

Report of 5th Online Care Leavers' Café

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ONLINE CARE LEAVERS CAFE

TOPIC

HOW TO BE(COME) A GOOD
CL ADVOCATE?



ORGANISING NETWORKS

YOU'RE ORGANIZATION VIETNAM
SOS CHILDREN'S VILLAGES THAILAND



Section 1: About the Café Session

Introduction

The fourth Online Care Leavers' Café topic was "How to be(come) a good CL advocate?", which took place on 27th June 29, 2021. This session aimed to educate care leavers from different backgrounds and different parts of the world on what is advocacy, why it is so important, and how to do it through professional presentation, and care leaver leader panelists interview (local focus in this session), and to empower care leaver participants via providing psychological reflection space on their qualities and strengths and how to use those in advocacy.



About the organizing team

The session was conducted by 6 care leavers from two networks and 2 professionals;

- Phong Le, the care leaver from Vietnam Care Leaver Network as key note speaker
- Fabienne, Leader from the care leaver network Austria
- Te, Karn, Rei, Namthip, and Da, care leavers from SOS Children's Villages Thailand, from 4 villages
- Gunn and Hoa, advocacy focal persons from Thailand and Vietnam, consecutively.

Session Program

- Ice-break & Check-in
- Presentation of What, How, and Why "Advocacy" by Hoa, Advocacy Focal Person from SOS Children's Villages Vietnam
- Panelist Interview with two key care leaver leaders;

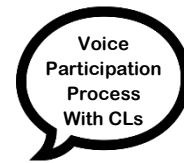
- **Phong Le** is the representative from Vietnam Care Leaver Network, a Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) Advocate, with a focus on quality education, reducing inequalities, and acting to stop the irreversible consequences of climate change. He is a founding member of the Leadership Development Fellowship by Teach for Vietnam and the Leading from Lived Experiences Fellowship by Teach for All.
- **Fabienne**
 - The River of Self-empowerment workshop
 - Life drawing session
 - Break out room for sharing session
 - Group sharing & self-reflection.

Where the participants and organizers were from?

(from the Chat and registration information)



Section 2: What, Why, and How to “advocate”?



What is Advocacy?

- To **give support** to the **voice for the voiceless**.
- To guide, to improve the social and economic situation
- to **represent** a certain group and **speak up** for their **rights**
- Decision makers are **powerful** and in high position. It's how we send them issues we care.
- **Legal support** on what Care Leaver want.
- **Empowerment** to support anybody.



THE KEY WORDS

"Equality"

"Rights"

"Bringing changes"

"Problem solving"

"Taking actions"

"Speak for those who have less voice heard"

Why Advocacy?

Some comments answered by the participants;

- We do advocacy because want to change the world and giving them **equality in life**.
- To guide and improve economic situation where this affect the populations across the continuum, including care leavers.
- To help us making equal voice for **those who are vulnerable** in the society.
- To protect and to promote our rights.
- The system is **accumulation of people's thinking**. And the thinking isn't always perfect and suitable for all times; it needs adjustment from times to times to improve the system to suite well with people's lives. And with no voicing out or **taking actions**, the system remains the same. And that's the necessity of why we have to advocate.
- If we don't speak for our issues, who will? In our work environment, there are many problems, so we need to **analyze**, to work with, and to **voice out** about the problems, and to **mobilize others** to take

"To mobilize others to take action, including the government"

"To strengthening law reinforcement"

"Empowerment"

action on the problems. For example, if most of the care leavers have problem with access to education, we have to address the issue and the rights deficit, having the support from others for the equality.

- To **ensure** that the **government heard** our problems and to properly **work on** the issues that need to be fixed.

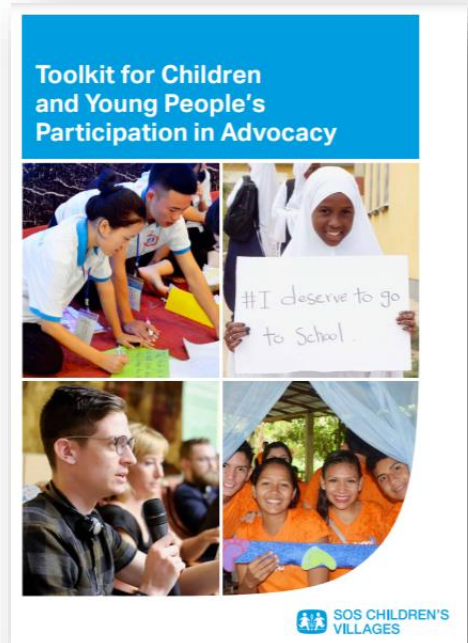
- **Law reinforcement** wasn't strong. We have to fight for social justice, child abuse, and other issues. It's important for the care leavers, and those who have been in alternative care to share experiences to form recommendations so that the service providers can improve the quality of the child care, and also to advocate the government to provide support.

- To ensure that our problems are being worked on, and also to help **empower** the target group.

How Advocacy?

There are several forms of advocacy e.g.

- Collaborate with the local authority or organization to solve the problems.
- Listening to their problems, and support them by giving them tools and providing the beneficiary with information and guidance. And then, we respect their decision,
- Research on the evidence to take action to create positive changes, and to change the lives of vulnerable group.
- Connection and information sharing to come up with common concern/problem is first step of advocacy. It is good that we are gathering in the forum/ care leavers cafe to advocate for the rights of our community and for vulnerable groups,
- Using social media campaign,
- Petitions,
- Mobilize other people to take collective activities.



You can look for more details in the SOS Children's Villages Toolkit for Children and Young People's Participation in Advocacy to explore more ways to advocate with children and youth in this link.

https://www.sos-childrensvillages.org/getmedia/2ee87f70-bf9f-4c06-ba6f-5d9738d53586/CYPAToolkit_web_ENGLISH.pdf

How to become a good advocate?

It takes time and effort to do advocacy. While practicing advocacy itself, we become a good advocate by the constant learning and practicing more about advocacy, then we need to develop action plan for advocacy.

Section 3: Care Leaver Panelists Interview

Guess speaker No.1: Phong Le

"As a care leaver, it's really hard to fight for things with just by connecting the dot. The gap of generation of care leaver community makes igniting idea. We don't have connection with them. **The experience from older generation with younger ones can be helpful. We need to work as a community.** We have the preference to connect each other.



Phong Le

Care Leaver Leader from Vietnam Care Leaver Network,
Founder and CEO of YOURE Organization, which stands
for your education, your empowerment, and your
employment

What are your inspirations in becoming the leader making changes for others?

"The reasons I established YOURE Organization is that I aware that education is the primary concerns due to that many of care leavers do not have efficient skills to compete in the career market, especially during Covid-19. And that we have the social platform for SOS Children's Villages. We have the Facebook group with other organizations for sharing opportunities. This makes it easier for care leavers to connect and help each other."

Do you have any advices for those who want to become self-advocate, too?

"Most of the care leavers lack of communication and analyze skills, so they don't know how to voice their problems to be heard. From that perspectives, I recognized that if they want to be self-advocate, they need to work harder on such skills, also how to present information in proper way to make the policy maker understand their points of view.

Anyway, **one bird cannot make the whole spring, we need to create the movement together as a whole.** I think that 'empathy' is the key bringing out the common problems. The communication platform is needed to bring encourage

within them. The Care Leaver Café is a good example where people come to talk, and to share issues collectively.”

How to advocate during the Covid-19?

“It is the right time for them to advocate and to present themselves in the eyes of public. Currently, in the news, there are no news about the care leavers yet. The priority would be to increase visibility for the care leaver community and to make a declaration to make it easier for the care professions to easier advocate with the government. If the care leaver community is aware of, it would be much more helpful.”

Guest speaker No.2: Fabienne



Fabienne

Leader of care leaver network Austria

How did you start to become the leader of care leaver network?

„Once, my care giver send me a message about an opportunity to get involved in a care leaver project. I attended the project and it was the first time I got to know about care leavers.

Since this moment, I've never left the Care leavers cause beside and worked/got involved in many projects about them. Along this way, networks with these people were formed because there were things in common that was condensed into the collective discourse to fight for.“

What is the issue you and your network fight for?

“In Austria we fight for a better situation for the care leavers in general. For example, we demand the government to support care leaver in extending the age for leaving care, from 18 to 26 year-old: the average age of young people leaving home in Europe is 26, then it is not fair for care leavers to have to be completely independent at 18 years. The leaving care period is quite vulnerable as most care leavers from childcare institutions don't have proper or any support, and parents or anybody to turn to when needed. These young people did not choose their situation. So they need someone who speaks up for their rights and their vulnerable situation. This is the kind of fairness I'm fighting for. The moment when a child comes into the care system, the parents are no longer responsible due to many different reasons. In the end, the institutions and the government take on the responsibility, which is a huge thing. It's

important that someone is there and supports the continuation of their education and creates a fairness for this group in this and other perspectives as well. Every young person should be able to start their life as adults without any weak point.”

How does the Care Leaver Network operate? And how do you all advocate for care leaver’s rights?

“We in Austria come from many different care institutions. To stay connected, we have the possibility to attend at a kind of round table where different people working in different care settings and care positions all come together and discuss what is and what is not happening. This kind of meeting takes place every two months. So we Care Leavers get new information and we connect directly with the source. Additionally, we get attention from the media because they know that we exist and have a stable network. For example, they do a short television show on care leavers and ask care leavers for an interview. We take a lot of different opportunities so people do know about us.

Many of us turned to where we came from and work now as social workers, child care experts or in another setting that has to do with the child welfare system. For me personally, as I’m super interested in these child care issues, I’m working now at SOS Children’s Villages as an Intern in the professional setting of Care Leaving. So I have a lot of opportunities to engage with care leavers in many different ways. What is significant is to know what kind of opportunity is out there: sometimes by simply just Googling it, sometimes through professional or network connections and seizing this opportunity.”

How much personal resources does it take in becoming a self-advocate care leaver?

“It is true that it takes some resources. For some Care Leavers in Austria for example, it’s really hard to bring in a lot of time because many of them are super occupied or are struggling in areas of life like getting their first jobs or the coronavirus. Also being active in a network should be some kind of teamwork where we can work together hand-in-hand. This is easier for people who have time flexibility and a stable situation in life.”

Why is it significant to become self-advocate?

"I really encourage every care leaver to be a self-advocate because we have such a rich experience in this topic and this is so important. I think that people who haven't been through this experience might not be as good an advocate as a care leaver could be with all his experience. We are strong and a lot of us know how to use their voices."

How to advocate during the Covid-19?

"Covid-19 is affecting everyone, but especially young care leavers are much more and deeper affected because when they lose their job while having no safety network to go to when they need it is a huge issue. And while going through a hard time, it is more difficult to advocate for your own issues. And it is necessary to have Care Leaver self-advocates. But now during Covid-19 a lot of events turned into online-events, and when you are in a stable situation, this makes it a lot easier to advocate, as you can reach the advocate opportunity from your own home via your computer or smartphone without having to plan how to travel to an advocacy event from the UN for example. We can now just go online like this! And the same for this Care Leaver café: we can participate and connect with likeminded people from all around the world."

Section 4: The River of Empowerment

Key reflection after sharing the journey of life for each person.

- Life has brought us many obstacles we have to face, but these made us stronger and gave us tools to better navigate through life.
- I have learnt that care leavers have almost experienced a lot of challenges that's makes us vulnerable at some extent we wouldn't wish other young children to go through.
- Personal institution should be responsible for the person until they can become independent.
- We are all in this together regardless of parts of the world. We experience similar challenges.

Need for further support

Skills in order to overcome fear and circumstances, self-doubt, resilience skills and challenges.

Report writer: Tanachaporn Putiyanun (Gunn)