

## SPECIFIC PROGRAMMES AND SERVICES TARGETING CARE LEAVERS

### STATE RESPONSES AT THE NATIONAL LEVEL

Many interviewees were unaware of support from the national social protection system for young people seeking employment, or perceived that support came solely from NGOs or international organizations. Local and international NGOs are actively supporting impoverished families through family support measures. Such services undoubtedly contribute to reducing the numbers of children who might otherwise be drawn into alternative care. The on-going support from CSW care workers, targets encouragement on self-reliance and integration into the community, well timed and individualised leaving care planning, formal or vocational education, life skills training or other support. The CSWs were considered unequipped to conduct much proactive or preventive work instead.

### STATE RESPONSES AT THE LOCAL LEVEL

None identified.

### NON-STATE RESPONSES

One example of care leaving services is provided by SOS Children's Villages Kosovo. This is a structured system of moving from a youth house, to semi-independent living and finally to 'supported independence' covering the age range 18-25. During this time, SOS Children's Villages provides financial and personal assistance and helps the young people with education and employment. Another programme of follow-up assistance is also provided by Caritas to some care leavers who remain in the towns nearest to the residential home. Moreover, young people leaving care who are part of the Programme of the Peer Educators Network (PEN) get additional support for traveling or printing materials from the Department of Youth that is active in different municipalities in Kosovo.

## CONCLUSIONS

Kosovan legislation governing the development of children's rights and social services is of recent origin and is strongly informed by the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and the UN Guidelines for the Alternative Care of Children. However, the rights of care leavers constitute a major gap and weakness in the legislation as it is simply missing, and there is little focus on care leavers in the work of the Ministry or CSWs. Although the state may provide monthly allowances for children without parental care, or those incapable of providing the necessary living conditions for themselves, leaving care and after-care support is only provided by a few NGOs rather than coordinated by the State.

There are no procedures in place to assist children and young people in the transition period as they prepare to leave the alternative care system. Many enter care as babies and leave the system via national or international adoption. Care leaving is largely an issue for residential providers, since the foster care system is both new and accommodates few young people.

Data gathered on children in care is amalgamated and provides no information on needs or outcomes. For example, more information was needed to document the particular position of care leavers, such as their educational qualifications and employment outcomes. No data is collected on care leavers, so there is no accurate number of those exiting care at age of 18 or older each year, but it is thought the numbers are small.

Overall, the education, employment and training opportunities are few and not well matched to the labour market. Youth unemployment is very high and decent work is hard to find. A few examples of localized practice and support mechanisms to influence employment outcomes exist, principally the programmes of SOS Children's Villages Kosovo and the PEN programme, both identified as helping to support the independence of care leavers.

In order to support young people leaving care in gaining access to decent work, interviewees suggested that government, education institutions and the business sector should collaborate more closely to match training provision with the skills required by industry. Other specific examples included:

- ➔ Providing government incentives (including positive discrimination) for businesses to stimulate employment of young people leaving care;
- ➔ More legally enforceable provisions around decent work and/or the effective implementation of the labour law;
- ➔ Research should be conducted on: the exact number of young people leaving care, their level of education and further issues related to them.

54 World Bank database. 2015. Population, total. <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.POP.TOTL?locations=XK&view=chart>

55 Eurostat. 2014. Enlargement countries - Demographic statistics. <http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/en/web/products-catalogues/-/KS-04-15-589>

56 Kosovo Statistical Office. 2012. Census.

57 Coalition of NGOs for Child Protection (KOMF). 2013.

58 Eurostat. 2015. Unemployment rates. [http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/File:Unemployment\\_rates\\_\(persons\\_aged\\_15%E2%80%9374\)\\_2005%E2%80%932015\\_\(%25\\_of\\_labour\\_force\).png](http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/File:Unemployment_rates_(persons_aged_15%E2%80%9374)_2005%E2%80%932015_(%25_of_labour_force).png)

59 Eurostat. 2015. Employment and unemployment rates, 2005, 2010 and 2015. [http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/File:Employment\\_and\\_unemployment\\_rates\\_2005\\_2010\\_and\\_2015\\_\(%25\).png](http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/File:Employment_and_unemployment_rates_2005_2010_and_2015_(%25).png)

60 ILO - Key Indicators of the Labour Market database. 2015. Share of youth not in education, employment or training, total (% of youth population). <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SL.UEM.NEET.ZS?locations=XK>

61 Kosovo Statistical Office. 2012. Census.

62 Kosovo Agency of Statistics. 2017. Series 5: Social Statistics. Labour Force Survey 2016. <http://ask.rks-gov.net/media/3245/lfs-2016-anglisht.pdf>

63 Ibid.

## COUNTRY MAPPING REPORT

## Kyrgyzstan



## Total population

5,956,000 (2015)<sup>64</sup>

## Child population (ages 0-18)

2,170,000 (2015) (36.4% of the total population)<sup>65</sup>

## Population of children in alternative care

According to official national data from 2014, 21,000 children and young people aged 0-18 were in residential care<sup>66</sup>. Data from the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection in 2016 states that there were 8,265 children in residential care (0.4%)<sup>67</sup>.

## Numbers ageing out of care each year

It is estimated that around 400 young people between the ages of 14 and 18 transition out of care each year<sup>68</sup>.

## Total unemployment

7.7% (2016)<sup>69</sup>

## Youth unemployment (ages 15-24)

14.9% (2016)<sup>70</sup>

## Young people not in education, employment or training (NEET)

20.4% (2016)<sup>71</sup>

## Options for alternative care placements

Under the legislation of the Kyrgyz Republic, there are various forms of placement for children in care including adoption, guardianship, foster care, family-like care, boarding schools, orphanages, temporary centres for children in difficult life circumstances.

## LEGISLATIVE AND POLICY FRAMEWORK

children's homes, children in care are still usually placed in institutions.

## STATE PROVISIONS FOR CHILDREN UP TO THE AGE OF 18

The Constitution of the Kyrgyz Republic sets out the responsibility of the State for the well-being, upbringing and education of orphans and children without parental care (Article 36). Under this, the responsibility to provide support and services, including subsistence, education and training for children and young people who are unable to live with their biological parents, and to ensure the rights of these children, lies with the regional departments of the authorized agency for child protection, which is the Ministry of Labour and Social Development of the Kyrgyz Republic. NGOs and civil society organizations support the local government to develop services for children.

The child protection system is fragmented and different ministries and state agencies at both national and local levels have particular responsibilities to ensure the well-being of children, including children without parental care:

- ➔ The Ministry of Health: responsible for therapeutic services and for the care of children under four years of age;
- ➔ The Ministry of the Interior: responsible for children under age 18 who are in conflict with the law;
- ➔ The Ministry of Education and Science: responsible for children with disabilities and children without parental care (runs orphanages);
- ➔ The Ministry of Labour and Social Protection: responsible for children without parental care and children with disabilities, runs special facilities for children with disabilities.

The Children's Code which was adopted in 2006 (revised in 2012) determines the basic rights of orphans and children without parental care. This Code also sets out family-based care as a priority in terms of placement type. However, in practice, due to a shortage of foster care families and family type

## STATE PROVISIONS FOR LEAVING CARE AND AFTER-CARE SUPPORT

There is no clearly established, definitive definition of care leavers in Kyrgyzstan; this hampers efforts to gather comparable data about these young people. There are no government targets or standards currently in place with regards to care leavers and the government is not signed up to any international frameworks around young people leaving care.

Children in care become 'graduates' from care between the ages of 15-18 and according to the 'Law of the Kyrgyz Republic on Youth Policy' they are then defined as 'youth'. These 'graduates' have guaranteed access to social services, health care, and education (including basic vocational training), monthly social payments, and support for clothes and food, as well as accommodation in dormitories.

The Law on State Benefits of the Kyrgyz Republic (Article 10) states that a monthly social allowance is provided to young people in care until the age of 16, and to those who study at professional schools and students of secondary and higher educational institutions, until the age of graduation from these educational facilities up to a maximum age of 23 years.

The Housing Code of the Kyrgyz Republic stipulates a provision of social housing to young people who have left care and Article 13 of the Children's Code states that orphans who have no living space from the age of 16 have priority to get accommodation with the right of ownership. However, the shortage of social housing means that the current legislation around housing for young people who have left care is not feasible.

Once young people in care turn 18, the government no longer continues to provide the support and services they received while in care. However, young people with a disability are afforded state social protection for life.

**Proposals in discussion:** New legislation entitled 'A programme of social support to care leavers, orphans and children without parental care for 2015-

2018' has recently been sent for approval. The goal of this programme is to establish conditions to ensure successful social adaptation and support to young people leaving care for their living arrangements and integration into society. The programme has the following objectives:

- ➔ Improve the system of social, psychological and pedagogical support to children in care and young people leaving care;
- ➔ Improve social and life skills of children in care;
- ➔ Organize social services for the adaptation of young people leaving care;
- ➔ Develop interagency cooperation to tackle the problems of adaptation and integration of young people leaving care, support to get education, employment and to address their material and housing needs.

The Lead Specialist of the Family and Children Protection Department in the Ministry of Labour and Social Development stated that there is a need to improve the preparation of care leavers for employment and independent living and that this is part of the new draft regulation on the social support of care leavers.

## EDUCATION, TRAINING AND EMPLOYMENT SITUATION

The Law on Education ensures the right of children and young people to free professional education and preferential access for young people from care to higher education. Education in Kyrgyzstan is compulsory for nine years, between the ages of 7 and 15. Compulsory education consists of four years of primary schooling and five years of lower secondary schooling. Following this, young people leaving care then take a further two years of 'complete secondary' (ages 16-17), which leads to the award of the Certificate of Secondary Education giving access to higher education. Young people who enter the two years of complete secondary education must pass the General Republican Test to successfully graduate and enter university.

Professional (technical) schools offering training in over 210 different trades admit students that have at minimum the certificate of basic secondary education. The duration of these courses is three years for basic secondary school graduates and 18 months for students with complete secondary education.

### NUMBER OF YOUNG PEOPLE LEAVING CARE WITH QUALIFICATIONS

Data not found.

### MAIN ACTIVITY OF YOUNG PEOPLE LEAVING CARE

Data not found.

### PATHWAYS IN EDUCATION, TRAINING AND EMPLOYMENT

Many children's homes only provide children in care with basic secondary education, meaning that, on leaving care at the age of 15-16, the only route available to them is 'professional' education in vocational schools, rather than the higher education route. The types of professional courses offered at these vocational schools include chef, seamstress, painter, carpenter and builder.

Attending higher education is expensive and involves additional costs, such as accommodation, which is a further barrier to care leavers pursuing this route. A factor that pushes care leavers into a professional/vocational route after completion of basic secondary education is that these schools usually have a dormitory attached where they can live until they graduate. However, after completing these vocational courses, they often face difficulties finding employment because they lack life skills, such as where they can apply to find a job, how to search for work and how to manage their finances. There is no official information or statistical data on the kinds of work that care leavers can find.

## YOUTH SUPPORT MEASURES TO ACCESS DECENT WORK

There is a database of young people looking for employment held by the Ministry of Labour and Social Development. Young people can visit the Youth Labour Office and ask to be registered on the database so that when a vacancy arises they can be contacted to inform them of the position and suggest they apply. The Office also communicates with the heads of the vocational schools to pass on information about vacancies. In relation to care leavers, as most do not have accommodation, the Youth Labour Office will always try to find them work with housing provision.

**Decent work:** There is no official definition or recognition of the term 'decent work' in government legislation; however, in an interview with the Head of the Youth Labour Office, they defined decent work as "stable work with a good salary, where you can cover your necessary expenses."

## SPECIFIC PROGRAMMES AND SERVICES TARGETING CARE LEAVERS

### STATE RESPONSES AT THE NATIONAL LEVEL

In order to ensure the rights of the care leavers, the Labour Code of the Kyrgyz Republic stipulates the requirement to provide a quota for employment for young people leaving care. However, few organizations facilitate the employment of care leavers in practice. The programme of development of social protection of the population for 2015-2017<sup>72</sup> outlines requirements such as development of mechanisms of social support for care leavers, development and approval of special programmes of preparation for young people in care to transition to independent living, and an annual increase of the number of grants provided for entering higher education.

The promotion of decent work for care leavers is usually the responsibility of the heads of the vocational schools. When young people age out of care, the head should assist them in finding employment by using their connections in the business sector. However, the general trend is that, even where this does happen, care leavers will only be employed for a few months before leaving. Currently no one has responsibility for monitoring the situation of care leavers after they leave the vocational schools.

The Youth Labour Office organizes meetings specifically with young people in care in the children's homes, in order to explain their employment rights to them, including employment contracts; and to give advice such as how to communicate and conduct oneself in interviews. Additionally, together with SOS Children's Villages Kyrgyzstan, the Youth Labour Office publishes and distributes booklets for young people in children's homes on finding employment, and SOS Children's Villages has organized visits for young people from children's homes to the office to learn about their employment rights and opportunities.

The directors of two different funds working with children without parental care, 'Zashita prav detei sirot' and 'Sirotskaya dolya', whose remit includes supporting care leavers, in an interview for this study, stated that in Kyrgyzstan there is generally a negative view of care leavers, particularly amongst employers, so these young people often experience discrimination on the labour market and in society in general.

### STATE RESPONSES AT THE LOCAL LEVEL

Data not found.

### NON-STATE RESPONSES

A few public foundations and organizations exist that provide advice and practical support, and work with NGOs, raise awareness and lobby the government and employers to improve the situation of care leavers.

## CONCLUSIONS

Kyrgyzstan has a fragmented child protection system with responsibilities and remits split across different ministries and agencies which are further complicated by national and regional level jurisdictions.

There is conflicting statistical data on the number of children and young people in care depending on the source. There is a lack of data on the educational attainment of children and young people in and leaving care and on the main activity or pathways in education, training or employment of care leavers. This stems largely from the absence of a national integrated monitoring and evaluation system.

There is no official definition of 'care leaver' in Kyrgyzstan, though in practice support ceases by the age of 18. There are, however, some legislative provisions for care leavers, e.g. a monthly allowance for those in education up to the age of 23 and accommodation, but the implementation of this in practice is variable.

There are no government targets or standards currently in place with regards to care leavers. The government is going some way to try and address this, for example through new legislation such as a new programme of social support. If approved, this programme will give more focus on the particular needs of care leavers and provide greater support and assistance to them.

Most children in care and care leavers only receive basic secondary education, and so higher education routes are rarely open to them, besides being largely unaffordable. Care leavers tend to take a vocational route after basic secondary education, which generally leads them to low-paid and unstable employment.

Registration is a key issue for care leavers. Registration requires a permanent address, which care leavers often do not have after leaving children's homes or vocational schools. Without registration it is hard to find employment, particularly in the main cities. Some initiatives (some government-led, but largely NGO-led) are in place to address care leavers' knowledge of employment rights, and to challenge the negative perception that employers have of care leavers through the funding of a small number of job placements for care leavers.

There is a need for more comprehensive, extended support for care leavers beyond 18, a strengthening of the preparation of young people for leaving care and greater educational and practical support to give care leavers opportunities to take a higher education route or to gain high level professional or technical qualifications, and then to secure decent work.

64 World Bank database. 2015. Population, total. <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.POP.TOTL?locations=KG&view=chart>

65 UNICEF. 2016. State of the World's Children. Downloaded from: <https://www.unicef.org/sowc2016/>

66 National Statistical Committee of the Kyrgyz Republic, Population, Monee Info. <http://www.stat.kg/ru/statistics/naselenie/> and <http://stat.kg/ru/monee-info/>

67 It should be noted that these figures include special boarding schools for talented children, lyceums with boarding and paid education and specialized boarding schools (e.g. Art boarding school) which may explain the high numbers of children recorded in residential care.

68 Ministry of Labour and Social Protection. 2016. [http://www.vb.kg/doc/340684\\_nikitenko:\\_net\\_sistemy\\_podgotovki\\_dlia\\_adaptacii\\_vypysnikov\\_internatov.html](http://www.vb.kg/doc/340684_nikitenko:_net_sistemy_podgotovki_dlia_adaptacii_vypysnikov_internatov.html)

69 ILOSTAT database. 2016. Unemployment, total (% of total labor force) (modeled ILO estimate). <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SL.UEM.TOTL.ZS>

70 ILOSTAT database. 2016. Unemployment, youth total (% of total labor force ages 15-24) (modeled ILO estimate). <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SL.UEM.1524.ZS>

71 ILO - Key Indicators of the Labour Market database. 2014. Share of youth not in education, employment or training, total (% of youth population). <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SL.UEM.NEET.ZS?end=2016&locations=KG&start=1998>

72 Ministry of Justice of the Kyrgyz Republic. 2015. Programme for the Development of Social Protection of the Population of the Kyrgyz Republic for 2015-2017. <http://cbd.minjust.gov.kg/act/view/ru-ru/97348>

## COUNTRY MAPPING REPORT

## Mexico

## Total population

127,017,224 (2015)<sup>73</sup>

## Child population (ages 0-18)

42,245,000 (2015) (33.3% of the total population)<sup>74</sup>

## Population of children in alternative care

The 2010 census showed that there were 1.6 million children under 18 living without a parent in Mexico<sup>75</sup>. According to official data, in 2015 there were 25,667 children under 18 living in 879 public or private institutions<sup>76</sup>, shelters or social welfare centres<sup>77</sup>. Other data has calculated that there are around 412,456 children and young people living in Mexico without parental care, including those who live in residential care settings like social welfare centres<sup>78</sup>. In 2015, young people aged 15-29 living in social welfare centres were 4,881 (2,026 male and 2,849 female)<sup>79</sup>. The large majority of them was under 19 (4,244 young people), whereas young people aged 20-24 were 500, and those aged 25-29 were 131<sup>80</sup>.

## Numbers ageing out of care each year

Data not found.

## Total unemployment

3.9% (2016)<sup>81</sup>

## Youth unemployment (ages 15-24)

7.6% (2016)<sup>82</sup>

## Young people not in education, employment or training (NEET)

19.6% (2015)<sup>83</sup>

## Options for alternative care placements

There are various types of care placement in Mexico:

- ➔ Casa cuna: Foster home for babies and young children aged 0 to 6 years or up to 8 years in certain cases.
- ➔ Casa hogar: Foster home for children aged 6 to 18 years. These can be mixed homes or single gender homes. In special cases young people may stay up to the age of 20.
- ➔ Temporary shelters: providing temporary accommodation for children aged 0-12 years who are victims of crime or who are in a situation of conflict, danger or harm.
- ➔ Familia de acogida or foster family: Certified by the local authority under the General Law, foster families provide care, protection, positive upbringing and the promotion of the social welfare of children and adolescents for a limited time until a permanent option can be found either with extended family or through adoption.

## LEGISLATIVE AND POLICY FRAMEWORK

## STATE PROVISIONS FOR CHILDREN UP TO THE AGE OF 18

There is a vast array of international, regional and national laws, codes, rules and regulations operating in Mexico that relate to the protection and support of children and young people in care. The three levels of government that form the State are obligated to establish programmes to serve and care for children and young people in care (under 18). This obligation is defined by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and was established in article 4 of the Political Constitution of the United Mexican States in the 1990s, and with the publication of the General Act for the Rights of Girls, Boys and Adolescents in 2014.

Currently, the National System for the Integral Protection of Girls, Boys, and Adolescents (SIPINNA), is responsible for the protection and rights of those in care in coordination with each federal, state or municipal authority (there are 32 states and 2461 municipalities in Mexico). SIPINNA regulates the National System for Integral Development of the Family (DIF), which is the department responsible for the special protection of children and adolescents. This includes children and young people in care. The coordination of this protection remains concentrated in the single institution of DIF. DIF has the power to request support and cooperation from other agencies and organizations which are authorized, but not legally required, to respond to those requests when their services are needed. This is something that has been identified as an area where additional legislation and regulation is needed, to legally require other organizations to respond to DIF requests for cooperation and assistance in providing special protection and support for those in care.

According to the general Law on the Rights of Children and Adolescents (LGDNNA), every social welfare centre is responsible for guaranteeing the physical and psychological well-being of the children and young people in their care. Children and young people in care are guaranteed education, housing, food, health services and legal support

provided through public and private Social Welfare Centres. These centres are required to hold and maintain a complete file on each child so that their situation and progress can be reviewed. They are also responsible for preparing young people for leaving care and for working with other services and organizations to facilitate young people's transition from care.

## STATE PROVISIONS FOR LEAVING CARE AND AFTER-CARE SUPPORT

Once young people in care reach 18, they are deemed to be adults and consequently lose their right to receive social protection. However, the process of leaving care can occur any time from the age of 14. Young people in care usually have to leave their placement at the age of 18 and assume new responsibilities, such as finding employment or continuing their education and securing accommodation, all without the economic or emotional support of a family<sup>84</sup>.

**Proposals in discussion:** The General Law for the Rights of Children and Adolescents (LGNNA) published in 2014, specified in article 125 that the Mexican State has the obligation to design a national information system, and it is now in the process of creating and consolidating databases and local State level censuses so that the number of children and adolescents in care in each region can be known.

According to the General Director of Authorization, Registration, Certification and Supervision of Social Welfare Centres from the Protection Agency for Girls, Boys and Adolescents, mechanisms to record the number of young people leaving care are in the process of being established. This information could be obtained at a State level in some geographical areas where there is a local census of data on those leaving care.

## EDUCATION, TRAINING AND EMPLOYMENT SITUATION

With regards to the educational qualifications of young people in general, data from the National Survey on Demographic Dynamics (ENADID)<sup>85</sup> in 2014 shows that 33.8% of young people aged 15-29 have secondary education qualifications and 19.9% have higher education qualifications. 1.2% of those aged 15-29 have no education or only pre-school education and 3% have incomplete elementary level education. The provision and uptake of secondary education is an ongoing challenge for the national educational system despite it being mandatory. In 2015, approximately 34% of the economically inactive population (PNEA) did not have secondary education, which is equivalent to approximately 12 million people aged 15 and over. Even in the economically active population (PEA), only 35% have completed basic education, which is equivalent to 18.5 million individuals<sup>86</sup>.

### NUMBER OF YOUNG PEOPLE LEAVING CARE WITH QUALIFICATIONS

Data not found.

### MAIN ACTIVITY OF YOUNG PEOPLE LEAVING CARE

Data not found.

### PATHWAYS IN EDUCATION, TRAINING AND EMPLOYMENT

There is no information available on post-care pathways. Some information on the types of employment that young care leavers can access was identified in a doctoral thesis by Romero (2015)<sup>87</sup>. This study was focused on one particular region of Mexico, and found that the types of work available to young people from care were mainly in the service sector (e.g. cleaning and working in restaurants and shops).

## YOUTH SUPPORT MEASURES TO ACCESS DECENT WORK

Major issues for young people in general in Mexico include the lack of work experience, 18.2% of unemployed young people aged 20-24 have no work experience<sup>88</sup>, and the high level of informal employment which is estimated at 61% of young people aged 15-19 years<sup>89</sup>. Informal employment is defined by the National Institute of Statistics and Geography (INEGI) as companies and workers that are part of the non-structured sector of the economy which does not comply with legal regulations in Mexico (e.g. no social protection or labour rights).

Another significant issue is underemployment. 7.1% of the working population aged 15 to 29 reports being underemployed, which means that they need, and are available, to work more hours than their current employment allows. There is also concern over the growing number of youth who do not study or work. Data relating to this same PNEA group shows that there are approximately 5.8 million young people who do not study or work. Young people experience a vicious circle whereby they cannot obtain employment because they have no work experience, but cannot get work experience because they cannot secure employment.

There are support programmes and initiatives for university students to secure 'dignified or decent' work but not for young people finishing secondary school or middle-higher level. There is also a dearth of programmes or initiatives to help those who have undertaken technical courses to secure decent work. Additionally there is a lack of integrated working between schools and other centres of education and the employment sector.

To try and address these problems, YouthBuild International, which is operating in Mexico, is establishing youth employability programmes such as professional work internships (technical level) with companies like Nestlé and Manpower for young people who do not have a college degree. These programmes are running in four cities. As part of the programme young people also receive support for reading, writing and mathematical thinking, as well as skills for life and job skills such as digital literacy.

**Decent work:** In Mexico there is recognition of the term 'dignified' work in legislation. Article 123 of the Political Constitution of Mexico states that every individual has the right to dignified and socially useful work and that there should be a focus on the promotion of job creation and the social organization of labour in accordance with the law. This Constitution also sets out conditions of dignified work including regulations governing the length of the working day and night-time employment for those over 18 years and for young people under 18.

person to rent accommodation independently and maintains a degree of supervision over them. DIF in Morelos has an agreement with the National Employment System to provide training courses in pastry to female care leavers; at the end of the training the participant receives a payment for completing the course. With this payment, care leavers can purchase material to continue making food to sell. The profits are reinvested in to the project and distributed among the participants for their savings.

### NON-STATE RESPONSES

Other local initiatives for care leavers include one established by Instituto Poblano de Readaptación AC, an NGO operating in the city of Puebla. They run an integration programme for care leavers that aims to support young people to build a life project, assisting them with securing a residence, study and employment. There are other local programmes being established by Centres for Social Welfare and other organizations in civil society but not in a national or systemic way. These include supporting young people into business enterprises, obtaining educational scholarships, counselling and temporary therapy.

## SPECIFIC PROGRAMMES AND SERVICES TARGETING CARE LEAVERS

### STATE RESPONSES AT THE NATIONAL LEVEL

In 2015, DIF developed a Model of Residence for the Development and Training of Youth that focused on care leavers. The model started in Mexico City with the aim of rolling out implementation to the other states of the Mexican Republic. The focus of this model is to facilitate the transition of care leavers aged 18 to 24 into an autonomous and independent life. It is hoped that this model will help these young people to obtain the necessary training, skills and knowledge to integrate into society, develop themselves cognitively and emotionally, and transition to independence.

The opportunities for support with employment and housing are the same as for all other young people.

### STATE RESPONSES AT THE LOCAL LEVEL

There is wide regional variation in availability of support for care leavers. Where it does exist, it is small scale. In 2014, a workshop was organized by the National DIF, where regional government representatives discussed the local strategies and projects that were being newly implemented. DIF in the Sinaloa region grants financial and/or in-kind support to young people during the first six months after leaving care. This support allows the young

## CONCLUSIONS

Mexico has legislation for the care and protection of children and young people in care and a specific government department with oversight and responsibility (DIF). Children and young people in care are guaranteed education, housing, food, health services and legal support provided through public and private Social Welfare Centres who are also responsible for preparing young people for leaving care.

There is a lack of reliable, accurate and up-to-date government statistics on the number of children in care and virtually no information on care leavers, but this is being addressed through recent legislation that obliges the State to design a national information system and it is in the process of creating and consolidating local databases.

Educational participation above basic elementary level is low in Mexico for the general population and this is likely to be even more acute for care leavers, though data on their educational qualifications and pathways after leaving care was not available.

Unemployment and underemployment amongst young people are major issues as is lack of work experience, which is a key barrier for young people to find employment. As a result, young people are hugely overrepresented in the informal job market which is poorly paid, insecure and outside the jurisdiction of labour laws.

There is a lack of policy specifically addressing the employment of care leavers. However, there are some developments, such as the 2015 DIF Model of Residence discussed above. Greater powers need to be accorded to DIF through legislation, so that it is a legal requirement for other agencies and organizations to respond to and provide support and services as required by DIF for children and young people in and leaving care. This could facilitate better integrated working between placement institutions and the education and business sectors, to ensure better provisions for young people in care and better preparation for them in the run up to leaving care.

There are programmes and initiatives currently in place to help university graduates find decent work but nothing similar is in place for young people finishing secondary school, or middle-higher level or for those who have undertaken technical courses, to secure decent work.

There is currently great variation between the regions in terms of the support and provision accorded to young people leaving care. A statutory system providing more systematic and consistent support to care leavers is needed along with programmes that provide work experience opportunities. There are examples of good local practice and provisions that could inform statutory provision at the national level.

- 73 World Bank database. 2015. Population, total. <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.POP.TOTL?locations=MX&view=chart>
- 74 UNICEF. 2016. State of the World's Children. Downloaded from: <https://www.unicef.org/sowc2016/>
- 75 INEGI. 2010. Censo de población y vivienda. <http://www.inegi.org.mx/est/contenidos/proyectos/ccpv/cpv2010/>
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- 77 According to the General Law on children's rights, social welfare centres are establishments, places or spaces for alternative care of children and adolescents outside of their family care provided by public or private institutions, shelters or associations. [http://www.diputados.gob.mx/LeyesBiblio/pdf/LGDNNA\\_041214.pdf](http://www.diputados.gob.mx/LeyesBiblio/pdf/LGDNNA_041214.pdf)
- 78 Aldeas Infantiles SOS México. 2009. Estatus de la infancia en México. <https://www.aldeasinfantiles.org.mx/getmedia/65e928cf-de01-4f02-a5ea-82426b01880e/Status-de-la-infancia-en-Mexico.pdf?ext=.pdf>
- 79 INEGI. 2015. Censo de alojamiento de asistencia social. <http://www.beta.inegi.org.mx/proyectos/encotras/caas/2015/default.html>
- 80 Ibidem.
- 81 ILOSTAT database. 2016. Unemployment, total (% of total labor force) (modeled ILO estimate). <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SL.UEM.TOTL.ZS>
- 82 ILOSTAT database. 2016. Unemployment, youth total (% of total labor force ages 15-24) (modeled ILO estimate). <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SL.UEM.1524.ZS>
- 83 ILO - Key Indicators of the Labour Market database. Share of youth not in education, employment or training, total (% of youth population). <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SL.UEM.NEET.ZS?locations=MX>
- 84 According to Article 53 of the public shelters run by the National DIF, the responsibility with the institutionalized young people ends when they turn 18 years old. [http://sitios.dif.gob.mx/normateca/wp-content/Archivos/Normateca/Reglamentos/ReglamentoInternoCNMAIC\\_Oct2015.pdf](http://sitios.dif.gob.mx/normateca/wp-content/Archivos/Normateca/Reglamentos/ReglamentoInternoCNMAIC_Oct2015.pdf)
- 85 INEGI. 2014. Encuesta Nacional de la Dinámica Demográfica. <http://www.inegi.org.mx/saladeprensa/aproposito/2015/juventud0.pdf>
- 86 INEGI. 2015. Encuesta Nacional de Ocupación y Empleo. <http://www.beta.inegi.org.mx/proyectos/enchogares/regulares/enoe/>
- 87 Romero, A. 2015. Childhoods and institutionalized teens: route and destination of young in nursery shelter home. Autonomous University of Nuevo León. Mexico. (Doctoral thesis).
- 88 Negrete Prieto, R. y Leyva Parra, G. Enero-Abril 2013. Los NiNis en México: Una aproximación crítica a su medición. Realidad, Datos y Espacio, Revista Internacional de Estadística y Geografía, Vol. 4, (p.97). INEGI
- 89 Negrete, R. Leyva, G. 2013. The NiNis in Mexico: A critical approach to his measurement. Reality, Data and Space. International Journal of Statistics and Geography, Vol. 4 (p.97). INEGI



## COUNTRY MAPPING REPORT

## Nicaragua

## Options for alternative care placements

When children and adolescents cannot live with their biological family, priority is given to the search for a permanent home in a family setting. The favoured option, wherever possible, is to grant custody to other family members (kinship care) such as the grandparents, brothers, sisters, aunts or other members of extended family. Where this is not possible, children and young people are admitted to a foster home selected and supervised by the Ministry of Family, Adolescence and Childhood (MIFAN, Ministerio de la Familia, Adolescencia y Niñez) with the ultimate aim of adoption. MIFAN also has a responsibility to monitor the development and progress of these children to ensure their rights as ratified by the country under the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC).

Shelters or protection centres including residential homes are viewed as a last resort and as places where children and young people should stay for as short a time as possible in order to avoid institutionalization. Most of these centres or residences are located in the capital city Managua and are private. Some of the private care centres receive a grant from the central government and so are governed by guidelines established by MIFAN. While most protection centres and alternative care facilities are governed and regulated by MIFAN, they have autonomy (conferred by Article 350 of the Family Code) in managing the guardianship of the children and young people in their care.

## Total population

6,082,032 (2015)<sup>90</sup>

## Child population (ages 0-18)

2,189,010 (2015) (36.0% of the total population)<sup>91</sup>

## Population of children in alternative care

According to official data there are 1,290 children and adolescents living in care centres or under special protection in Nicaragua<sup>92</sup>.

## Numbers ageing out of care each year

Data not found.

## Total unemployment

6.1% (2016)<sup>93</sup>

## Youth unemployment (ages 15-24)

10.0% (2016)<sup>94</sup>

## Young people not in education, employment or training (NEET)

1.4% (2014)<sup>95</sup>

## LEGISLATIVE AND POLICY FRAMEWORK

## STATE PROVISIONS FOR CHILDREN UP TO THE AGE OF 18

Article 76 of the Nicaraguan constitution states: “The government will create programmes and develop special centres to protect minors; they are entitled to preventive measures, protection and education that their condition requires, by their family, society and State.”

The main piece of legislation for children and young people in care is the ‘Code of Children and Adolescents’, which states that special protection measures are applicable to all those under 18 who require it and should be provided by the administrative authority, which in Nicaragua is MIFAN. MIFAN is the governing body of the National System of Social Welfare with national, departmental and regional offices and it is responsible for children and young people in care. Its role includes coordinating with various national bodies to ensure comprehensive care and the realisation of the rights of children and adolescents living under conditions of risk.

## STATE PROVISIONS FOR LEAVING CARE AND AFTER-CARE SUPPORT

According to the Code of Children and Adolescents and the Family Code, young people who have been in care lose their right to special protection after the age of 18 and there are no government policies, targets or standards specifically for young people leaving care after this age. The exception to this is when young people have a disability and no family support, under which circumstances there is no age limit to support and protection. Those with disabilities continue to live in care homes or go to specialized centres, such as the Pajarito Azul Centre. However, provision is limited with only approximately five such centres in Nicaragua.

As Nicaraguan citizens, care leavers have access to the general programmes that exist in the National Technological Institute (INATEC, Instituto Nacional de Tecnología) or the Public Service Employment of the Ministry of Labour, which are available

to all young people. It is largely dependent upon carers or residential centres that have been supporting these young people to guide them into accessing these generic programmes should they so wish.

## EDUCATION, TRAINING AND EMPLOYMENT SITUATION

Children enter primary school at age 6 and attend for 6 years before moving to lower secondary at age 12 for a period of 3 years. Upper-secondary commences at age 15 and lasts for 2 years. According to data from the World Bank, 18% of children of primary age are out of school and 43% of secondary age children do not attend school<sup>96</sup>.

## NUMBER OF YOUNG PEOPLE LEAVING CARE WITH QUALIFICATIONS

Data not found.

## MAIN ACTIVITY OF YOUNG PEOPLE LEAVING CARE

Data not found.

## PATHWAYS IN EDUCATION, TRAINING AND EMPLOYMENT

There is currently no government information available on the pathways of care leavers in education, training and employment in Nicaragua. However, a recent research study conducted with 82 young people in SOS Children’s Villages in Nicaragua provides some information on the pathways of care leavers<sup>97</sup>. The research found that most had taken or were in the process of taking one or more training courses. These courses tended to be in the areas of handicraft, art, music, English, jewellery, beauty, merchandise, computing, bakery, cake decorating, cell phone repair or cashier.

The research also found that access to decent work for young care leavers is limited with the majority

entering into unstable, low-paid work in the informal sector. These often are small businesses, largely in the trade and service sector, which are usually not legalized and do not offer social security. Workers in this sector are 'self-employed' and do not have access to the protection provided by the labour legislation. Most of the young people that had transitioned out of care into independent living had experienced negative employment trajectories characterized by jobs that were far below what is considered as decent work by the National Plan of Human Development 2012-2016.

Some of the major challenges for young people in general, in relation to employment are: the need to increase competencies for work and professional vocational training and work experience, the development of soft skills, such as communication, teamwork, interpersonal skills, and the ability to defend their labour rights. These issues are even more acute for young care leavers, who often have low self-esteem and unresolved emotional problems which are barriers to employment and make them vulnerable to exploitation.

As stated previously, there is no special protection or legislation for care leavers in Nicaragua; as such they are expected to pursue the same pathways as all other young people according to their qualifications, training and interests. Young people leaving care often do not have a job or any significant work experience, and many have not finished compulsory education. As highlighted in the research study cited above, a lack of preparation for work puts care leavers at a disadvantage with many ending up in the service sector which is generally characterized by lower wages.

Care leavers face the same employment difficulties as almost all young Nicaraguans, with the aggravating circumstances of a lack of family support and growing up in protection centres which removes them from the dynamics of 'normal' life. One care leaver interviewed stated:

*"We know we are not going to live here [alternative care setting] forever, but we need to learn how to face life."*

Care leaver, interviewee

## YOUTH SUPPORT MEASURES TO ACCESS DECENT WORK

There is no information on the situation of young people after leaving care, but some data is available on the general situation of young people's employment from the Household Survey. This shows that in 2009, 53.6% (965,000) of those aged 15 to 30 were in employment in the production of goods or services, and 46.4% (835,000) not in employment. Amongst the 'economically inactive but available to work' population in Nicaragua, young people are the most prevalent group. Further data from the Household Survey (2009) reveals that nearly 439,000 young people neither work nor study (24.5%). This group of young people is of particular concern as they are not increasing their educational capital or accumulating practical experience needed to succeed in the labour market. The majority of young people in this group are aged 20 to 24, and about three quarters are women.

According to the 2011 Labour Market and Youth study<sup>98</sup>, most young people in Nicaragua are self-employed or an unpaid family worker (62.2%). This is a concern because they tend to have no social protection and cannot access the different social programmes that protect workers. 16.2% of the young working population performs unpaid work to support their parents or guardians; alongside this they may or may not be attending school.

The Technological Institute has established programmes aimed at 'young people at risk', but there is very little support to help them access the labour market and there are no government programmes, initiatives or mechanisms of support specifically aimed at care leavers, in order to help them to find decent employment.

**Decent work:** 'Decent' or 'dignified' work is a recognised term in Nicaragua and appears in national legislation and in the National Human Development Plan of Nicaragua, which states: "The government will continue building the concept of Dignified Work. Although this is a political concept, it is a practical expression in the development of the labour incidence dimension, consistent with the provisions of the Constitution of the country, where Ar-

ticle 57 states 'Nicaraguans have the right to work according to their human nature'."

Despite this recognition of dignified work in legislation, there is non-compliance with labour rights particularly for young people. According to the results of the 2011 Labour Market and Youth study: "It has been observed that the lack of decent employment for youths is a problem faced by Latin American countries, the Caribbean and the rest of the world, which reveals characteristics similar to those that are perceived in Nicaragua, such as systematic increase of young people without employment, labour concentration in sectors of low productivity, low competitive technical vocational training or negative towards future employment and personal fulfilment (low self-esteem) attitude, lack of stimuli in the workplace around them."

The Government of Reconciliation and National Unity of Nicaragua (GRUN) developed a National Plan for Decent Work and discussions have been initiated in all sectors (social, economic and political) including municipal authorities, unions, employers' organizations, social and community organizations and other government institutions. The Ministry of Family Economy, in conjunction with the Ministry of Family, Adolescence and Children, are working to promote youth entrepreneurship for young people in general, but this is a recent and underdeveloped initiative.

## SPECIFIC PROGRAMMES AND SERVICES TARGETING CARE LEAVERS

### STATE RESPONSES AT THE NATIONAL LEVEL

None identified. The opportunities for support with employment and housing are the same as for all other young people.

### STATE RESPONSES AT THE LOCAL LEVEL

If protection centres for children and young people in care have the relevant coordination, they can apply for scholarships for their young people before they officially leave care, so that they can continue in training for a technical career or college to have a trade to assist with their autonomy and transition to independence.

According to a study conducted by UNDP and PRO-Nicaragua on Technical Education (2013)<sup>99</sup>, the National Technological Institute (INATEC) has a network of 43 training centres and 396 private schools with 16 areas of study specialties. In 2013, 24,816 students were registered in public and private technical studies centres, 52% were women and 48% men. There is no data on the percentage who were care leavers. Public and private universities award a number of scholarships which young people in and leaving care can apply for.

### NON-STATE RESPONSES

SOS Children's Villages in Nicaragua has recognized the need to strengthen the vocational orientation of young people and the support they provide in helping care leavers to access decent employment. Strategic actions are being promoted through the use of networks. There was an alliance with GIZ (Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit) to provide opportunities for entrepreneurship and employability. SOS Children's Villages Nicaragua was part of the management team for this along with other organizations at the Central American level. SOS Children's Villages Nicaragua was also working in partnership with the Young Nica Association which works to promote entrepreneurship and emotional development through sports, arts, culture and education.

## CONCLUSIONS

There is a lack of data on the number of care leavers, on the education of children and young people in care and on the pathways of care leavers in education, training and employment. There is a need for more State support and protection for care leavers over 18 years of age as there are no specific policies or laws that address their particular needs and circumstances.

Despite the country's efforts, Nicaragua still faces a significant problem of low levels of compulsory educational participation, especially amongst children and young people living in rural areas, as well as youth unemployment and a predominance of employment in low skilled, poorly paid jobs or in unprotected self-employment. The government developed a National Plan for Decent Work to address these issues, but there is a lack of available funding for the promotion of decent work and entrepreneurship and for strengthening existing local programmes.

With specific reference to care leavers, the processes in place to prepare them for work and to enhance their employability need addressing. The existing approach of institutions encouraging care leavers to take low-level short courses does not help them to secure stable decent work. On the contrary, these institutions invest significant amounts of money into such courses without seeing positive results. Support for care leavers should incorporate the development of soft skills and the strengthening of individual development plans that allow them to recognize their talents and interests, which route them into quality training. This will help to ameliorate the problem of care leavers jumping from one low-level course to another, which does not enhance their employability.

In general, there is a need to establish permanent collaborations and interrelationships between the organizations and institutions looking after children and young people in care and government departments, public and private sectors, in order to strengthen legislation and opportunities for care leavers in employment, to bring 'supply and demand' closer and to better guarantee dignified employment that will open up new employment trajectories for care leavers.

- 90 World Bank database. 2015. Population, total. <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.POP.TOTL?locations=NI&view=chart>
- 91 UNICEF. 2016. State of the World's Children. Downloaded from: <https://www.unicef.org/sowc2016/>
- 92 Ministry of Family, Adolescence and Children. [http://www.hacienda.gob.ni/hacienda/ppresupuesto2016/F\\_7\\_17\\_MGMP\\_MIFAMILIA.pdf](http://www.hacienda.gob.ni/hacienda/ppresupuesto2016/F_7_17_MGMP_MIFAMILIA.pdf)
- 93 ILOSTAT database. 2016. Unemployment, total (% of total labor force) (modeled ILO estimate). <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SL.UEM.TOTL.ZS>
- 94 ILOSTAT database. 2016. Unemployment, youth total (% of total labor force ages 15-24) (modeled ILO estimate). <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SL.UEM.1524.ZS>
- 95 ILO - Key Indicators of the Labour Market database. Share of youth not in education, employment or training, total (% of youth population). <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SL.UEM.NEET.ZS?locations=NI>
- 96 Education Policy and Data Centre. 2014. National Education Profile 2014 Update: Nicaragua. [http://www.epdc.org/sites/default/files/documents/EPDC%20NEP\\_Nicaragua.pdf](http://www.epdc.org/sites/default/files/documents/EPDC%20NEP_Nicaragua.pdf)
- 97 Gallardo, B. R. G. & Solis, I. I. 2016. Study of Employment and Decent Work for Young People who had concluded or will conclude Residential Care at Aldeas Infantiles SOS Nicaragua. First Progress Report.
- 98 Osorio D. G. 2011. Mercado del Trabajo y Juventud. [http://www.mdgfund.org/sites/default/files/YEM\\_ESTUDIO\\_Nica\\_Mercado%20de%20Trabajo%20y%20Juventud.pdf](http://www.mdgfund.org/sites/default/files/YEM_ESTUDIO_Nica_Mercado%20de%20Trabajo%20y%20Juventud.pdf)
- 99 Pronicaragua. 2013. Informe de Educación Técnica. Nicaragua. [www.pronicaragua.org](http://www.pronicaragua.org)

## ELÍAS, ENERCILIA AND WENDY: CARE LEAVERS HELPING CARE LEAVERS

Elías, Enercilia and Wendy are three care leavers from Nicaragua, who left an SOS Children's Villages' alternative care programme some years ago. Their life was marked by loss of parental care, mainly for health reasons, and the need for protection and emotional support during their childhood and adolescence. Today, they have become an entrepreneur, a psychologist and a civil servant, and have their own family. Their stories are a model of success for other young people who prepare for leaving care, and this is why the three of them have generously committed to meeting young people in care and sharing their experience.

Orientation, counselling and social networks are important resources for those who transition into independent living. They help care leavers develop a life plan, soft skills for their daily life, and a drive to seize educational and vocational opportunities.

During a forum on leaving care, organised by SOS Children's Villages Nicaragua, Elías, Enercilia and Wendy exchanged their experiences on the topics and abilities that are relevant for young people to become responsible adults and contributing members of their society. Their stories can hopefully benefit and inspire future care leavers, who often struggle during this complex process and seldom have positive role models that they can mirror and turn to for advice.

"Success is achieving the goals that you have set for yourself, and accomplishing them", explains Elías. There are many practical issues: "I did not know how the public services worked, the first time I entered in a hospital in León I felt very strange, it was like something I had never imagined, and the same happened the first time I paid taxes, rent..." he added.

Enercilia also mentioned that one of the main challenges of leaving care and becoming independent is administering your own money and dealing with daily life. But she also thinks that guidance to build strong values and identities plays a key role in the development of a young person and their motivation to make positive changes.

"At this moment I feel good and stable. I feel that I have achieved many things, firstly because I wanted to change my life, and secondly because I had the support of SOS Children's Villages, without which I would not have achieved what I have now", says Wendy.

It takes a mix of self-determination and practical support, which can be built over time, with adequate assistance, for young people to be able to seize opportunities to study, train and participate in society. All young people should have access to and be provided with support, in order to have equal chances to realise their full potential.

## COUNTRY MAPPING REPORT

## Togo

## Total population

7,304,578 (2015)<sup>100</sup>

## Child population (ages 0-18)

3,553,000 (2015) (48.64% of the total population)<sup>101</sup>

## Population of children in alternative care

6,080 (43% boys and 56% girls)<sup>102</sup>

## Numbers ageing out of care each year

Data not found.

## Total unemployment

6.2% (2016)<sup>103</sup>

## Youth unemployment (ages 15-24)

10.8% (2016)<sup>104</sup>

## Young people not in education, employment or training (NEET)

11.5% (2011)<sup>105</sup>

## Options for alternative care placements

Residential care and foster care. Residential centres, transit centres and non-residential centres cared for 6,490; 2,049; and 1,022 children in 2012 respectively, but registered children in orphanages and in child care facilities barely represented 10% of the demand for these services<sup>106</sup>. According to actors in the field of child protection, the known facilities would represent only 50% of the existing facilities, due to the proliferation of unregistered facilities<sup>107</sup>. Provisions are largely left to NGOs.

## LEGISLATIVE AND POLICY FRAMEWORK

## STATE PROVISIONS FOR CHILDREN UP TO THE AGE OF 18

Article 440 of the Law on Children provides that: “the State establishes minimal standards for care centres in charge of hosting and bringing up children, particularly orphan children, children with disability, and any other vulnerable child.” Decree Nr. 2010-100/PR on norms and standards applicable to care centres responsible for the protection of vulnerable children lays down rules and guidelines for centre creation, child admission procedures, child care, responsibility and service quality for the care staff and readiness of children and young people leaving care for social and professional integration.

The General Child Protection Board (DGPE) within the Ministry of Social Action works towards the improvement of the legal framework in relation to child protection. It is responsible for drawing up, implementing, coordinating and assessing interventions related to child protection in line with the effective law and national political directives.

While the government is officially in charge of children in care, the implementation of provisions within the Law on Children is largely left to non-governmental organizations (NGOs) with little in the way of government initiatives. There are 141 care centres for looking after vulnerable children in Togo, 4 of which are State-owned. The remaining ones are run by NGOs (many centres belong to religious and good-will institutions).

## STATE PROVISIONS FOR LEAVING CARE AND AFTER-CARE SUPPORT

There is no specific legal framework that governs young people leaving care and there is no specific legal term used for ‘care-leavers’.

Decree Nr. 2010-100/PR on norms and standards applicable to care centres specifies that each young person must have a ‘life project’ upon leaving care centres. Life projects must be defined early on and should help young people to plan their exit from

care and help reintegrate them into society. For those children in care who have family or extended networks, there is a requirement on provisions to ensure that a relationship is maintained, which supports the transition out of care. However, for those young people who do not have these networks, the transition experience is more challenging with the underdeveloped necessary life and employment skills, leaving young people open to exploitation.

Young people leaving care either return to their birth family or manage their own reintegration. There are no specific support programmes for young people leaving care outside of the life projects designed in care centres. NGOs very much see the preparation of young people leaving institutional care as an important dimension of their work. They will provide young people with financial assistance, advice and guidance and follow up and monitor young people’s integration into society.

Interviews with care leavers revealed that, while they do receive support – a life project, financial assistance and guidance on jobs/careers on transitioning out of care – more support and guidance is needed to help them transition from the institution, where there is a clear sense of support and rights, to the outside world.

*“There was not a real preparation to live independently. Children must be taught very early on and in a practical way to look for work and to meet the challenges of life. Their talents must also be detected and then they have to be stimulated so that the child is fully prepared when he reaches adulthood.”*

Care leaver, interviewee

Other challenges cited by young care leavers include the lack of financial means and support to further their education, post compulsory schooling and the absence of family connections which can often facilitate access to employment.

## EDUCATION, TRAINING AND EMPLOYMENT SITUATION

In 2016, a Presidential Order created a National Coalition for Youth Employment (CNEJ) which sought to work with industry sectors with the capacity to create employment opportunities.

National responses to the employment situation of young people include providing opportunities to acquire professional experience through volunteer work, support with starting a microbusiness, becoming an entrepreneur or learning a trade. Specific government initiatives to tackle unemployment include:

- ➔ The National Agency for Employment Promotion (ANPE) does not have a programme specifically for young people in care, but they can partner with care facilities, as they did with SOS Children's Villages Togo to provide training in entrepreneurship for young people;
- ➔ National Agency for Volunteer Work in Togo (ANVT), who send volunteers into public services and NGOs for a period of five years in order to help them acquire professional experience and increase their chances in the job market;
- ➔ Support Fund for Youth Economic Initiatives (FAIEJ);
- ➔ Support for Insertion and Employment Development (AIDE), a programme led by ANPE which places and supports job seekers in businesses for a period of six months with the support of the World Bank.

The main goal of these programmes is to facilitate employment opportunities for young people. Current government initiatives are not specifically targeted at young people leaving care and there is some argument that positive discrimination may be needed to address the challenges facing care leavers.

### NUMBER OF YOUNG PEOPLE LEAVING CARE WITH QUALIFICATIONS

Data not found.

### MAIN ACTIVITY OF YOUNG PEOPLE LEAVING CARE

Data not found.

### PATHWAYS IN EDUCATION, TRAINING AND EMPLOYMENT

Little is known about what happens to young people after they leave care centres and what is known is derived from studies by SOS Children's Villages. The Tracking Footprints study revealed that the majority of the young people who left SOS Children's Villages programmes did not attend college. The report found that 64% of its care leavers dropped out of school before completing the ninth grade and entered low skilled employment such as hairdressing, sewing, mechanics, and woodwork<sup>108</sup>.

## YOUTH SUPPORT MEASURES TO ACCESS DECENT WORK

All young people in Togo face similar challenges in seeking training and employment.

*“The job opportunities for the youth are very limited; businesses are scarce and the young people who decide to start their own business have a hard time making it.”*

NGO co-worker, interviewee

The national education system is overly academic, with limited technical training (itself being devalued) and the business sector is small. Jobs in the industrial and manufacturing sectors remain unfilled as do those in the service sectors. While the biggest job provider is seen to be the private sector, this is underdeveloped.

*“The economic structure has changed considerably but the school system does not follow; there is a gap between the trainings offered and the needs in the business world.”*

Government agency employee, interviewee

The possibilities for professional training in Togo are very limited and this forces the young people to go into low skilled trades. Apprenticeships in the traditional crafts and employment in the service sectors are often overlooked as they are not highly valued. But the opportunities for training in the innovative and growth-bound trades are few and where they do exist they are too costly and located in areas beyond the reach of young people. There is a trend amongst some young people to opt for diplomas after finishing high school in areas such as Sales and Marketing, Computerised Accounting, Human Resources, Business Communication, but jobs in these areas remain scarce.

**Decent work:** The term ‘decent work’ appears in the National Work Policy without clear definition. In its vision, it states that “by 2030, most Togolese including the disabled, youth, women, etc. without any discrimination whatsoever and old enough to work, will enjoy a fair, quality, decent work in an accelerated, inclusive economy and a stable socio-political climate.” This is not elaborated on or explored in any research or publications on employability and decent work for young people leaving care in Togo.

Interviewees defined ‘decent work’ as a job that offers social protection, a decent income, good working conditions and protection from exploitation and risks of injury/accident. There are various challenges to achieving decent work in Togo; these include:

- ➔ Businesses that avoid paying the national minimum;
- ➔ The weak job market results in young people's willingness to accept any job which exposes them to risks of exploitation;
- ➔ Corrupt practices where many private businesses make deductions from employees' salaries for social security contributions, where employees are not registered with the State Social Security Service.

To promote ‘decent work’, the government created a General Office of Labour and Social Laws with trained labour inspectors who work in all the districts of the country to inspect working conditions. Togo ratified the ILO Conventions and has set up a policy of workers' rights protection through the establishment of a nationwide programme for decent work (PPTD). In addition, the country has a national policy for industrial development. Here, the government, employer and union participate in a three-way social dialogue initiative that defines the work and wage conditions in the private businesses to protect the rights of workers.

## SPECIFIC PROGRAMMES AND SERVICES TARGETING CARE LEAVERS

### STATE RESPONSES AT THE NATIONAL LEVEL

The government has set up various agencies, programmes and services to support young people in general to access employment, guidance, and support. One of the responsibilities of the General Office of Child Protection (DGPE) is to oversee the implementation of the care standard and that all young people are prepared for work and society – ‘for a socio-professional inclusion’. The DGPE has just completed a study on the sustainable trades that provide recommendations for strategies to support care leavers' employment and skills development and the Social Protection Policy is also currently undergoing reform.

### STATE RESPONSES AT THE LOCAL LEVEL

None identified.

### NON-STATE RESPONSES

RESAEV-TOGO is a network of organizations caring for vulnerable children in Togo. Its aims are to create a unified set of standards and objectives between the main alternative care organizations for

children at-risk in Togo. In addition to this, they also help with campaigns to train staff and young people leaving care. Within the network there is a division that is responsible for supporting care leavers into employment by offering professional training.

## CONCLUSIONS

Government legislation establishes minimum standards for care given to vulnerable children. While there are a small number of public provisions for children in care, the majority of children's care centres are managed by NGOs and international organizations. The DGPE collects statistics on the situation of children at-risk and those admitted into care facilities, but it does not collect data on young people after they exit from care.

While young people are offered advice and guidance (as well as financial assistance), the education system in Togo is underdeveloped and disconnected from the needs of industry. Young people leaving care cannot afford to fund further education. More broadly, the employment opportunities that do exist are limited in range and number, and it appears that decent work is rare. The government has established a variety of initiatives to support young people to gain employment. However, these are typically unpaid, which presents a challenge for care leavers.

Local solutions to tackle care leavers' access to decent work largely sit with the care hosting facilities themselves. Each hosting facility, within its means, offers help to young people to gain access to work, but these efforts are not necessarily met with success. There is also a need for a coherent national programme to support the youth.

Overcoming challenges for care leavers is often seen as sitting with the children's care centres themselves. While there is possibly more that could be done to establish links with businesses, the real challenges around education and employment are ones that require political will and direction.

Interviews with stakeholders revealed a number of recommendations for government to help support young people leaving care in gaining access to decent work. These include:

- ➔ Take positive discrimination measures to support young people leaving care, e.g. to establish employment quotas for young people leaving care (as is done for persons with physical disabilities), or offering preferential conditions when it comes to loan access or creating a support fund for the youth leaving residential care;
- ➔ Reform the school system and review the training programmes to match skills with employer's need;
- ➔ Create an appropriate legal framework that gives a chance for everybody to have the same conditions to access work;
- ➔ Create employment opportunities for young people;
- ➔ Raise the minimum wage.

Implications for other stakeholders included:

- ➔ Businesses must become a stakeholder in the training of young people and influence training programmes to ensure skills are matched to the industry's needs;
- ➔ International organizations and NGOs can contribute by developing opportunities to share experiences and also by mobilizing resources;
- ➔ Care hosting facilities should work towards a national standard of practice where they offer support and guidance to care leavers on all aspects of the transition process. Such facilities should also develop relationships with public agencies of employment assistance (e.g. ANPE), job agencies and local businesses, in order to support care leavers' access to employment opportunities.

100 World Bank database. 2015. Population, total. <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.POP.TOTL?locations=TG&view=chart>

101 UNICEF. 2016. State of the World's Children. Downloaded from: <https://www.unicef.org/sowc2016/>

102 Eneis Conseil. 2016. Étude d'Évaluation des Centres d'Accueil et d'Hébergement des Enfants Vulnérables. Commissioned by: Ministère de l'Action Sociale, de la Promotion de la Femme et de l'Alphabétisation / Direction Générale de la Protection de l'Enfant and UNICEF.

103 ILOSTAT database. 2016. Unemployment, total (% of total labor force) (modeled ILO estimate). <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SL.UEM.TOTL.ZS>

104 ILOSTAT database. 2016. Unemployment, youth total (% of total labor force ages 15-24) (modeled ILO estimate). <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SL.UEM.1524.ZS>

105 ILO - Key Indicators of the Labour Market database. 2012. Share of youth not in education, employment or training, total (% of youth population). <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SL.UEM.NEET.ZS?locations=TG>

106 Regional Offices for Social Action. April 2012. In: SOS Children's Villages International. 2014. Assessment Report of the Alternative Care System for Children in Togo (Care for ME campaign). Original report and research by SOS Children's Villages Togo and EUREKA EDU Consulting Firm.

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108 SOS Children's Villages International. 2006. Tracking Footprints.

## COUNTRY MAPPING REPORT

## Tunisia

## Total population

11,253,554 (2015)<sup>109</sup>

## Child population (ages 0-18)

3,115,000 (2015) (27.7% of the total population)<sup>110</sup>

## Population of children in alternative care

Data not found.

## Numbers ageing out of care each year

Data not found

## Total unemployment

14.9% (2016)<sup>111</sup>

## Youth unemployment (ages 15-24)

35.5% (2016)<sup>112</sup>

## Young people not in education, employment or training (NEET)

33.0% (2014)<sup>113</sup>

## Options for alternative care placements

There are 23 regional Integrated Centres for Youth and Children (CIJE), which offer a range of services to different categories of children. These include 86 residential facilities (37 for girls and 49 for boys), as well as more than 60 facilities (complexes pour enfants) offering services for children who continue to live with their families, but are nonetheless living in difficult situations, all run by the Ministry of Women's and Family Affairs (MWFA).

The National Institute of Child Protection (INPE), under the auspices of the Ministry of Social Affairs, provides residential care and works with other stakeholders to find alternative placements for children without parental care. The INPE also monitors children in their placements.

Care and support for vulnerable children and young people is also provided by international, national and regional non-governmental and civil society organizations.

## LEGISLATIVE AND POLICY FRAMEWORK

## STATE PROVISIONS FOR CHILDREN UP TO THE AGE OF 18

The Tunisian Child Protection Code sets out the general principles pertaining to children's rights, education and schooling, domestic work, marriage and the promotion and protection of people with disability. Law No. 27 of 1958 sets conditions for adoption and kafala (unofficial tutorship<sup>114</sup>). At the time of writing, an 'integrated policy of child protection' was under development, managed by the Ministry of Women's and Family Affairs (MWFA).

## STATE PROVISIONS FOR LEAVING CARE AND AFTER-CARE SUPPORT

There is no specific legal framework that governs young people leaving care and there is no specific legal term used for 'care leavers'.

There is some professional and specialized support for young people making the transition out of care placements, primarily focused on encouraging self-reliance and integration into the community, help with formal or vocational education, learning practical skills for everyday life and finding suitable employment opportunities. Care leavers and unemployed young people are not entitled to receive financial support from the National Social Security Fund.

## EDUCATION, TRAINING AND EMPLOYMENT SITUATION

More than half of Tunisia's children leave school without completing upper secondary education and approximately 140,000 students drop out of school annually, 80,000 of whom have not completed their basic education<sup>115</sup>. No information is available on the education of children in alternative care.

Young people (31.8%), women (22.6%) and university graduates (31.2%) are especially vulnerable to unemployment, versus 15% for the general popu-

lation<sup>116</sup>. One fifth (20.3 %) of all young men, and nearly one third of young women (32.4%) are not in education, employment or training (NEETs), which exemplify the situation of young people in regard to inactivity and discouragement<sup>117</sup>.

A factor contributing to high youth employment includes an education system that is overly academic with minimal focus on preparation for the labour market. Educational institutions have been strongly criticised for failing to equip young people with the right skills to enable a smooth transition from school to active citizenship and professional work. Postgraduate training is also scarce and it is estimated that just one in ten young Tunisian employees receives additional training<sup>118</sup>.

In response to recommendations by the OECD (2015)<sup>119</sup>, the government has sought to improve the school-to-work transition of young Tunisians by investing in an effective vocational education and training (VET) system that is both demand-driven and attractive to students. The Public Vocational Training System was thus set up and has resulted in:

- ➔ The establishment of quality assurance in the national system of vocational training;
- ➔ The establishment of alternative training;
- ➔ Certification of diplomas of training, development and implementation of training programmes, and training of trainers based on the skills approach.

## NUMBER OF YOUNG PEOPLE LEAVING CARE WITH QUALIFICATIONS

Data not found.

## MAIN ACTIVITY OF YOUNG PEOPLE LEAVING CARE

Data not found.

## PATHWAYS IN EDUCATION, TRAINING AND EMPLOYMENT

Data not found.

## YOUTH SUPPORT MEASURES TO ACCESS DECENT WORK

The National Agency for Employment works to improve the employment prospects of young people by working with industries in all sectors. It provides information about employment opportunities, professional and vocational qualifications, and it works with particular groups, such as young people, to help integrate them into society. The National Youth Observatory works to promote communication and dialogue with young people, while seeking to inform and guide them on a range of issues concerning young people.

Employment is one of the priorities of European Union support for Tunisia. The EU implements several programmes and projects to support job creation and improve the employability of graduates working with the education sector, employment structures and the private sector.

The Centre of Orientation and Professional Reconversion is a project run by the Tunisian Chamber of Industry and Commerce (AHK Tunisia) with the aim of bringing the qualifications of job seekers closer to the needs of companies in Tunisia. Existing provision includes nearly 140 professional training centres since 1995, reportedly underused, and a five-year project Work4Youth, created in 2011 between the International Labour Organization (ILO) and the MasterCard Foundation, which aims to promote decent work for youth.

Civil society and non-governmental organizations are also involved in the provision of services to help young people into employment. Together they contribute both strategically and practically to improving the chances of young people to access employment. This includes working with employers to improve vocational, training and placement opportunities, offer scholarships to students from low-income families, and promote social enterprises and entrepreneurship.

**Decent work:** There is no reference to the term 'decent work' in government policy. However, Tunisia has been a member of the International Labour Organization (ILO) since its independence in 1956 and has since ratified 58 international labour conventions. These include Objective 8, which was set up to promote shared and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all. Its priorities include addressing youth unemployment and the elimination of all forms of child labour. Decent work priorities are also included in other objectives. For example, technical and vocational skills are covered under Objective 4 on education and minimum social protection. Cooperation with the ILO has been successful in particular with the establishment of the social security system in Tunisia and the development of active employment policies. The ILO has also contributed to the implementation of the first vocational training centre in Rades.

## SPECIFIC PROGRAMMES AND SERVICES TARGETING CARE LEAVERS

### STATE RESPONSES AT THE NATIONAL LEVEL

There are no specific policy interventions targeted at young people leaving care. Stakeholder interviewees, from NGOs, stated that much of the work currently being undertaken in Tunisia to improve unemployment is focused on a macro level and targeted at the unemployed population in general. Both young people in general and care leavers were perceived to face the same challenges when it came to seeking employment.

While there are several youth projects<sup>120</sup>, the situation of young people, and particularly those in care and leaving care, is not a government priority. There are some government programmes aimed at supporting young people to gain access to employment such as those run by the Ministry of Vocational Training and Employment (MFPE) and through the National Agency for Employment. These offer support with vocational training, skills training, self-employment, civic participation, and entrepre-

neurships. However, these are more accessible to unemployed graduates in urban areas than others and do not solve the problem of those NEETs.

In 2012, the government published a National Strategy which sets out six strategic objectives. Among the most relevant to young people are: improving the employability of the workforce and improving the operation of the labour market through active employment programmes for the most vulnerable. Nevertheless, there are difficulties in coordinating these services across the agencies, leading to fragmented coverage, ambiguity and overlap in roles. Recognition of regional disparities is one of the key areas of importance for youth organizations and institutions. One of the key priorities of the reform of the country's youth work is to decentralize budgets and policy prerogatives to the regions themselves, in order to better allow agencies to target activities to the needs of the regions.

### STATE RESPONSES AT THE LOCAL LEVEL

Data not found.

### NON-STATE RESPONSES

There are many civil society organizations supporting young people to access employment opportunities. However, these are not specifically targeted at care leavers.

## CONCLUSIONS

There is no legislative framework or data collection concerning children leaving care to provide a national picture of the situation of care leavers in Tunisia.

There are very high levels of youth unemployment and also high levels of inactivity amongst young people in general. The education system fails to equip young people with the skills required in a modern economy and reform is necessary. In response, the government has implemented a policy which seeks to improve the school-to-work transition of young people by investing in programmes

aimed at delivering vocational education and training that match the needs of the labour market. However, it is still too early to judge the effectiveness of such programmes.

Tunisia does have an infrastructure for supporting young people into work. However, responsibilities are spread across many different ministries and agencies and the implementation of policies and programmes is fragmented, leading to many gaps in coverage. A key priority for the government should be to consolidate its current provisions and devolve responsibilities to local levels to better target the needs of the different groups of unemployed young people: graduates, those NEET, and in particular care leavers in all regions. There is no explicit mention of decent work in government policy, although Tunisia is a member of the ILO and has ratified many treaties that have the concept of decent work enshrined as a priority. The concept of decent work is, however, implicitly addressed in some of the initiatives currently being implemented, such as those aimed at improving the skills of young people and NGOs who work to provide sustainable and decent work for young people.

109 World Bank database. 2015. Population, total. <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.POP.TOTL?locations=TG&view=chart>

110 UNICEF. 2016. State of the World's Children. Downloaded from: <https://www.unicef.org/sowc2016/>

111 ILOSTAT database. 2016. Unemployment, total (% of total labor force) (modeled ILO estimate). <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SL.UEM.TOTL.ZS>

112 ILOSTAT database. 2016. Unemployment, youth total (% of total labor force ages 15-24) (modeled ILO estimate). <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SL.UEM.1524.ZS>

113 ETF. 2014. Young People Not in Employment, Education or Training in the EU Neighbourhood Countries.

114 Committee on the Rights of the Child. [https://www.unicef-irc.org/portfolios/documents/189\\_tunisia.htm](https://www.unicef-irc.org/portfolios/documents/189_tunisia.htm)

115 World Bank. 2014. Tunisia: Breaking the Barriers to Youth Inclusion. <http://microdata.worldbank.org/index.php/catalog/2332/download/34749>

116 World Bank. 2016. Bi-annual MENA Quarterly Economic Brief. <http://pubdocs.worldbank.org/en/234021460138331314/MEM-Tunisia.pdf>

117 World Bank. 2014. Tunisia: Breaking the Barriers to Youth Inclusion. <http://microdata.worldbank.org/index.php/catalog/2332/download/34749>

118 World Bank. 2014. Tunisia: Breaking the Barriers to Youth Inclusion. <http://microdata.worldbank.org/index.php/catalog/2332/download/34749>

119 OECD. 2015. Investing in Youth: Tunisia. <http://www.oecd.org/els/investing-in-youth-tunisia-9789264226470-en.htm>

120 Euromed. 2013. Youth Work in Tunisia after the revolution. [http://euromedyouth.net/IMG/pdf/youth\\_work\\_in\\_tunisia.pdf](http://euromedyouth.net/IMG/pdf/youth_work_in_tunisia.pdf)



## COUNTRY MAPPING REPORT

## Uganda

## Total population

41,487,965 (2016)<sup>121</sup>

## Child population (ages 0-18)

21,473,000 (2015) (51.8% of the total population)<sup>122</sup>

## Population of children in alternative care

Data not found.

## Numbers ageing out of care each year

Data not found.

## Total unemployment

2.1% (2016)<sup>123</sup>

## Youth unemployment (ages 15-24)

3.7% (2016)<sup>124</sup>Young people not in education,  
employment or training (NEET)5.9% (2013)<sup>125</sup>

## Options for alternative care placements

Children who do not live with birth parents or extended family are cared for by child care institutions (CCIs), run by a variety of non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and in foster homes.

LEGISLATIVE AND  
POLICY FRAMEWORKSTATE PROVISIONS FOR  
CHILDREN UP TO THE AGE OF 18

The Children's Act provides the framework for the protection of all children in Uganda, including those who do not live with birth parents, relatives or extended family. Part III of this Act specifies the roles of local authorities in supporting children. The Act also spells out the responsibilities of the family and the children's court, which are mandated to preside over legal matters concerning children in Uganda.

The government has a policy of institutionalization of care of children as a last resort for the alternative care of children. To this end, it has put in place the Alternative Care Framework, as well as the approved Homes Rules and Regulations, which set the standards of alternative care providers and ensures that there is an exit strategy for those in care.

At the national level, the Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development is primarily responsible for child protection and devolves power to local governments at district and sub-county level to deliver child protection services. At the local level, a network of NGOs and faith-based organizations provide care for children and young people who no longer live with their families in what are known as child care institutions (CCIs). Most CCIs are privately run by individuals, non-governmental and faith-based organizations. Once in the CCI, children will spend most of their childhood there, some will be adopted by families and others may stay until they transition out of care.

CCIs are required to register with the Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development and apply for a court order (renewable after three years) before a child can be admitted to their care. In 2016, the records of the Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development showed that there were over 1000 CCIs in Uganda, but only 39 were legally registered. An example of a registered CCI is SOS Children's Villages Uganda, which provides alternative homes and family health and education services for children under their care.

STATE PROVISIONS FOR LEAVING  
CARE AND AFTER-CARE SUPPORT

In Uganda, there is no legal definition of 'care leavers', and they are not a recognized group within legislation, social protection policies and programmes for young people. Children in care are no longer entitled to special protection and assistance from the care system once they reach the age of 18.

EDUCATION, TRAINING  
AND EMPLOYMENT  
SITUATION

Uganda has a total of 9,428,000 pupils enrolled in primary and secondary education. Of these pupils, about 8,098,000 (86%) are enrolled in primary education<sup>126</sup>.

The average pass rate for the Primary Leaving Certificate Examination has been 85%<sup>127</sup>, but only a fraction of those that did the examination transition to secondary school. According to the Uganda Bureau of Statistics, 68% of young people out of school completed primary education and only 3.4% completed tertiary education<sup>128</sup>.

NUMBER OF YOUNG PEOPLE  
LEAVING CARE WITH  
QUALIFICATIONS

Data not found.

MAIN ACTIVITY OF YOUNG  
PEOPLE LEAVING CARE

Data not found.

PATHWAYS IN EDUCATION,  
TRAINING AND EMPLOYMENT

Data not found.

## YOUTH SUPPORT MEASURES TO ACCESS DECENT WORK

In some CCIs, care leavers are provided with extended post-childhood support and follow up. This can include help and support with continuing education, be it vocational, professional, or at university level. CCIs will also help with job searching and will contact different organizations to find work for care leavers. As a result of this post-care support, children in CCIs have a higher chance of finding work and integrating into wider society.

*“...our care leavers are well prepared for life outside care while they are still with us. We strive to provide them with professional education and training, usually up to university level or vocational training for those that opt for vocational skills. In most cases, we help them look for jobs by contacting different organizations. Normally we don't allow them to leave without getting jobs. This enables them to easily and quickly integrate into communities outside the care family.”*

CCI worker, interviewee

**Decent work:** Uganda recognizes the International Labour Organization (ILO) definition of ‘decent work’ in the Decent Work Country Programme (DWCP 2013-2017). Uganda’s DWCP offers an integrated programming framework through which interests of various key actors in the labour market can be balanced and consensus achieved through social dialogue. Through this framework, the Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development, the National Organization of Trade Unions, the Central Organization of Free Trade Unions, and the Federation of Uganda Employers and the ILO have developed the Uganda’s DWCP 2013-17, and three key priorities were identified:

- ➔ Improved labour administration and adherence to fundamental rights and labour standards;
- ➔ Promotion of youth employment;

- ➔ Improved social protection for formal and informal sector workers.

## SPECIFIC PROGRAMMES AND SERVICES TARGETING CARE LEAVERS

### STATE RESPONSES AT THE NATIONAL LEVEL

There are no specific national targets and standards set by the government with regards to care leavers. Instead, some matters of concern to care leavers are included under broad/general targets and standards for youth in the country. For example, there are employment-related targets and standards under various development programmes and initiatives that target young people in Uganda.

These include developing the skills of young people through the Business, Technical, Vocational Education and Training (BTJET) strategic plan, which aims to have 70% of employers satisfied with competencies of BTJET graduates by 2020; 80% of BTJET graduates entering the labour market have found employment/self-employment generating sufficient income by 2020; and increase the number of BTJET graduates to 450,000 annually, with 50% female participation. While such targets exist and some are aggressively pursued, the actual outcomes and achievements of the programmes under which they are formulated are yet to be realized and felt.

The government has also put into place employment policies and programmes to support youth employment, such as education, entrepreneurship courses in schools, funds for youth employment like the Youth Livelihood Fund and SACCOS, among others.

Uganda has a National Action Plan on Youth Employment (NAP) that specifically outlines strategies and actions needed for engaging young people in gainful employment, equipping them with entrepreneurship skills and attitudes, and to increase their participation in local governance and decision making processes.

## STATE RESPONSES AT THE LOCAL LEVEL

At the local level, stakeholders involved in the care and protection of children and young people leaving care are implementing initiatives aimed at supporting care leavers access to decent work. These included:

- ➔ The Youth Livelihood Programme;
- ➔ Non-formal education and vocational training programmes have enabled many young people including care leavers to acquire skills for decent work;
- ➔ Private sector foundations in Uganda have enabled youth get vocational skills by sponsoring and facilitating their training;
- ➔ The Young Achievers’ Awards is a national competition held annually that selects and promotes the best practice and excellence in youth creativity;
- ➔ The government of Uganda has signed bi-lateral agreements with countries in the Middle East like United Arab Emirates and Qatar among others to provide jobs for young people in Uganda. However, this has been controversial with reports of enslavement and exploitation of young people working in the Middle East.

## NON-STATE RESPONSES

NGOs like the Samaritans Purse, ANPPCAN, Compassion International, SOS Children’s Villages, Youth Alive Uganda, World Vision, Plan International, CARE International, KIFAD, and AVSI are implementing projects and programmes in which vocational skills training is a component. These initiatives are helping to equip young people with skills in carpentry; welding, motor mechanics, beauty and cosmetology, which enables them create their own jobs.

## CONCLUSIONS

There are big gaps and challenges for employment and access to decent work for young people in Uganda, and more attention is needed to support young people leaving care to gain access to decent work. Greater effort is needed for enforcing existing policies and other legal frameworks on child protection, education and youth employment. Poor implementation of policies on child protection, education and employment for young people was identified as a major obstacle to youth unemployment in Uganda.

Care leavers should be recognized as a special subgroup of youth in Uganda and accorded special status by legal and development frameworks in the country. In particular, the government and care providers should put in place special provisions to support the integration of care leavers, especially those raised in residential care into society. This could be in the form of special career guidance targeting children about to leave care, and of recognition of care leavers as a group that needs special attention in key government youth programmes.

Finally, alternative care service providers need to put in place functional and deliberate follow-up programmes or mechanisms to monitor the progress of care leavers. Many institutions lack a monitoring system, while some others have weak and demand-driven programmes for its alumni.

121 World Bank database. 2016. Population, total. <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.POP.TOTL?locations=CV&view=chart>

122 UNICEF. 2016. State of the World’s Children. Downloaded from: <https://www.unicef.org/sowc2016/>

123 ILOSTAT database. 2016. Unemployment, total (% of total labor force) (modeled ILO estimate). <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SL.UEM.TOTL.ZS>

124 ILOSTAT database. 2016. Unemployment, youth total (% of total labor force ages 15-24) (modeled ILO estimate). <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SL.UEM.1524.ZS>

125 ILO - Key Indicators of the Labour Market database. 2015. Share of youth not in education, employment or training, total (% of youth population). <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SL.UEM.NEET.ZS?locations=IT>

126 Education Policy and Data Centre. 2014. National Education Profile. National Education Profile 2014 Update: Uganda. [https://www.epdc.org/sites/default/files/documents/EPDC%20NEP\\_Uganda.pdf](https://www.epdc.org/sites/default/files/documents/EPDC%20NEP_Uganda.pdf)

127 UNESCO. 2012. World Data on Education. VII Ed. 2010/11. <http://www.ibe.unesco.org/en/document/world-data-education-seventh-edition-2010-11>

128 Uganda Bureau of Statistics. <http://www.ubos.org/>

## COUNTRY MAPPING REPORT

## Zimbabwe

## Total population

15,602,751 (2015)<sup>129</sup>

## Child population (ages 0-18)

7,504,000 (2015) (48,09% of the total population)<sup>130</sup>

## Population of children in alternative care

Data not found.

## Numbers ageing out of care each year

Data not found.

## Total unemployment

5.2% (2016)<sup>131</sup>

## Youth unemployment (ages 15-24)

10.2% (2016)<sup>132</sup>

## Young people not in education, employment or training (NEET)

Data not found.

## Options for alternative care placements

Informal care is the predominant form of care, with children placed with extended family, friends or other parties such as residential facilities. Foster care was culturally unknown until recently and is still in its infancy. Just 50 families reported interest in fostering in 2013.

## LEGISLATIVE AND POLICY FRAMEWORK

## STATE PROVISIONS FOR CHILDREN UP TO THE AGE OF 18

The National Residential Child Care Standards were developed in 2010, by the Ministry of Labour and Social Services in conjunction with the Zimbabwe National Council for the Welfare of Children (ZNCWC). They were developed in response to the growing numbers of children who were no longer cared for by their families and thus placed in residential facilities, largely because of the HIV and AIDS epidemic, the breakdown of the social and extended family, and poverty, among other things. The Standards were derived from international treaties and national legislation (such as the UNCRC, the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child, the United Nations Guidelines for the Alternative Care of Children and the Zimbabwean Children's Act) and provide a benchmark for residential care institutions.

According to the Standards, residential care is a temporary placement for children while efforts are made to plan for a more permanent solution such as returning the child to their own family and community or a placement within an alternative family environment in their own community. Standard 14.2 of the National Residential Child Care Standards specifies that the caregiver to children ratio should be at 1:10 at all times.

## STATE PROVISIONS FOR LEAVING CARE AND AFTER-CARE SUPPORT

Section 37 of the Children's Act states that: "a Discharge Plan shall be prepared for each child leaving care, and is to be based on the individual care plan of the particular child. It will detail the process through which a child will become independent, return to his/her family of origin or move into another placement (Chapter 5:06)."

The Discharge Plan has a set of criteria that guides the preparation of young people for leaving care and after they have left the care system. The criteria are:

The institution, in consultation with the child and

the Department of Social Services, shall plan and implement the Discharge Plan, which shall outline the following arrangements:

- ➔ Education, training and occupation;
- ➔ Support necessary for children living with disabilities;
- ➔ Support to enable the child to set up and maintain independent living, where necessary;
- ➔ Providing information on available social service benefits for future use. These may include Public Assistance, Health Care and other specialist services that may be required by the child;
- ➔ Creating and maintaining networks of advice and information in order to support the child's decision making during the leaving care process;
- ➔ Ensuring effective reunification of the child with his or her relatives and reintegration of the child into the community.

Particular attention shall be paid to ensure that children are prepared to:

- ➔ Develop and maintain relationships with others;
- ➔ Understand their sexuality and establish positive and caring relationships;
- ➔ Overcome trauma and establish self-esteem and resilience;
- ➔ Enter the labour market and/or further education;
- ➔ Develop practical and independent life skills.

Follow-ups, continuous support and opportunity for contact are ensured so as to make the child's adjustment to the new situation smooth.

Young people are required to leave at the age of 18 but research by SOS Children's Villages found that most of the care facilities continue to look after young adults beyond this age, and until they have a qualification or a source of livelihood. There are no mechanisms in place to follow care leavers after they leave a placement home.

Standard Six of the National Residential Child Care Standards provides guidelines on preparing young people living in residential care for independent living. Young people in care should be supported 'through a process aimed at preparing them to be independent and active members of society' (Ministry of Labour and Social Services, 2010a). However, the Department of Child Welfare and Probation Services, responsible for providing oversight to residential care facilities and ensuring that the National Residential Care Standards are adhered to, lacks the human and financial capacity to fulfil its mandatory role.

Moreover, caregivers have limited capacity to deliver the guidance and support needed by young people. Interviewees of this study noted that most caregivers do not have sufficient or relevant tertiary qualifications to effectively support care leavers in their transition into the labour market. Examples were given of lack of capacity to effectively support preparation of CVs or for interviews. Support was limited to caregivers' own knowledge of employment. In the interviews one example was made that in a residential facility, caregivers encouraged young people to take up sewing, carpentry and farming, and young people who did not have an interest in these occupations did not receive any guidance.

## EDUCATION, TRAINING AND EMPLOYMENT SITUATION

Overall, the education system was perceived as being primarily academic, ill-suited to the needs of industry and failing to ensure that young people left with general qualifications. Over three quarters, 79.3%, of young people fail to get the required five ordinary level subjects, including English and mathematics. There were no mechanisms for educating those who were less academic. No information was provided on the education and pathways of care leavers. A reasonable assumption is that they mostly do not progress after secondary education. Girls drop out of school at an earlier age than boys, particularly during secondary school years.

There is a national policy to create 2.2 million jobs for young people, but the policy document lacks a

concrete plan for achieving this target. There is a lack of precise information available on patterns of youth employment and unemployment. While there is clearly a major problem of youth unemployment, there is no information about unemployment among marginalised groups such as care leavers. Young people as a demographic group continue to face challenges of poverty and inequality, stemming from unemployment, lack of formal employment, irregularity of work and social protection. Girls are particularly at risk since their employability is threatened by early school dropout. Further, young people rarely get work experience through access to entry level jobs.

Interviewees have highlighted that the country's education and training systems are ill designed to meet the demands of the economy (both formal and non-formal). There are an estimated 40,000 graduates of universities and other tertiary institutions who are employed in street vending. Secondary educated young people make up 50 percent of the youth workforce and this group is growing by an estimated 7 percent per annum. This interviewee summed up some of the difficulties:

*"We are in an underperforming economy, there are limitations in terms of accessing employment, and entrepreneurial opportunities are very tight. There is also the issue of relevance of courses/qualifications, they do not suit current trades such as fitting and turning course, where do you use it and yet in the last year alone over 200 companies closed, where do these graduates go to use their skills?"*

Fund Development and Communications Officer at SOS Children's Villages Zimbabwe, interviewee

Young people's access to employment is hindered by a lack of accessible information regarding employment opportunities. While the African Youth Charter (Article 15.3) states that 'Parties shall address and ensure the availability of accurate data on youth employment, unemployment, and under-employment'. There was reported to be no labour market information system that care leavers or oth-

er young people can rely on. Being unable to access the internet is a particular disadvantage, as is living in distant and spatially mismatched neighbourhoods. Further difficulties may lie in not having money for transport or data for internet access.

Industrial capacity is in sharp decline and, accompanying this, there has been a shift from formal to informal employment. There is a loss of investor confidence. While formal employment in industries provided decent employment and regulated working conditions, this is not the case in the unregulated informal sector. Jobs are available in the service industries such as telecommunications, but these demand highly skilled individuals. There are many young people with high level academic qualifications, such as Masters Degrees, who are unable to find suitable work and therefore accept lower skilled work. This in turn results in young people who leave school with limited choices of employment entering the informal sector. The rate of increase in informal entrepreneurial activities is approximately eight times higher than the post-independence period of 1980-1998. The rise of entrepreneurial activity has been largely driven by need, with the absence of liquidity as well as the absence of formal employment opportunities having the greatest impact on the increase in informal economic activities.

## NUMBER OF YOUNG PEOPLE LEAVING CARE WITH QUALIFICATIONS

Data not found.

## MAIN ACTIVITY OF YOUNG PEOPLE LEAVING CARE

Data not found.

## PATHWAYS IN EDUCATION, TRAINING AND EMPLOYMENT

Research participants made the point that few care leavers have the networks and the social capital to make contacts in employment, whereas those who grew up with their biological families have a large network of people who assist them in life especially

in terms of getting decent work. Some residential child care facilities have developed mentorship programmes where young people are placed in families within the broader communities, but this approach is not always successful as some young people suffer from culture shock, or are abused or neglected.

## YOUTH SUPPORT MEASURES TO ACCESS DECENT WORK

No information was provided on services and programmes to support young people into employment. There are no systems in place to follow up on care leavers in order to design programmes around their needs. They do not feature among the categories of young people who are targeted by the youth programmes initiated by the government. One interviewee stated that:

*"We do not know where [care leavers] are, where they are employed and if they feel they are in decent jobs. For those that I know, no, they are not getting the right remuneration, they are barely surviving, and it is not decent work. There is a gap in after-care support and monitoring. The care planning process and exit plans should be done to prepare for exit and access to decent work, life skills needed and information that is current and relevant to the job market. We need to build the negotiating skills of young people, ensure they are able to have confidence and challenge stereotypes and build relations in the work place."*

Gender, Advocacy and Child Protection Officer at SOS Children's Villages Zimbabwe, interviewee

Reportedly, the key transition service providers (the government and institutions) lack the capacity to implement comprehensive programmes for young people leaving care. As reported by Wyatt et al. (2010)<sup>133</sup>, the government and institutions lack adequate financial, human and other material resources to implement

transition programmes for young people leaving care. Policy responses to youth unemployment do not include care leavers as a category of young people needing special attention. As a result, there have not been any interventions targeting care leavers. In the following section there are some examples of policy initiatives aimed at all young people in Zimbabwe.

**Decent work:** 'Decent work' was described by interviewees as 'productive work, for women and men, that is done in conditions of freedom, security, equity, and human dignity'. It was associated with regulated employment in industries that have declined rapidly, and largely not available in the precarious, informal employment in which most young people were engaged.

## SPECIFIC PROGRAMMES AND SERVICES TARGETING CARE LEAVERS

### STATE RESPONSES AT THE NATIONAL LEVEL

The government has put a number of policies and programmes in place to address the economic empowerment requirements of Zimbabwean youth.

These policies include:

- ➔ National Skills Development Policy;
- ➔ National Youth Policy;
- ➔ Vocational Training programme focusing on Training for Enterprise;
- ➔ Indigenisation and Economic Empowerment programme;
- ➔ Zimbabwe Youth Employment Network (ZIYEN).

There are several other policy measures and programmes that the government has developed.

These include:

- ➔ National Employment Policy Framework (ZNEPF);
- ➔ Establishment of the Youth Development Fund;
- ➔ Establishment of Youth Economic Zones;
- ➔ The Indigenisation and Economic Empowerment programme;
- ➔ The Zimbabwe Agenda for Sustainable Socio-Economic Transformation (ZIM-ASSET).

The National Youth Policy is supposed to provide common aspirations and priorities for youth development across Zimbabwe. Through the National Youth Policy, the government declares the importance of active involvement by young people in national development, demonstrating the distinctive and complementary roles of all government ministries, the non-governmental sector and youth groups in youth development by providing a framework with common goals for development and promoting a spirit of cooperation and coordination. The priority groups of the policy are: young women; young people with disabilities; pupils and students; unemployed young people; out-of-school young people; young people living with HIV; and youth in the diaspora. The problem with the policies is lack of, or uneven, implementation.

### STATE RESPONSES AT THE LOCAL LEVEL

Data not found.

## CONCLUSIONS

The work commissioned for this study uncovered little or no official data regarding the situation of care leavers in Zimbabwe and their access to employment and decent work. This is primarily because the formal unemployment figures are around 83%; therefore, the informal sector absorbs most young people albeit without any mechanisms for tracing and monitoring their working conditions. No national statistics were found on children in care and young people leaving care. While there is some legislation governing children in care and care leavers, there is no way of knowing if these are implemented and to what extent. The informal care system, by far the largest provider of care in Zimbabwe, is unregulated and unmonitored, and residential facilities are poorly funded and unsupported. There are no programmes targeting care leavers specifically.

The country report made several recommendations, summarised here:

- ➔ Government should adopt a quota system when recruiting to ensure some young people and specifically care leavers are considered for employment;
- ➔ Develop affirmative programmes that consider young people from care institutions with lower entry points;
- ➔ Use budgets held nationally and by local authorities to invest in the Youth Employment Creation Fund and the Youth Development Fund so that young people have opportunities for decent work;
- ➔ In the forthcoming land audit, give young people including care leavers land to cultivate and earn a living from;
- ➔ Introduce entrepreneurship into the school curriculum and modernize vocational training, along with professional and systematically available career guidance.

129 World Bank database. 2015. Population, total. <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.POP.TOTL?locations=TG&view=chart>

130 UNICEF. 2016. State of the World's Children. Downloaded from: <https://www.unicef.org/sowc2016/>

131 ILOSTAT database. 2016. Unemployment, total (% of total labor force) (modeled ILO estimate). <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SL.UEM.TOTL.ZS>

132 ILOSTAT database. 2016. Unemployment, youth total (% of total labor force ages 15-24) (modeled ILO estimate). <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SL.UEM.1524.ZS>

133 Wyatt, A., Mupedziswa, R. & Rayment, C. 2010. Institutional Capacity Assessment: Department of Social Services. Final Report, October 2010. Harare: Government of Zimbabwe and UNICEF.

## CONCLUSIONS AND FINAL REMARKS

This study examines the information and gaps in legislation and protection systems for young people who are transitioning out of the alternative care system, with particular focus on preparation for and access to decent work, in twelve countries representing four regions of the world. It has proven to be highly innovative, employing SOS Children's Villages' country based fieldwork teams, under the guidance of experienced researchers at UCL Institute of Education and the coordination of SOS Children's Villages International. Testimonies from interviews with public authorities and experts from the social care, education and employment sectors, as well as consultations with young people who have grown up in care, have enriched the understanding of the phenomenon and helped address the dearth of data and research.

Across the participating countries, a familiar story emerges. In the midst of a global youth employment crisis, and impoverished educational and career prospects for young people, young people leaving care appear to be experiencing even more hardships in terms of preparation and participation in social and economic life. For these young people, the transition to adulthood is often more difficult than that of their peers. The lack of a supportive family environment makes them dependent on support from their government, NGOs and other actors that have taken on parenting responsibilities and provide care services and facilities. While the study countries are signatories to international frameworks such as the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Guidelines for the Alternative Care of Children, and while legislation is in place to protect children and young people without adequate parental care when they are under 18, the research shows that legislative and practical support falls away dramatically as soon as they turn 18. At a time where young people remain dependent on their families for longer, due to the growing social and economic insecurity, young people ageing out of alternative care arrangements are required to become fully independent and self-reliant at a relatively early age. This age corresponds to the end of legal entitlements rather than their actual level of maturity and readiness to step into independent living. The stakes are higher for those young people who cannot return

to the family home after their period in care or count on any social network as a safety net.

The following brief synopsis of the concluding messages from the country reports shows that there is a glaring lack of visibility of young people leaving care as a group in policy terms, which is consequently reflected in the (lack of) data collection and monitoring of the numbers and outcomes after leaving care, and in the support services available to them.

On the one hand, the **lack of recognition of young people leaving care** as a vulnerable group in policy terms often leads to neglect and rights violations.

➔ In countries with highly developed and universal social protection systems, the lack of dedicated policy definitions and measures could mean that young people leaving care are supported through measures targeting young people in general and that they do not become stigmatised; however, the study shows that even in developed welfare states, like Italy, general measures for young people are not sufficient for those who do not have any family support.

➔ In countries with targeted or low levels of social services, the lack of recognition translates into a lack of care and opportunities for social inclusion and decent work. Due to weak social protection systems, responses in terms of preparation and effective follow-up for young people reaching the upper age limit for provision of child care services (usually their 18th birthday) are mainly left to the efforts of NGOs, sympathetic individuals, and in some cases, the local public sector (municipalities) and their staff. This means that the delivery of support is highly geographically fragmented.

On the other hand, **national data collection** is often fragmented or non-existent, making it difficult to have oversight of the size of the population and the unique needs of care leavers. It also prevents the monitoring of trends, as well as the impact of social protection and care services on the chances of young people, who spent time in alternative care, to develop their full potential for successful integration in society and the labour market. In the country reports, the best efforts of providing such protection

and services were not followed through with monitoring data in the years after leaving the alternative care setting.

With regard to **opportunities for decent work**, study participants from all the countries in this report explained that it was difficult to find jobs and the insufficient regulations governing conditions of work and offering sufficient rewards to be able to survive financially also presented an issue. They said that it was common practice that employers exploited young people and raised the issue of discrimination of young people who had grown up in care. This picture is likely to be starker in countries with high rates of youth unemployment, but no research was found on the relation between improvements in economies and options for young people leaving care. However, from the study interviews it would appear that the likely employment options for young people leaving care are frequently temporary, low-paid and precarious. Such working conditions and their precarious nature result in a lack of certainty in their lives, which is also due to a lack of resources and networks that a family often provides. Moreover, study participants highlighted the need for more focus on developing plans for leaving care, skills for living independently, employability skills, dedicated vocational orientation and training for young people in care, in addition to legislation to ensure provision of after-care services, including suitable accommodation.

The study also identified **promising practices and proposals for reform** in several countries, which have proven to contribute to the improvement of the situation of young people leaving care. For example, in Cape Verde there is a multi-sector policy drive towards societal and employment integration that may also improve employment opportunities and conditions for these young people. More often, the non-governmental sector is taking care of developing and implementing programmes so that young people leaving care can benefit from a support network. These localised solutions are geographically sparse. For instance, in Croatia, children's homes and NGOs are working together on initiatives that help young people gain IT skills, language skills and driving licences, which in turn support their search for employment. These solutions need to be acknowledged by governments and, when proven effective in supporting young

people into work, expanded to target greater numbers of young people.

Overall, the **risk of labour market and social exclusion** is especially high for young people who have spent time in care, who are often left alone and ill-equipped to step into independent living when their care placements end. It is necessary to reflect and find the right responses to address the inequalities facing these young people, extending entitlements and offering them access to opportunities that can reduce their social, educational and economic disadvantages.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

### DATA COLLECTION, MONITORING AND RESEARCH

- ➔ States should strengthen national data collection and monitoring systems to develop reliable and disaggregated official data on the number, placement, and living conditions of young people in care and who have left care, in order to inform evidence-based policymaking and practice in their support. This responsibility of the state is also outlined in the United Nations Guidelines for the Alternative Care of Children (§69). For those who have left care, it would be important that data collection distinguishes between those who have aged out of care vs other reasons for leaving care at younger ages.
- ➔ Local, regional and national governments should coordinate and harmonize the collection and analysis of data to track outcomes of young people who spent time in care, especially in relation to basic indicators of education, employment, training, housing, food security, health, poverty and discrimination.
- ➔ A national centralised database with key information on children and young people placed in alternative care should be established and maintained up-to-date.
- ➔ Young people should be informed about the data and monitoring process, so that they are aware of the information being held on them and for what purpose, and they can also actively contribute to improve our understanding of their situation and the type of data they think would be important to collect.
- ➔ In accordance with privacy protections and in the child's best interest, ministries and government agencies should make the data public and accessible for the purpose of monitoring and research.
- ➔ There is a need for further research into the problems of and the social protections available for

young people leaving care in the study countries and elsewhere. Longitudinal data could be deployed to track progress at different points in time, in order to deepen the understanding of the pathways into employment and independent living of these young people, and to make comparisons with their peers without a care background.

### LAW, POLICY AND PRACTICE

- ➔ States should have a legal framework in place to regulate the preparation for leaving care and after-care services in line with the United Nations Guidelines for the Alternative Care of Children, with a clear definition of young people leaving care as a social group facing social disadvantages and, thus, being entitled to special protection.
- ➔ States should have a clear strategy and quality standards to accompany in their journey to adulthood young people who faced personal or family difficulties and were placed in care.
- ➔ Leaving care and becoming independent does not have a cut-off age. It is a process that should be planned well before the young person reaches the age of majority and should end when the young person has progressively reached a reasonable level of maturity, with the skills and resources to deal with the socio-economic challenges of living alone and actively contributing to the community. Elements of this process include quality education, health, employability, finance and housing. Extending entitlements for leaving care and after-care support beyond the age of 18 is crucial to realise the rights of young people, and to prevent long-term unemployment and other social issues. It is also cost-effective. Young people who leave care without proper preparation and support are likely to be found somewhere else in the public system. For example, under different social welfare schemes or in the judicial system.
- ➔ The timing of leaving alternative care should not be earlier than the average age of young people leaving the care of their own families.

### IMPROVING YOUTH EMPLOYABILITY AND DECENT WORK OUTCOMES

- ➔ Care professionals (social workers, educators, tutors, etc.) should be equipped with the required training and tools to best assist care leavers, including thorough training on how to embed a child rights-based approach to their work and in the preparation for leaving care. The training of care professionals should be sustained in the long run, together with key stakeholders in the field of child protection at national and international levels.
- ➔ The different actors contributing to protect the rights of young people in care and their integration in society and the labour market - including local governments, non-profit organizations, the business sector, educational institutions, the community etc. - should work together in a coordinated way, and exchange information and promising practices.
- ➔ Young people in care must be empowered and supported to actively participate in all stages of the leaving care process, know their rights, and be listened to seriously when they voice their opinions and concerns.
- ➔ Care leavers networks should be encouraged. Young people can play a crucial role, individually or as a group, in improving the understanding of needs and suitable solutions based on their own experience.
- ➔ Promising practices to support young people leaving care in localities and regions should be the subject of national evaluation and amplification, taking into account local and national contexts.
- ➔ The implementation of existing laws and policies must be improved to ensure: (i) better interdepartmental coordination at national level; (ii) no fragmentation of responsibilities among government departments; (iii) enhanced inter-agency cooperation at the local level, including cooperation between local governments and NGOs.
- ➔ There is a need to develop partnerships among government ministries, local and regional governments, NGOs and other service providers, and employers to increase the number of mentorships, sufficiently remunerated internships, apprenticeships and employment options for care leavers, so that they can follow their aspirations and reach their full potential.
- ➔ Social protection and support services should remove perverse incentives to take low-paid work or training to avoid homelessness.
- ➔ Opportunities to study beyond compulsory school level in further and higher education should be made accessible for care leavers, including through scholarships or exemption from fees.
- ➔ Preferential conditions to access loans or the establishment of support funds can help mitigate the economic challenges facing young people leaving care.
- ➔ The private sector must become a stakeholder in the preparation of young people for the labour market, to ensure their skills match the industry's needs through work-linked training opportunities.
- ➔ Positive discrimination measures, like tax relief for companies that employ care leavers or the establishment of employment quotas, can be explored based on national and local contexts.
- ➔ Advocacy actions to increase public awareness of the situation and rights of young people with care background should be promoted, including through the empowerment of young people to become self-advocates, in order to improve state responses and end discrimination against this group in society.





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