



International
Care Leavers Convention
2020



FIRST INTERNATIONAL
CARE LEAVERS
CONVENTION, 2020



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Event Report

“

I would like to live in a world where investments are made to ensure those from public care and others affected by adversity, everywhere can reconnect, build and heal, free from shame and public stigma.

This would be socially just, fiscally prudent and frankly just plain easier and better for the whole of society.

”

- Care Leaver as cited in a speaker's presentation at the convention

PREFACE



The above quote from a Care Leaver, succinctly captures the discomfort on one hand and dreams on the other that every Care Leaver across the globe go through. It was to fulfill this unspoken desire, that the “1st International Care Leavers Convention 2020” was planned. Going through the initial hiccups due to pandemic, the organizing team comprising of passionate Care leavers and committed leadership from organizations working with Care leavers, converted the obstacle into an opportunity and scaled up a physical program planned in New Delhi, India in March 2020 to a much wider global convention, held virtually in November 2020.

The convention was planned in an inclusive fashion and began with seeking inputs from Care Leavers during September 2020. Around 140 Care Leavers responded and the feedback captured their aspirations from such a convention in form of topics which mattered as well as understanding various ways in which people wanted to engage in the convention. While designing the convention, a 360° view was taken to ensure that viewpoints of all stakeholders were captured whether these are Care Leavers themselves, organizations working with Care Leavers, policy makers, researchers and other subject matter experts. A dedicated website for the convention was created (<http://www.careleaversconvention.udayancare.in/>) to facilitate registrations, share information and act as a repository for all relevant information. A series of pre-events were planned before the main convention – with the dual aim of focusing on niche areas related to Care Leaving as well as building a momentum towards participation in the main convention. These pre-events focused on topics such as the importance of Care Leaver networks, the art of video making as a means to amplify one’s voice, importance and impact of research in the domain of care leaving and poster presentations on a range of aspects of leaving care. Timing of these sessions was carefully chosen to ensure coverage of maximum people across Europe, Africa, Asia and Australia as well as North and South America. Furthermore, the sessions were kept short to not allow any online fatigue.

The main convention was planned on a virtual platform, which provided a near live experience of a physical seminar with poster booths, welcome videos, selfie corner, networking lounge, auditorium, helpdesk as well as various kinds of resources available at different booths. People from more than 85 countries participated in the convention.

Finally, a closing session was planned, where Care Leavers came face to face with policy makers and shared the collective takeaways from the convention. Over the series of the pre-events, main event and closing session, a wide array of speakers from across the globe participated and shared their insights and valuable suggestions.

Care Leavers participating, went back with developing a global family and a confidence with which they said out loud and clear - **“Nothing for young people without young people.”** As an outcome of the convention, a digital space for Care Leavers has been curated in the form of www.careleaverscommunity.org which aims to become a global repository of resources pertaining to care leaving and beneficial to care leavers.

This report is a compilation of different stages of the whole convention, its various components and discussions which happened across the two months period and aims to serve as a guidebook for Care Leaver networks and organizations working with Care Leavers to seek inputs from, as well as for policy makers to understand this cohort better to develop policies in keeping with their dreams and aspirations. The report hopefully would serve as a tool for the planning of the next International Care Leavers Convention in 2022, led by Care Leavers themselves. In the words of Gift, a care experienced youth, “2020 has been a year of pandemic for the world but for Care Leavers it has been a year of hope and a year of possibility because of the Care Leavers Convention held virtually”.

Kiran Modi, PhD
Founder Managing Trustee
Udayan Care



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Special Gratitude: To all the Care Leavers who stood up and owned the platform and participated in various pre-events and main convention.

Thanks to all the speakers and panelists who spared their valuable time in sharing their insights about the topic of Care leavers.

Organising Committee Members: Dr. Kiran Modi and Ms. Leena Prasad (Udayan Care, India), Ms. Chathuri Jayasooriya, Ms. Amelia Andrews and Ms. Purnima Jindal (SOS Children's Villages International), Dr. Severine Thomas, Dr. Carolin Ehlke, Ms. Dorothee Kochskämper, Prof. Dr. Wolfgang Schröer (University of Hildesheim, Germany), Ms. Martine Tobe (Kinderperspectief, Netherlands), Ms. Nimmu Kumari (Member, Generation Never Give Up, Sri Lanka), Ms. Karishma Singh (CLAN, India), Ms. Laila and Ms. Jimena Del Castillo (Latin America Network of Care Leavers), and Mr. Jeffrey Chasi (Zimbabwe Care Leavers' Network)

Supporting Organisations: SOS Children's Villages International Office, Indian Oil, Miracle Foundation, Tata Trusts, Powergrid Corporation, Friends of Foster Care India and iPartner India.

Technical Partner Organisations: UNICEF, EPIC, FICE International, Wataneya Society, Create Foundation, Eurochild, Make Me Smile International, ISS, CYC Net, A Little Light.

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INTRODUCTION

Care Leavers are young people, who have lived in Alternative Care settings, either in foster care or in residential care as a child and have left them on attaining adulthood, which is mostly 18 years. Having lived in a highly protected and controlled environment till the age of 18, they find it difficult to live independently in the society later. The transition from living in a protective care facility to independent living often brings in a host of difficulties, due to the absence of a pivotal family-like ecosystem, minimal community integration, and limited ownership of essential resources, at the care setting like that of a residential care or foster care. This leaves them with no confidence in their own agency, lacking basic life skills, and disrupted education, often left with little or no job opportunities which crushes their aspirations. To settle for the early start, they are pushed to get into menial jobs and often get stigmatized in the society. Having not experienced stability in their lives, these young people go through immense mental stress and have no access to support services. The outcomes then are but logical – taking to streets, substance abuse, homelessness and unemployment, and hence pushed towards crime or not engaged in anything, often leading them towards suicidal tendencies.

Because of their unique situation, Care Leavers are seen as one of the most vulnerable youth in society, who need extra care and support at the individual, collective, societal as well as national and international level.

The First International Convention for Care Leavers

Four organizations from different parts of the world: Udayan Care (India), SOS Children's Villages, University of Hildesheim (Germany) and Kinderperspectief (Netherlands) joined hands in March 2020 to convene the first ever international convention for Care Leavers and it was planned in New Delhi, India in March 2020. Together, they formed the Organizing Committee (OC) (more details on OC members in the next section). All arrangements were completed with the help of numerous support organizations, the networks and partners of Care Leavers, and approximately 300 participants registered with over 100 Care Leavers from 25 countries. However, with the exceptional circumstances created by COVID-19, it was realized that it was imprudent to put together individuals from various countries under one roof in a large gathering. Keeping the protection and well-being of all participants in mind and on the basis of advisory provided by the Government of India, the event was declared postponed.

The OC closely observed the developments from March to August and continued to virtually meet and engage with the Care Leavers transnationally. A landscape survey was followed by a series of webinars from June-July with 100 young Care Leavers globally to understand the challenges they were going through during the pandemic and their needs around COVID-19. 11 gaps were identified, thus setting forth a set of recommendations in the form of "Care Leavers Declaration" to mitigate these risks. The process showed how the Care Leavers from different countries experienced similar challenges during the crisis and the virtual connection provided them psychosocial support and resiliency by connecting with each other and voicing their concerns. The process also showed that young people have the power to find their own solutions and inform the service provision and policy development locally as well as internationally. This gave

encouragement to the OC to create a virtual convention, so as not to lose the momentum and empower young Care Leavers worldwide to come together for a virtual conference to share, learn and gain from the experiences of each other, policymakers' and practitioners' experience on Aftercare issues.

A few other things commonly heard ideas from the Care Leavers, during the continuous engagement that the OC had with Care Leavers, were as follows:

- | The convention is only the starting point to come together and it is not a one-time activity but something that had to be sustained and nurtured continuously.
- | The engagement plan with Care Leavers must be planned in a way that brings in maximum young people together and technology can aid in this initiative to a great extent.
- | The need to come together is global and existing networks of Care Leavers are equally excited and willing to contribute and support the process.
- | The virtual platform provided an opportunity to expand the reach and yet achieve depth. It allowed for more participation while cutting down the cost to travel and boarding.
- | The bringing together of Care Leavers globally will mitigate some of the emotional and connection loss they had experienced during the crisis and motivate and inspire them towards resiliency.
- | The virtual convention brought forth a huge opportunity for media outreach and advocacy, with social media playing an enabling role.

Accordingly, the three-day convention was held between November 23 to 25, 2020 virtually and saw participation from 2300 delegates from more than 80 countries with diverse expertise and experience in the global care system. Thus, amidst the crisis, there was a silver lining since more Care Leavers could join across countries and regions due to the virtual format and share their needs, aspirations, challenges and what they themselves considered to be good policies and practices. These collective voices of the Care Leavers were heard by the policy makers, practitioners, donors and the researchers. The outcome of the convention saw the birth of a social movement for the Care Leavers driven by the motto "nothing for us, without us".

Organizing Committee (OC)



Udayan Care was registered in 1994 as a Public Charitable Trust and works to empower vulnerable children, women, and youth, in 27 cities across 15 states of India. Udayan Care accords the highest importance to child and youth participation, encouraging their direct voices to be heard. In 26 years, they have directly impacted the lives of about 30,000 children, women, and youth as beneficiaries as well as hundreds of thousands as indirect beneficiaries through their advocacy, research, publications and training programs. Udayan Care has recently concluded a seminal research on Aftercare in India. The research has initiated a much-needed discourse on the need for robust Aftercare program among different stakeholders in India, including Care Leavers and has been widely appreciated nationally and internationally. Post this research, they are also piloting demonstrable evidence building projects on Alternative Care in different states of India, with a focus on transition planning and Aftercare. Efforts are also being made to bring Care Leavers together as peer-support networks in different states of India.



SOS Children's Villages is a global federation working to protect and care for children who have lost parental care, or who stand at risk of losing it. They work with communities, partners and states to ensure that the rights of all children, in every society, are fulfilled. They are an independent, secular, non-government organisation working in the spirit of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child with five regional offices in five continents. They believe that every child belongs to a family and has the right to grow with love, respect and security.



Kinderperspectief is committed to children and young people in the Netherlands and Southeast Europe who grow up in difficult circumstances. They want to offer them a better future perspective. They do this by supporting and helping to develop projects and initiatives together with partner organizations. They consider the perspective that children and young people themselves have on their situation and future very important. Their motto is therefore: "See through the eyes of children and young people and build their future together".



The University of Hildesheim – Germany is regionally and transnationally connected through intense contacts with research organisations, NGOs, social service organisations and educational institutions. Its strength in research is widely visible and comprises diverse topics, different theoretical approaches and methodologies. There has been much research on young people's rights and vulnerable groups with a focus on public child and youth care at the *Institute of Social Pedagogy and Organization Studies*. It founded a research cluster on residential and foster care. The cluster focuses on basic research to support reforms in this sector. Members of the institute are also part of the *International Research Network on Transitions to Adulthood from Care*.



Care Leavers Association and Network, Delhi is an independent youth collective for all Care Leavers in Delhi, India to encourage peer support, advocate for their rights and create a network of mentors to guide CLAN.



Zimbabwe Care Leavers Network contributes to capacity development and engages with duty bearers to influence policies and programs affecting children and young people in residential care.



Generation Never Give Up is a space for youth who are leaving care homes in Sri Lanka to find the support they need to face the challenges of an independent life, through a nation-wide peer network.



Latin American Network of Care Leavers is a coalition of Latin American organisations working to improve the lives of adolescents and youth who live or who have lived in Child Protection Systems.



APPROCH

Continuous Engagement: Not just a 3 Day Event

Once the OC decided to go ahead with the virtual convention format – the first step that was undertaken was to seek inputs from the Care Leavers themselves about what they were looking for in such a convention. Based on a Google form survey, which saw more than 140 responses from Care Leavers from across Asia, Europe and Africa, the event outline was drawn. Because of time-zone difference and perceived ‘online fatigue’, there was a challenge that the main event could be held only for a limited number of hours during the day – to make it easy to join for maximum participants. However, since the topic of Care Leaving was so vast, that it would have been unfair, if because of the time limit challenge, certain key aspects were not given its due focus. It was therefore decided to not look at the convention as just a three-day event but a continuous engagement opportunity. A poster contest was launched on the event website. Four pre-events were planned at a space of one week each starting Oct 24th leading up to the main convention. These four pre-events were anchored by one each of the OC organizations.

	Format and Topic	Anchored by	Date
Pre Event 1	Panel Discussion : Importance of Care Leaver Networks	SOS Children’s Villages	Oct 24 th
Pre Event 2	Training : Creating Videos for Raising voice	Udayan Care	Oct 31 st
Pre Event 3	Panel Discussion: Research in the area of Care Leaving	University of Hildesheim, Germany	Nov 7 th
Pre Event 4	Poster Presentation	Kinderperspectief	Nov 21 st

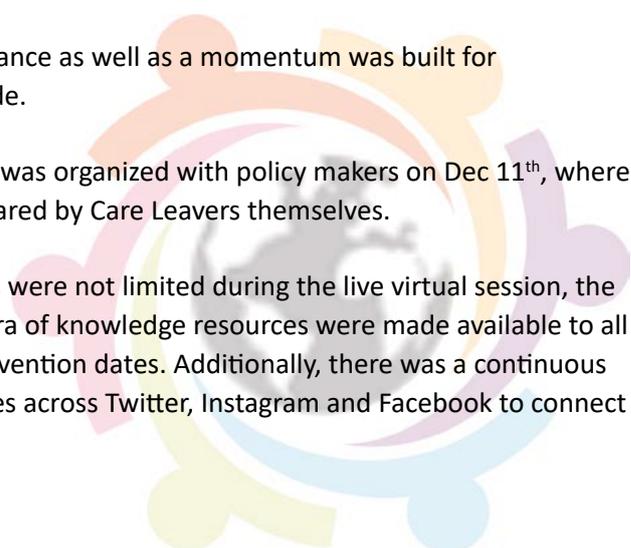
This ensured that each topic got its due time and importance as well as a momentum was built for participation in the main convention in a spread out mode.

Finally, with a gap of around 20 days, the closing session was organized with policy makers on Dec 11th, where the key demands / expectations of Care Leavers were shared by Care Leavers themselves.

To further ensure that the convention and its discussions were not limited during the live virtual session, the platform with recordings of all sessions as well as plethora of knowledge resources were made available to all registered participants, for 30 days beyond the main convention dates. Additionally, there was a continuous engagement built through dedicated social media handles across Twitter, Instagram and Facebook to connect with the Care Leavers across the globe.

Participatory process

The convention of this scale was made possible due to the participation and engagement of different stakeholders during its planning and execution stage. Besides consulting with the various key stakeholders,



the following steps were taken to create a participatory process while conceptualising the different elements of this convention

Four Care Leavers Networks from different parts of the world i.e. India, Sri Lanka, Latin America and Zimbabwe were part of the OC, besides the four initiating partners.

1. Before finalising the agenda of the convention, a need assessment was done to collate the expectation of Care Leavers, who were the core of this event. More than 140 Care Leavers responded to the same across domains, like most preferred social media channel (Facebook and Instagram), most preferred way to access the virtual event (mobile), most preferred mode to connect with other Care Leavers (Whatsapp and Facebook) – which helped design the pre-events and main event communication and IT infrastructure.
2. There were further questions which deliberated upon the motivation to be part of Care Leaver networks (network to raise voice for common cause); expectations from the convention (best practices learning and networking); expectations from a virtual networking platform etc. These helped design the content and speakers of the main event as well as pre-events.
3. Once the date of the convention was decided, various sub-committees were formed to handle various activities as a part of the convention, viz. technical committee, sponsorship committee, social media committee, Care Leavers engagement committee, etc. These sub-committees were constituted from different organisations belonging to OC, alongside agency partners as well as Care Leavers themselves were part of these sub-committees.
4. In a focused manner, dedicated teams from OC worked to engage with technical partners and donor partners. The concept note about the event was shared with them. All technical partners from different parts of the globe shared their best practices in the field of Care Leaving and these became part of repository on the event platform, thus providing immense opportunities for cross learning with practitioners and Care Leavers.
5. One of the key objectives during organising the event was to make the event engaging for the Care Leavers as well as researchers on the topic. A poster contest was announced on the event website, inviting participation on various facets of Care Leaving. Final shortlisted posters not only got a chance to present during pre-event 4 but also got featured on the event platform in a dedicated virtual booth.
6. A pre-event about video making was planned, as a two way interactive workshop, to build participation from Care Leavers.
7. Social media engagement was initiated across multiple channels for the convention, viz. Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and YouTube and executed through a weekly engagement plan, focusing on the dual objective of promoting awareness about the cause as well as promoting awareness about the convention.
8. The Speakers were carefully chosen, for their expertise and interest in the topic. Care Leaving practitioners, influential policy makers, researchers of universities, international NGOs, UN bodies and government bodies were invited to speak.
9. Additionally, there was a dedicated Convention Café session which was organized separately from the three-day main convention on Nov 25th 2020 to suit the American time zone so as to brief the Care Leavers from Americas about main discussions as well as to listen to their views.

It was ensured that at all stages, Care leavers were themselves at the forefront of the events – in inviting participation, organizing, anchoring as well as leading the conclusion session with eminent policy makers.

360 Degree view of the Event

The OC of the First International Care Leavers Convention 2020 took special care to cover the 360 degree view of the topics while keeping at core the issues faced by Care Leavers, their stories of struggle, resilience, failures and successes.

Perspectives of other stakeholders (researchers, practitioners, policy makers etc.) were interwoven in a seamless manner all across the three months of convention as well as the three days of the main event as well as at the closing session. This ensured that as an outcome of the convention, an action agenda emerged that is comprehensive and holistic in nature. The main event and the various events, therefore, had dedicated sessions to listen to the perspective of these stakeholders and also provide them an opportunity to listen to the collective voice of Care Leavers as a global community.

Adding to this, these perspectives represented different countries and their contexts, where several similarities emerged and highlighted the need for creating more awareness on the need of Youth leaving care and amplifying their voices.



PARTICIPATION AND EXECUTION

The convention spread across 3 months saw a cumulative registration of more than 2500+ registrations from over 85 countries across seven sessions spread over 50 days.

Pre Events

Pre Event 1: Importance of Care Leaver Networks

24th Oct, 1330 IST / 0900 CET / 0800GMT / 1100 EAT

To enable a brighter future for Care Leavers, strengthening their Networks is crucial. A focused panel discussion was organized on October 24, 2020 to bring together experiences of Care Leavers and Civil Society Organizations from across the globe, aiming towards the identification of actions to strengthen Care Leavers Networks.

The session was convened by Chathuri Jayasooriya, Advocacy Advisor-Asia of SOS Children's Villages International on behalf of the organizing Committee. The session was moderated by Ruth Wacuka (Care Leaver Representative, Kenya Society of Care Leavers (KESCA), Kenya) and Karishma Singh (Care Leaver Representative, Care Leavers' Association and Network (CLAN), India). Following people joined as expert panelists:

1. Fabienne Landerer, Care Leaver Representative, Association Care Leaver, Austria
2. Jeffrey Chasi, Care Leaver Representative, Zimbabwe Care Leavers' Network
3. Nahla EINemr, Care Leaver Representative, Care Leavers' Network in Egypt
4. Nimmu Kumari, Care Leaver Representative, Generation Never Give-up Network (GNGN), Sri Lanka
5. Divakar Ratandurai, National Director, SOS Children's Villages, Sri Lanka
6. Martine Tobe, Director, Kinderperspectief, Netherlands
7. Yasmin Nasef, Youth Development Senior Specialist, Wataneya Society, Egypt
8. Natasha Ntini, Gender and Public Policy Specialist, Southern African, Parliamentary Support Trust, Zimbabwe

Besides the above, there were recorded sessions from Care Leavers from Latin America Network of Care Leavers of the Child Protection System. Lady Cobena from Ecuador, Jasmin Perez from Argentina and Mario Luis Bustios from Bolivia. Around 231 participants (from 41 countries) who were Care Leavers, researchers, civil society organization representatives, subject matter experts from across Asia, Africa, Europe and Americas joined the session.

In the first half of the session, the representatives of Care Leavers networks introduced their organizations and shared their experiences of engaging with Care Leavers' networks, including responsibilities, challenges, achievements, support requirements with special reference to the COVID 19 pandemic. Besides the above, the representatives of the civil society organizations spoke about the importance of policy advocacy focusing on the core issues of housing, employment, higher education and legal support, required for Care Leavers. The second part of the session focused more on the challenges, needs of peer-led Care Leaver networks and the proposed solutions for their urgent necessities of job opportunities, housing information, tools of policy advocacy and emotional and mental support. The session ended on a hopeful note with the proposed need for an International Care Leavers' Network.

For detailed pre-event report, refer to <http://bit.ly/PreEvent1Report>

Pre Event 2 : Creating Videos as Means to Raise Awareness, a Skill Building Session

31st Oct, 1330 IST / 0900 CET / 0800GMT / 1100 EAT

An interactive training workshop on video making was conducted on 31st October 2020 to make the Care Leavers understand the power of video to express themselves and advocate their cause. The training workshop was facilitated by Isha Chitnis, who has been creating videos and training youth to create videos since 2016 and have focused on using this medium to create social impact. The session was moderated by Aneesha Wadhwa, Executive Director of Udayan Care. The session also saw four Care Leavers who had leveraged the video medium effectively come in and share their experiences. These were Nawras Khalid Haroon from Jordan, Naglaa Fathy Khalil from Egypt, Gurmeet Kaur from India and Moses Akash from Sri Lanka.

The workshop saw registrations from 238 participants, from 45 countries, of which over 50% were Care Leavers. The 2-hour training session was subdivided into micro teaching modules where the Care Leavers were introduced to:

- | Different types of videos focusing on messaging and diverse audiences in mind
- | Importance and impact of telling a story through video
- | The planning process behind shooting a video
- | Interactive discussion on participants' plans for videos thus making it action oriented
- | Curated suggestions on apps to edit videos

While 76 % participants had no experience in making videos but by the end of the session, almost 97% agreed that videos are the best way to spread awareness about their cause. The interactive workshop was appreciated by the participants and was seen as an effective session for understanding the importance of video to create a veritable impact in the lives of Care Leavers.

For detailed pre-event 2 report, refer to <http://bit.ly/PreEvent2Report>

Pre Event 3: Research in the Domain of Care Leaving

07th Nov, 1330 IST / 0900 CET / 0800GMT / 1100 EAT



A virtual panel discussion was conducted on 7th November 2020 where academic researchers in institutions and Care Leaving organizations and Care Leavers representatives from different Care Leaver Networks came together to discuss and provide an insight into global research on leaving care processes as well as into research activities of Care Leavers themselves. The agenda of the session was divided into 2 parts:

- I Global comparative studies in Care Leaving research, frameworks, challenges and solutions for Care Leavers
- I Perspective of Care Leavers and participative researching on leaving care

The panel discussion was moderated by Prof. Severine Thomas & Prof. Wolfgang Schröer (University of Hildesheim) of Germany. The **panelists** were chosen to represent from four different parts of the world - Africa, Asia, Europe and the Middle East. The speakers for the session included:

Sl no	Name	Designation
1	Severine Thomas	Researcher, The Institute of Social Pedagogy and Organization Studies, University of Hildesheim (Germany).
2	Wolfgang Schorer	Professor, The Institute of Social Pedagogy and Organization Studies, University of Hildesheim (Germany)
3	Adrian van Breda	Professor, Social Work, University of Johannesburg (South Africa)
4	Benjamin Strahl	Research Associate and Lecturer, The Institute of Social Pedagogics and Organizational Studies, University of Hildesheim (Germany)
5	V.Mann Feder	Professor, Concordia University Montreal, (Canada)
6	Maria Groining	Research Assistant, University of Klagenfurt, (Austria)
7	Noha Emam Hassanin	Research and Knowledge Management Senior Specialist, Wataneya society (Egypt)
8	Kiran Modi	Founder and Managing Trustee, Udayan Care (India)
9	Fabienne Landerer	Care leaver Representative, (Austria)
10	Purnima Jindal	Youth Regional Focal Person, SOS Children's Villages Asia
11	Dr. JP Horn	Care Leaver Representative and PhD scholar (California)
12	Hadeel Al- Amayrah	Care Leaver Representative and Senior Communication Specialist, Information and Research Centre of King Hussein Foundation (Jordan)
13	Katharina Hoffken	Care Leaver Representative as well as a Social Worker (Germany)
14	Tanja Abou	Care Leaver Representative and Social worker (Germany)

The session saw 88 registrations from across 45 countries with 45 % of registrants being Care Leavers and 45% participants being subject matter experts (a combination of people from different walks working with Care Leavers) and researchers.

One of the interesting aspects of the session was the talk about the “strengths” of the Care Leavers than their deficits and to bring about perspectives of older Care Leavers who are often ignored in research. There is a pressing need to recognize Care Leavers who are researchers, as “experts”, who can then co-create and develop policies with policy makers and government institutions since at the end, they are best judges to solve their issues having experienced them first hand. Further, the need and scope of more research on Care Leavers were emphasized. Dr. Wolfgang Schroer concluded that there is a need to “open up” for more research and interactive sessions like these with multiple stakeholders focusing on the “strengths” of the Care Leavers. This will benefit the whole Care Leaving community in the long run especially in these uncertain COVID-19 times.

For a detailed pre-event report, refer to <http://bit.ly/PreEvent3Report>

Pre-event 4: Poster Presentation and Adjudication

21st Nov, 1330 IST / 0900 CET/ 0800GMT / 1100 EAT

A poster contest was organized On Nov 21, 2020 as a part of the convention. It invited researchers, Care Leavers and subject matter experts to present ideas in the areas of promising practices or good models of work with Care Leavers; research studies; legislation regarding Care Leavers as well as in the process of formation and strengthening of Care Leavers’ peer networks.

The following participants presented their posters.

Sl no	Name	Designation
1	Joelle Wimper	Representative of Youth Welfare Forum of Care Leavers ,Netherlands
2	Lily Rjinberg	Representative of Youth Welfare Forum of Care Leavers ,Netherlands
3	Magdalena Kępk	Co-founder of “Samodzielni Robinsonowie” Foundation(serving Foster youth). Care Leaver Representative, Poland
4	Purnima Jindal	Youth Regional Focal person of SOS Children’s Villages Asia
5	Federica Gullo	Researcher at the University of Oviedo, Spain
6	Namuyanja Ritah	Care Leaver Representative from Uganda
7	Abdullah Oskay	Ashoka Fellow, Founder of Turkish NGO(on Care Leavers) ,Care Leaver, Turkey
8	Caroline Ehlke	Researcher and teacher at the University of Hildesheim
9	Martina Sabetta	Care Leaver Representative, Italy
10	Bojan Krsnk	Leaving Care Support Expert, SOS Children’s Villages, Croatia
11	Laura Garcia	Care Leaver Representative, Spain
12	Divya Fernandez	Social Worker with St Catherine’s Home orphanage and children’s home,India
13	Gabriella Rask	Project Co-ordinator at SOS Children’s Village International, Austria
14	Vu Thien	Coordinator of youth care and development under the national program development team of SOS Children’s Villages Vietnam

15	Wolfgang Sierwald and Veronika Salzburger	Both scientific co-workers at the Socio Pedagogical Institute of SOS-Kinderdorf e.V, Germany
16	Akash Moses	Care Leaver Representative and member of GNG, Sri Lanka
17	Yasmine Naseff	Youth Development Senior Specialist, Wataneya Society, Egypt

At the end of the process, three winners were declared through an online voting process by Care Leavers only, and an audience choice award was also declared. The session was moderated by Joelle Wimper & Lily Rijnberg (Youth Welfare Forum Care Leavers) of Netherlands. The winners of the posters was **assessed on the following criteria**

- | Level of participation of Care Leavers
- | Design of the poster
- | Level of Impact on the life of Care Leavers
- | Clarity of poster without presentation

Laura Garcia of Spain won the first prize for her poster on PLANEA Program; Gabriella Rask of Austria won the second prize for her poster on ‘preparing for leaving care’; Bojan Krsnik from Croatia won the third prize for the poster on Leaving Care Expert model. Martina Sabetta won the audience choice award for her poster on ‘On the road to future’



For detailed pre-event report, refer to <http://bit.ly/PreEvent4Report>



Main Convention – November 23-25, 2020

23-25 Nov, 1330 IST / 0900 CET / 0800GMT / 1100 EAT

Nov 23-25, 2020 saw the culmination of efforts of all the pre-events, when the main convention was scheduled. There were more than 1500 people who registered for the main convention from over 83 countries across 6 continents. Considering the 'online fatigue' and 'multiple time zones', the event was scheduled across three days with 3 hours every day from 0800hrs GMT.

For the convention, a resourceful online platform was created which hosted a multilingual welcome message from Care Leavers in the main lobby, an exhibition hall carrying booths from Organising Committee; various sponsors and technical partners as well as posters from the poster competition.

The main event was held in the auditorium section. Besides, there was a resources section for people to read / download useful content or watch interesting videos of Care leavers from across the globe. The platform also allowed for a networking lounge and selfie booth to keep the audience engaged. A helpdesk booth was also provided to help any participant ask any query about the sessions, any technical query or beyond.

Day 1

The convention began with the welcome address by senior representatives of the Organising Committee; explaining the objectives of the convention, the process that went behind organising the same in virtual format and also spelt out their own expectations.

The focus on the opening day was to bring forth the issues felt by Care Leavers in open. The first session of the day was to understand the impact of COVID-19 on Care Leavers across the globe, moderated by Mr. Patrick Reason of FICE, Brazil. This was followed by a session on international commitment to youth, with particular focus on Care Leavers. This was moderated by Mr. Terry Dignan, CEO, EPIC, Ireland and brought together (refer Agenda of the Convention: Annexure 3) experts from UNICEF; UNHABITAT, Canada; ILO, Switzerland; Ono Academic College, Israel and Lumos, UK.



This was followed by the launch of a **Booklet on Case studies of Care Leavers from India**, by Prof. Mike Stein. The case studies have been taken from the Udayan Care’s research Study titled, “Beyond 18” and published in 2019 with support from UNICEF and TATA Trusts. The case studies have been mapped in the “*Resilience Framework*” suggested by Mike Stein. Mike who is a Professor Emeritus of University of York, has over three decades of research work on young people in care. Three key outcome categories are defined by his “*Resilience Framework*”- (Moving on (young people who show greater resilience), (b) Survivors (Young people who have faced greater disruptions) and (c) Strugglers (formerly called ‘victims’) - who have the highest mental health needs and have faced the most barriers to help (Stein, 2005, 2012).

The keynote address was delivered by a role model Care Leaver, **Mr Mark Riddel, National Implementation Adviser, Dept. of Education, UK**, who spoke on the efforts of local authorities in the UK committed to engaging Care Leavers at the centre of decisions that affect their lives. He was in care till he was 16 years old and did not want a ‘family’ and hence lived in residential care. From that time to now, a lot has changed, but he felt we still have a long way to go. During his care days, there was not much support available. Corporate parenting is a need. He spoke about the ‘black bags’ talking about the multiple placements he experienced. In 1983, he started working with the communities and sharing his ‘voice’ and he got benefit allowance, which is still very less even now. He took on leadership roles and was able to resolve conflicts easily because he knew what conflicts were like. He invoked Care Leavers to share their stories, like he has done. The story of being the best of yourself is very powerful, as has been told by Sylvester Stallone, the American actor, who had lived in foster care. Even today, the care system in the UK is not perfect and absolutely right but things have changed. Corporate parenting has improved at local authorities. **The test is always to see if it is good enough for our own children and if it is not, it is not right for Care Leavers too.** The State has a duty to make Care Leavers central to all decision-making processes. All Care Leavers are being supported till 25 years and this perhaps is the right thing to do. Working with the voluntary sector through the Care Leavers Covenant in the UK gives a range of opportunities for the young people and gives a favoured approach to Care Leavers. Conversations with multinational companies to provide devices and access to broadband internet are needed to get better offers for our Care Leavers. We are not ahead of the game but we are trying to level up fast. His message is that we need ‘hearts and minds’ that are applied to the cause of leaving care and always ask: “would you do this to your own children?”.



The second half of Day 1 saw a panel discussion on the topic of 'Policy and Legal Framework on Care Leaving' with examples from different countries.

This discussion laid the foundation stone to one of the key objectives of the convention which is to formulate a wireframe of policies that enable and support the Care Leavers. The session also highlighted how and why policy makers must come together at a transnational and international level to put forth an international policy and law framework and commitment to Aftercare and leaving care. The panelists included researchers, Care Leavers and practitioners from different parts of the world - Africa, Asia, Europe and the Middle East.

The day's proceedings were moderated by Care Leavers: Mai Namoboze (Uganda) and Karishma (India).

Day 2

This day was planned to listen to Care Leavers in different formats. Moderated by Care Leavers, Neelam (India) and Fabienne (Austria), the day started with Care Leavers from different parts of the world, presenting the Care Leaver Declaration, which was developed from May to August 2020 in virtual meetings, and its different domains and how Care Leavers from around 25 countries came together to develop the same. It clearly outlined the gaps as perceived by the Care leavers, in policy, law and practices, and also their recommendations as to how to fill these gaps.

This was followed by a breakout session – where all the participants were moved into different online rooms, each facilitated by an expert and a representative of the organising committee. Each group got 30 mins to discuss on pre-identified topics, and then later presented the smaller group's discussions to the larger group in 5 minutes.

Theme for Breakout	Speaker
Mainstreaming-Expectations, Challenges and Possible Solutions	Ms Pratima Kamble, Senior coordinator-education, Miracle Foundation, India, Ms. Nahla El Nemrand, Egypt, Mr. Krishna Kumar, India
Effective Participation of Care Leavers at the DGD 2021	Co-facilitated by members of the DGD 2021 youth advisors and supported by Aisling Ledwith and Caroline Rose (Lumos, UK), Bharti Mepani (Save the Children) and Mr. Adham Khedr and Farah El Sayed, Jordan
Exploring Future Aspirations of Stakeholders in the Care Leaving Ecosystem:	Prof. Umar Sheraz, COMSATS University, Pakistan
The Power of Story-telling in Care Reform:	Dr. Delia Pop, Global Care Reform Specialist, International and Md. Othman, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (video)
Becoming a Giver from a Receiver	Ms Pooja Udayan, India

Day 3

The focus of this day was to chart the way forward. It started with a panel discussion between representatives from organisations working for and with Care Leavers from Switzerland, Jordan, India, Australia and Germany discussing the good practices on supporting Care Leavers. The second part of this session, moderated by Care Leavers, Ruth Wacuka (Kenya) and Nimmu (Sri Lanka) saw the Care Leavers sharing their opinion on what good practice on Aftercare should be, and shared the essential components **which constitutes** “good practices” on leaving care.

The second half of the day was the ‘summing up’ session for the entire convention and it began with the moderators from all the three days coming together and sharing the key takeaways. This was followed by commitments from leaders of organisations working with Care Leavers on the rights of Care Leavers in a Global World. These key sector experts representing global experience responded to the presentations by Care Leavers, sharing their thoughts, ideas and commitment to support the strengthening of the charter and offering ideas that can sustain the global connections of Care Leavers in future.

Convention Café

25th Nov : 2230 IST / 1800 CET / 1700GMT / 2000 EAT

Considering the fact that the convention had participants attending from different time zones and some of them were unable to participate in the live discussions, a special session was planned on the third day of the convention to enable their participation and insights. This session was focused on the United States of America, Latin America and Canada, who also face a lot of challenges related to Care Leaving.

This Convention Cafe session was anchored and hosted by the Latin American Network of Care Leavers, who were members of the Organising Committee (OC) for the convention.

The key outcomes of the main convention sessions were shared by the members of the Organising Committee and participants shared how the discussions are relevant to their context.

Speaker	Designation
Jimena del Castillo	Moderator- Coordinator of the Latin American Network of Care Leavers
Cheyenne Ratnam	Care Leaver Representative from Canada
Tatiana Lustig Da Silva	Care Leaver Representative from Argentina
Laura Trejo	Care Leaver Representative from Mexico
Timothy Bell	Care Leaver Representative from USA
Viviana De La Cruz	Care Leaver Representative from Peru
Daniela Peralta	Translator, Director of Despiértate Ecuador

Post Event: Interface of Care Leavers and Policy Makers

11th Dec: 1330 IST / 0900 CET / 0800GMT / 1100 EAT

A concluding session for the First International Care Leavers' Convention was planned on Dec 11, 2020 to highlight the key takeaways and provide a direct interface between Care Leavers and Policy makers.

After the summing up note by Dr. Kiran Modi (Founder and Managing Trustee, Udayan Care), which highlighted the entire process from March to December, all virtual engagements at different level, the event commenced, which was divided into different section:

- | Jo Derrick, CEO, Staf, UK, spoke about their "National study: Through Care and Aftercare Services in Scotland's Local Authorities" and the **Scottish Care Leavers Covenant** which was launched in 2015 which has 4 pillars which is being implemented in all supporting Care Leaving organisations in Scotland. It is a policy that recognizes inequalities in care leavers support and offers corporate parenting and follows the principle of one in care, i.e. **One child: One plan: One care journey.**
- | Care Leavers highlighted a few takeaways from the convention, which were selected in a participatory manner by the Care Leavers over the days after the convention to this event, so that only more burning issues could be targeted.
- | First round of panel discussion with policy makers from India, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka and Nepal responding to the takeaways were presented, moderated by Ms Dhuwarakha Sriram (Chief of Adolescent Development and Generation Unlimited, UNICEF India).
- | Care Leavers highlighted other set of key takeaways from the convention.
- | Second round of panel discussions with policy makers from Zimbabwe, Italy, Egypt and Vietnam and a member of UNCRC committee responded to the takeaways presented, moderated by Maximilian Ullrich, Founder and Managing Director, Make Me Smile International, Austria
- | Launch of Care Leavers Community website as a global repository of resources (www.careleaverscommunity.org)



DISCUSSIONS AT THE MAIN CONVENTION

Day - 1

The convention opened with a welcome address by Dr Kiran Modi, Founder and Managing Trustee, Udayan Care, where she welcomed all the Care Leavers, practitioners and networks on behalf of the Organizing Committee. She explained the need of the convention on Aftercare and leaving care, so that a global dialogue on practices, gaps, and recommendations can develop.

This was followed by the address from other dignitaries from Organizing Committee:

- | **Ms Shubha Murthi, Deputy COO, SOS Children's Villages International** talked about challenges and the issues Care Leavers face in the world and shared the importance of raising these issues respectfully with the intention to find a solution and reaching out to decision makers. She also shared a case study example of Borai who was a Care Leaver from SOS Children's Villages program and now employs younger Care Leavers to give them employment. She emphasized that the output of the conference would lead to "specific" demands which would be helpful to delineate "affirmative action"
- | **Nimmu Kumari, a Care Leaver from Sri Lanka and member of Generation Never Give up** spoke on her Care Leaving experience where she had a rebellious streak and had to change two houses. Despite that she finished her B.A and had been instrumental in developing a great supportive network of GNG (Generation Never Give up). She said that "people will hurt you, break you, rate you but how strong you stand, makes you".
- | **Jeffrey Chasi of Zimbabwe Care Leavers Network** spoke how after a lot of struggle, and continuous petitioning they could get a reformed "Aftercare policy" in Zimbabwe.
- | **Wolfgang Schroer of University of Hildesheim, Germany** wanted the Care Leavers themselves to set the tone since they were there to listen to them.
- | **Martine Tobe of Kinderperspectief, Netherlands** introduced the "snowball effect" to take effect as a result of the discussions of the convention and thus help the voice of Care Leavers to reach everyone.

Post the welcome expectation setting, the next session was on the COVID 19 impact on Care Leavers.

Mr. Patrick Reason of FICE Brazil, who was the moderator, asked the Care Leavers to present their views on three questions- (a) In what way 2020 was unique for them?, (b) What support they received which helped them?, & (c) What needs to be done better?

- | **Tasha Reynolds of Australia** spoke that 2020 actually magnified the problems of the Care Leavers. However, she lived with her two sisters during quarantine and hence did not feel that alone. She said, *“What needs to be done is to extend the age of the Care Leavers leaving care from 18 to 21. They need support in the workplace and living arrangement.”*
- | **Tanja Abou of Germany** said that one cannot take young people out at age of 18 and expect them to function. The narrative needs to change from “Functioning” to “Nourishing”. They should focus not only on those who are “success stories” but also “who are lost on the way”. Access to therapy is important as she herself uses it. She survived as because she had a stable job as a social worker and found strength in “family of choice” which was the Queer community apart from the Care Leavers’ network.
- | **Fabienne Landerer of Australia** said that she was shocked as the Care Leavers piled up a lot of debt because they lost their jobs and were unable to afford stable housing. She, however, had a stable life as she was incredibly lucky to have a therapist and she had the financial scholarship. She summed up the struggle in the reflective query *“Why are others not living my life, decide my life”*.
- | **Le Phong of Vietnam** spoke that because of the proximity to China, Vietnam had a series of lockdowns which made them face a lot of hardships. However, he had an incredible support network in SOS Children’s Villages which helped them to help, live and support each other.
- | **Ebrahim Salama of Egypt** spoke how the pandemic raised important concerns regarding their identity, privacy and spiritual needs and how their organization helped to achieve them.

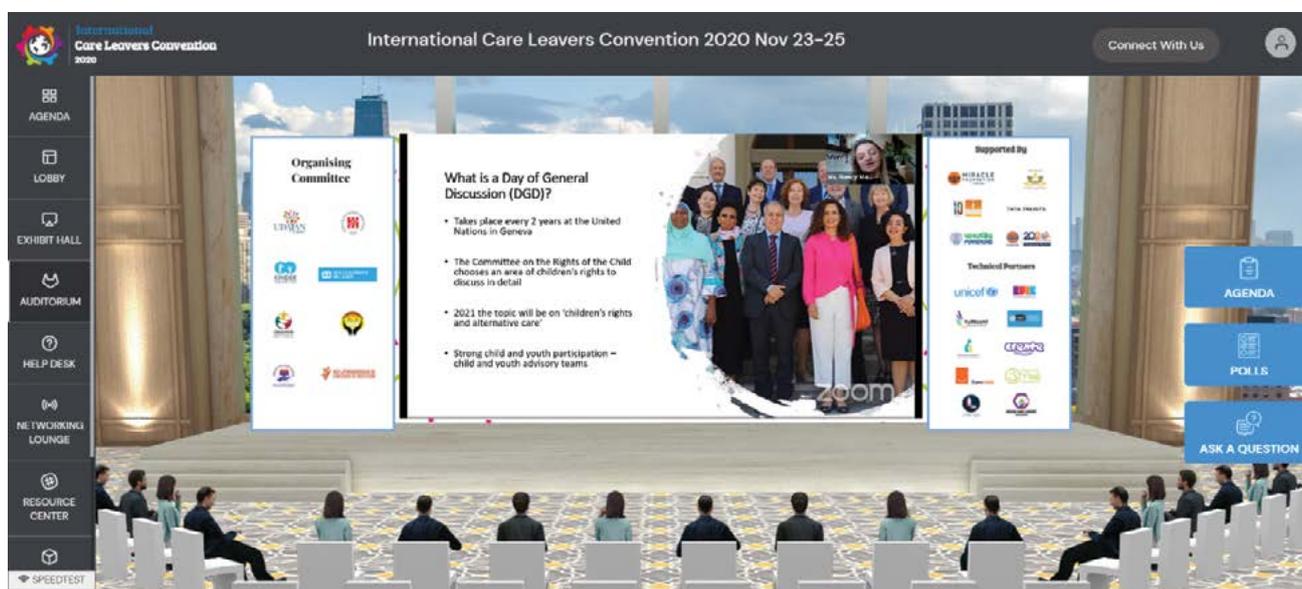
Having heard the Care Leavers in the first session, the immediate next session brought together practitioners in a panel discussion on the topic of “International Commitment to Youth”, with particular focus on Care Leavers:

- | **Terry Dignan, CEO at Empowering people in Care (EPIC), from Ireland** spoke how in Ireland they are fighting to increase the Aftercare support to 26 years which is currently at the age of 23.



Amanda Bissex, Child Protection Regional Advisor, UNICEF Regional Office, South Asia presented statistics of ACE research (Adverse Childhood Experiences) and the Indian experience of Care Leavers and the solutions provided by UNICEF which included “effective collaboration and partnership among various agencies” for improved access to services, accurate information and data on Care Leavers across countries, networks and voice such as the Care Leavers Convention to support, share information, identify gaps in services and prevent institutionalization and strengthen “family based alternative care”. She ended with a quote from her UNICEF colleague who is a Care Leaver himself- *“I would like to live in a world where investments are made to ensure those from public care and others affected by adversity everywhere- can reconnect, build and heal free from shame and public stigma. This would be socially just, fiscally prudent and frankly just plain easier and better for the whole of society.”*

Nancy McGuire of Lumos, UK spoke about the UN Day of General Discussion which would be held next year 2021 in Geneva, Switzerland, on Children’s Rights and Alternative Care. She sent out a form for delegates from the 1st International Care Leavers’ Conference 2020 to express their interest and provide contact details to hear more about opportunities linked to the UN Day of General Discussion. She said, *“It’s an opportunity to speak directly to the people responsible for policies to support children in Alternative Care and family globally. The Care Leavers who participate can then ensure genuine change for children and young people around the world.”*



Ms. Dhuwarakha Sriram of UNICEF India spoke on the UNICEF supported “Yuwaah India” and their aim to skill the Youth of India and make them leaders for tomorrow.

Emmanuel Grupper, President of FICE International spoke on importance of support in transition from care to independent living and creating a “safety net” for Care Leavers, which will include housing support, job search support, vocational training, emotional support and social relationships to help Care Leavers and advocating versus authorities.

After the panel discussion, **Prof. Mike Stein of University of York**, released a booklet called “Stories of Leaving Care in India”. Speaking about the booklet, Professor Mike said, *“This publication delineates the lived experiences of Care Leavers in the present Aftercare systems. These are case studies which are based on the experiences, challenges, and stories of the Care Leavers.”* The publication hopes to inform research-based practice, to address the needs and aspirations of Care Leavers and improve their life outcomes.

Keynote Speech by Mark Riddel, National Implementation Advisor for Care Leavers, Department for Education, UK

Mark is committed to getting local authorities in the UK to commit to having Care Leavers at the center of decisions that affect their lives. *“I grew up in local authority care after living with family and being passed around. I stayed with care until I was 16. In my time in care, choices were made about you without you being a part of it. In those days, there were very little After Care services.”* He also spoke on the importance of stories: *“We have to tell our stories, share our story of resilience for the rest of our life. My chance meeting with Sylvester Stallone got a role in Rambo 3 all because I’ve got a story to tell”.*

Post the Keynote speech, Prof. Mike Stein was back to moderate a **Panel Discussion** on Policy and Legal Framework on Care Leaving. He set the ball rolling stating the importance of policy and legal framework for Care Leavers. Other speakers on the panel were:

- | **Yasmin El Hagry of Wataneya Society, Egypt** who spoke about the need to standardize and unify alternative care.
- | **Joseph McDowall of Create Foundation Australia** spoke on the need to exert pressure on parliamentarians to make the adequate changes.
- | **Mark Riley of Uganda** spoke how their organization is helping to rewrite the Alternative Care framework.
- | **Tanja Abou of Germany** who spoke from a triple perspective of Care leaver, social worker and researcher said that “25 should be the new 18”. The average age of people leaving their parents home is 25 but for Care Leavers, they leave at the tender age of 18. She asked an interesting query that “Do policy makers really think that they are more capable to be ready for life and its challenges 7 years earlier.”
- | **Reda Ali from Egypt** spoke that there is a need for Care Leavers to be included in their fight for rights.
- | **Ian Anand of USA** spoke on the issues of having a proper Aftercare policy in regions of South Asia which is virtually non-existent.

At the end, **Karishma of India** and **Mai Nambooze of Uganda** summarized the key discussions and mentioned that COVID-19 has acted as a magnifying glass for seeing the challenges of Care Leavers by highlighting issues of isolation and need for peer support. They shared that while success stories are important but equally important are the unheard stories which are lost along the way.

Day - 2

Neelam, Care Leaver from CLAN (Care Leaver Association Network) of India and **Fabienne, from Austria** during a quick recap of the previous day recollected the several gaps in the Declaration.

Severine Thomas from University of Hildesheim, Germany introduced the 11 gaps as was represented by the Declaration as the transactional needs of Care Leavers amidst COVID-19 and beyond. She mentioned that this was a result of reaching out to over 100 young people with care experience from about 25 countries who came together in a series of webinars under the guidance of the organizing committee. These webinars were held in June-July 2020, collectively voiced their concerns and put them in the form of gaps and recommendations in the form of the present Declaration. The 11 gaps were- financial security; housing; education; accessibility; career support/employability; psycho social support; health, nutrition and hygiene; legislative/policy reforms; awareness and identity; participation; social networks; inclusion and social protection.

Konrad and Laura, Care Leavers from Poland, shared their personal experience of financial hardships (financial security gaps). Laura mentioned that she could not afford college and the state should support their families.

Nimmu, a Care Leaver representative from Sri Lanka and a member of Generation Never Give Up, spoke on the housing situation gap in Sri Lanka with case studies from different Care Leavers who had to face great problems while shifting from their care homes. Some had to reside in temples, some had to live in hostel rooms without proper electricity and with too many restrictions, which made working in night shifts impossible. Generation Never Give Up (or GNG) has done a great deal in ensuring to alleviate the housing situation for Care Leavers but they still have miles to go because of the systemic hurdles and stigma associated with Care Leavers in Sri Lanka. She also listed out the Housing security demands that Care Leavers in Sri Lanka want and also portrayed what would happen if Care Leavers are given a home. She also explained what Generation Never Give Up (GNG) is planning to do as a team. They have already written to the President about the housing issue and have requested an appointment for a meeting. They have also identified potential sponsors to support them with the housing project to raise funds.

| **Nimmu** also spoke on the gap on nutrition and health. She spoke of her first-hand experience of buying fruits and vegetables which were too expensive and hence the Care Leavers were not able to buy adequately for their nutritional needs.

| **Karishma from CLAN (Care Leavers Association and Networks, India)** spoke on education gap and how it is the most powerful weapon for Care Leavers and she explained it in a three prong- “Why, What and How”. She highlighted that to address this gap, we need to:

- a. Acknowledge the unique situations and circumstances of Care Leavers in universities, schools and provide them with adequate financial help and training. COVID-19 has worsened their situation with no money to help them get online skills-based training.
- b. Relax the need of documents for Care Leavers. For EWS (Economically weaker sections) in India there are scholarships however what is needed is to provide the annual income certificate of your father which is not possible in case of Care Leavers.
- c. Reserve seats in universities for people from other minority classes. This would help the Care Leavers to access quality education.
- d. Include Care Leavers in education and youth policies.
- e. Have departments of Care Leavers in India as is available in UK and Ireland for customised help and support
- f. Provide adequate financial assistance and support.

- I **Karishma** also spoke on the gap of psycho-social support and how the access to mental health services is a need for Care Leavers.
- I **Sabiti Jack of Uganda Care Leavers** spoke on career support and employability gap. Every child who leaves care does not have a long-term action plan which is very important. There is a lack of evidence-based research since many Care Leavers leave institutional care and the size of the problem is unknown. Lack of support networks and connections after leaving care make them feel stranded and dependent on donor support. Capacity building and life skills is very important. There is a need for a strategic plan on exiting care along with programs to help them to build their capacities.
- I **Lilly and Joelle from Netherlands** spoke on the gap of participation in a pre-recorded video. They said that what is most important is that Care Leavers should be included in decision making on local, regional, national and international levels especially when it deals with advocacy with authorities. They also did a huge campaign “Message in a Bottle” and shipped them to the mayors of all counties in the Netherlands. They also spoke on research on Care Leavers.
- I **Fabian, Hannah, Lea, Marie and Ruth, Care Leavers from Germany** spoke on need for social networks to help them connect with other Care Leavers and support each other. Care Leavers’ networks are important as these are made for them and each of them understand each other’s first-hand experiences.

Severine Thomas, from the University of Hildesheim asked questions to policy makers that how could the conditions of Care Leavers be improved by political decisions and what expectations do they have in their own lobbying.

- I **Josef Koch Director of FICE Germany** said that most support goes to the young people in care and not adequate support is given to Care Leavers. So, they have thought of 4 ways to tackle this:
 - a. To do several projects with universities like Hildesheim and Care Leavers network to build up good examples in how to support young people. They then use these examples and reports while framing policies in the federal Government.
 - b. To work very closely with the Care Leavers networks in Germany from the very beginning. They speak with the Care Leavers Union in their discussions with the Federal Government and have supported them financially.
 - c. Discussion panels with politicians and reach out to umbrella organisations of youth agencies and church organisations
 - d. Federal government is also coming up with a new law which includes coming back option for Care Leavers, obligatory support and financial security for young people.
- I **Mr. Chandrika Khatiwada, from Nepal** spoke that a new law has been introduced as “Children’s Act” and has a separate section on “Alternative Care ” arrangements. It speaks about Child welfare authorities to reintegrate children with care experiences into mainstream. They also drafted the regulations of the Children’s Act which has elaborate provisions and support for the Care Leavers. Another policy document, “ Standard for operations and management of Residential Child Care home” prepares for reintegration plan in accordance to individual needs and interest of the child and provide opportunities for interest of the child and are anticipating by-laws very soon which would define Aftercare support, assigning clear responsibility to concerned agencies for social development, vocational training etc. so that their employment opportunities can be increased and social protection measures are provided to the Care Leavers.

- | **Mr. H. H. Leelananda from Sri Lanka** spoke that several housing programs have been done for low-income people and lower middle income people, however, Care leavers have been missed out but now they would be having a meeting with Department of Child Care Services and SOS Children's Villages (Sri Lanka) and implement the program with Care Leavers in 2021 with proper allocation of land.
- | **Purnima Jindal of SOS India** spoke on supporting young people as they leave care in COVID-19 era. SOS Children's Villages International along with nine member associations namely SOS Bangladesh, India, Indonesia, Laos, Nepal, Philippines, Sri Lanka, Thailand and Vietnam conducted a regional survey to understand the COVID -19 impact on young people and how the young people are coping with it. 728 people between ages 14-24 participated in the survey. Their fear and apprehensions were recorded, some recommendations were also presented which included (a) Ensure mental health and well-being, (b) Access digital tools for education continuity, (c) Develop employability skills, (d) Develop partnerships and networks.

After the serious discussion around the Declaration and its gaps in the first half of the day, the second half was organised in the form of breakout sessions. The participants were allocated to five different groups which discussed the following facets of Care Leaving in smaller groups, in a focused and engaging manner.

1. Mainstreaming-Expectations, Challenges and Possible Solutions:

Ms. Nahla El Nemr, Egypt and Ms Pratima Kamble, senior coordinator-education, Miracle Foundation, India spoke on expectations of Care Leavers which included financial support, emotional support, financial help for housing, education, health insurance, confidence in communication, financial awareness and literacy.

The challenges they face are that they have no familial support, not enough money for housing loneliness causing mental health problems, less opportunities for higher education.

Within solutions, the life skills that were discussed were communication skills, managing households, knowing support services especially in need, relationship skills, knowing about their own rights. The

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support
education
financial support

empowering, mental support, mentor, vocational training, person of trust, relationship, reliable adults, self realization, awareness, budgeting skills, stable relationships, follow-ups communication, advisor, attention, trainings, support bubble, accommodation, networks, services

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recommended timeline for successful transition includes either when the child is ready or doing a step-by-step transition in all areas of life before stepping out in the actual world.

It was also highlighted that the key participants and people to make the transition process successful for the child include: Experts from CCIs (Child Care Institutions), professionals in residential care, foster family, and teachers, peers (friends, other Care Leavers, boyfriend, girlfriend etc.), NGOs and community centers.

2. Effective Participation of Care Leavers at the DGD 2021:

This breakout session was co-facilitated by members of the DGD 2021 youth advisors and supported by Aisling Ledwith and **Caroline Rose**. DGD (Day of General Discussion) is held in Geneva every 2 years, organised by the Committee on the Rights of Child. The purpose of the DGD is to bring together all stakeholders with a specific topic which relates with child's rights.

In the breakout session itself, the facilitators' crowd sourced information from the participants which are as follows:-

- | In the first query, regarding the most important issues facing Care Leavers, the most prominent answers came out to be participation, mental health, disability, support and education.
- | The prominent answers in the second query, regarding what works well for Care Leavers, included support, education and financial support.
- | The prominent answers related to the third query, regarding experiences after leaving care included support, turning to drugs, trying to be independent, government hurdles, etc.

3. Exploring Future Aspirations of Stakeholders in the Care Leaving Ecosystem

Prof Umar Sheraz from Pakistan facilitated the session which centred around stories. He mentioned that each story has two parts: (1) Sensitizing part- Linking one's story to strategy since narratives, inner stories, are needed to be reflected upon and (2) Second part was getting feedback from participants through their stories. He said, "Inner stories are important for Care Leavers to move forward in terms of moving ahead."

4. The Power of Story-telling in Care Reform

Dr Delia Pop facilitated this breakout group which focused on the importance of storytelling and looked at key points like (1) why storytelling is important, and (2) how best to tell a story. She said, "*Lived experience need not to just be part of participatory research but also it can be pivoted to lead and inform policies and services.*" Storytelling is a fantastic avenue for Care Leavers to bring about policy change and also other people onboard to their issues. A story links "*their heart, emotions with their minds*" and ultimately "*when the heart and the mind is connected, then we are led into action.*" She mentioned that every story has a character (the protagonist), a moment of challenge and choice and agency. There are 3 kinds of stories we can share: stories of self (the individual Care Leaver), story of us (the Care Leavers) and story of now (action to be brought about). With a combination of these 3, we can create powerful stories to influence.

5. Becoming a Giver from a Receiver

In this session, different Care Leavers shared their different experiences as to why they want to give back to the Care Leaving community. **Nimmu from Sri Lanka** left her family at age 10 due to various issues. Now when she is such a pivotal member of GNG (Generation Never Give Up) helping Care Leavers, she is just



“Happy to be there, with those, who are brothers and sisters”. **Moses Akash from Sri Lanka** remembers the first time when he finished bachelors of social work and his friend told him “I am proud of you”. That moment was so important as being a Care Leaver is such a lonely journey and nobody takes pride in them. Now he wants to do the same with other Care Leavers as well since he knows first-hand, self-esteem is important. **Tanja Abou of Germany** spoke that it is a “gift to have this exchange, it’s a constant exchange of giving and receiving. I was a caretaker for young siblings, now I am in social work giving back to the networks which raised me”. **Karishma Singh of India** shared her joy on being able to meet many Care leavers from different institutions and said “I will make sure to help them and support them, be like a mother, sister for our Care Leaver siblings around us.” **Pooja of India** said that the gift of giving goes back ultimately to the cause of Nation building and guidance to be a better citizen.

Post the breakouts, all groups gathered together and shared what got discussed in their respective groups in form of brief presentations. Finally, the engaging day was concluded by **Karishma Singh, a Care Leaver from CLAN of India**. She highlighted that Care Leavers face the onslaught of loneliness and lack networks which make them depressed and fall back professionally in career. So, both support for mental health services and life skills support is needed for Care Leavers. She also talked about the need of leveraging digital platforms to promote Care Leavers networks. Finally, she also talked about the importance of bringing out stories of Care Leavers to drive public policy and not just remain part of case studies.

Day - 3

Ruth Wacuka, Care Leaver from Kenya and Nimmu, Care Leaver from Sri Lanka did a recap of Day 1 and 2 and shared the Plan for Day 3, to open the session. Day 3 focus was on the way forward and hence the first plenary session was on “Good Practices on supporting Care Leavers: Global, Regional and National Commitments”.

Anna Schmid of FICE Switzerland emphasized the importance of discussing good practices in supporting Care Leavers. Using some examples, she argued that “good practice” is a multifaceted, relative term, and that the best chance for a practice to be “good” is if it is based on the knowledge, critical thinking, viewpoints and creativity of all the different actors involved – including, and especially, experts by experience / Care Leavers themselves.

Further speakers on the panel were:

Promising Practices: The Udayan Care Model

- **Aftercare Programme:** continuum of care, power of mentorship.
- **Participatory Research** based model focused on 8 domains of intervention.
- **Aftercare Outreach Programme:** monetary and mentoring kick starter programme for youth exiting the care system.



- **Collectivization:** Care Leavers peer support for change
- **Advocacy:** Building the Aftercare narrative with government, functionaries and civil society
- **COVID Care:** temporary housing and dignity support during the pandemic. National Alliance.

Dr. Aida Essaid, Director, Information and Research Centre - King Hussein Foundation, Jordan shared how the data driven digital campaign AL BEDAYA (“The Beginning” in Arabic) in Jordan focuses on health, housing, soft skills, work, education and money management. Dr. Aida also spoke that we need to be careful with the words being used in research, especially participatory research, e.g. prevent usage of “unknown origin”, ‘illegitimate children’, ‘born out of wedlock’, which is discriminatory in Jordan. Rather words like “Youth deprived of family ties” brings respect.

Dr. Rawan W Ibrahim of Jordanian University spoke on the Social Support Network for Care Leavers to coordinate the existing services in civil society to support Care Leavers and Youth deprived of social ties. The network was developed using a bottoms-up approach. Peer resource mapping was done which covered all the needs of the young people and the network thus encompassed health, education, housing, psycho-social support, legal support, soft skills, work, basic needs, financial support, marriage.

Nothing for Young People, without young people

Gabriella Rask
Project Coordinator
SOS Children's Village
International



| **Aneesha Wadhwa of India of Udayan Care** stated that Practitioners are at the soul of Udayan Care for 26 years. The model they use is “mentoring” where “mentor mothers and mentor fathers”, bring some continuity and reintegration of the Care Leavers to mainstream society. What was needed was research which they did with the- “Beyond 18 study”- Sphere of Aftercare. In the “Sphere of Aftercare” Framework, there are 8 domains where Care Leavers needs support including housing, independent living skills, social support, interpersonal skills, emotional well-being, physical health, education, vocational skills, ,financial independence and career. This is what can make practice and data move towards “collectivisation” of Care Leavers, which can become their biggest support for change. She said that in India wonderfully crafted laws are there but implementation is far from expectations. Groundswell movement needs Government response.

| **Gabriella Risk of Austria** spoke on a few Global projects of SOS Children’s Village International which is aimed towards the young people for young people. There are 4 programs:-Youthpower 2.0 which is a program for young changemakers, YouthCan which aims to make Care Leavers self-reliant, Prepare for Leaving Care Training which builds capacity for Care Leavers and YouthLinks which is a digital, platform leveraging the power of technology to support more Care Leavers towards employability. The programs are locally contextualised.

| **Mathias Hild, Programme Manager, Bruckensteine Care Leaver, Germany** talked about leveraging digital technology to bring about the collective impact. He said, “Since Participation is a central part, How do we manage to have them have a say? Hence we created the app for direct partnership and contact.”



| **Ms. Susan Barton, Founder-Director, Lighthouse Foundation, Australia** said that “What Young Care leavers really want is a sense of belonging, join in all community celebrations and emotional support. They want to feel that they have choice and have life skills, safe accommodation, personal and social support.”



Having heard some of the good practices from across the globe, the next session focused on what young Care leavers want as good practices. **Maxmillian Ulrich of FICE Austria/Kenya and Make Me Smile International** was the moderator of this session and spoke that continuity of relationship is most important when a young adult leaves care to give him a sense of identity. Other speakers in the session were:

- | **Mr. Marwah, a Care Leaver Representative from Egypt**, spoke that the good practices needed for Care Leavers include (a) Higher education), (b) Housing (some amount allocated for housing), (c) Healthcare (help in providing them health insurance), (d) Writing CV's and accounting skills, (e) Having an allowance according to their financial situation, (f) Care Leaver representation in the parliament.
- | **Mr. Georg Thurnwalder, Austria** spoke on three key points: (a) the needs of Care Leavers are very individual and hence the help needed too needs to be customised, (b) Care leavers must be helped in need especially in a pandemic like situation, (c) Need for digital platforms to connect.
- | **Dr. Deepak KC, Nepal** shared his inspiring story of how a boy with disabilities in-care became a sportsman, an architect, advocate for disability in sports and now President of National Physical Disabled Tennis Association. He said that *"No matter where we live as Care Leavers, each of us have different unique stories of Life struggles. What is important is to raise a voice."*

The last session of the Convention was planned as a 'Key Takeaways' summarisation session, which was aptly titled by the presenter Care Leavers as **"The Global 2020 – 2022 Care Leavers Agenda"**.

Karishma from India, Ruth Wacuka from Kenya, Nimmu from Sri Lanka and Fabienne Landerer from Austria listed the 17 key takeaways, which they had culled from the different sessions of the Convention. These are the voices of the Care Leavers themselves and are written in first person:

1. We want caregivers who understand, accept and nourish us!
2. We need support to learn, to share our "self-story" and "story of us" in such a way that it's healing for us and beneficial for the outside world.
3. We want a digital platform to be created where the children under Alternative Care can speak their minds, challenges and ideas to meet individual needs.

4. We want to be better prepared for leaving care.
5. 25 should be the new 18 (soft landing from planet youth care on planet earth).
6. We want to be included in decision/policy making processes that affect our lives.
7. We need a proactive rather than a reactive approach to mitigate the challenges and adjustment difficulties faced by Care Leavers.
8. We need free and quality access to mental health services after leaving care.
9. We need to spread and advocate for our “Declaration by Care Leavers in times of COVID 19” among policy makers around the world.
10. Our network as Care Leavers is our net worth. Never underestimate what we share for it is a life line impact in influencing each other to think differently, grow and be connected with our clan. No one should feel alone, let’s continue to reach out to each other. It is in giving that we receive. We all have something to give.
11. We want to have access to the digital world so we can have access to information, education, employment and other services.
12. We need to build an International Care Leavers Network and work towards the 2nd International Care Leavers Convention 2022.
13. Care leavers Networks should be resourced, funded to take the lead and not really left behind any other organisations.
14. We want more participatory research on our strengths, resilience and on challenges.
15. Peer to peer local and national support groups for Care Leavers need to be promoted and supported.
16. We should have a seat at the table at international forums, like UN, etc.
17. International Day of Care Leavers at the United Nations: The UN to approve an International Care Leavers Day and have a committed fund for Care Leavers which is accessible to the different Care Leavers Networks in the world



Ljiljana Ban, Social worker, from SOS Children's Village was the moderator of the last session, titled "The Commitment to the Rights of Care Leavers in a Global World: A Road Map". She wanted the Care Leaver Practitioners to take the convention learnings forward and move forward with their own commitments. The speakers for this powerful 'way ahead' session were:

Ms. Deborah Jones, Chief Executive, Voices from Care, Cymru, UK said that *"Care Leavers need to be recognised as a community especially the importance of love - to love and be loved, importance of being nurtured, actively listening to them and embedding Care Leavers' views into our services is important."* One of the key messages by her include the aspect of culpability (accountable approach) of all social services / networks related to Care Leavers - homelessness services, social services are all to be held accountable.

Delia Pop - Director, Tanya Dream Fund and Global Care Reform Specialist opined that *"We are witnessing the growth of a social movement."* She mentioned that the field of giving is opening up more and more to enable social movements for sustainable long-term change. She further added that the donors must learn more from young people, emerging organisations and social movements and understand - what are their funding needs, skill sets, barriers they are currently facing and what can be done to invest in areas that are not apparent. For that stories are important to be told by Care Leavers.

Ms. Mia Dambach, ISS/IRC Director, Geneva spoke on the successes of Alternative Care advocacy in the UN. 10 years ago, UN started a project in 2004, "Alternative Care Guidelines," however, there was no section on Care Leavers. She mentioned that with their active advocacy, the age of leaving care was raised from 15 to 18 and that it is now needed to be raised to 25 and thus advocacy is important more than ever now.

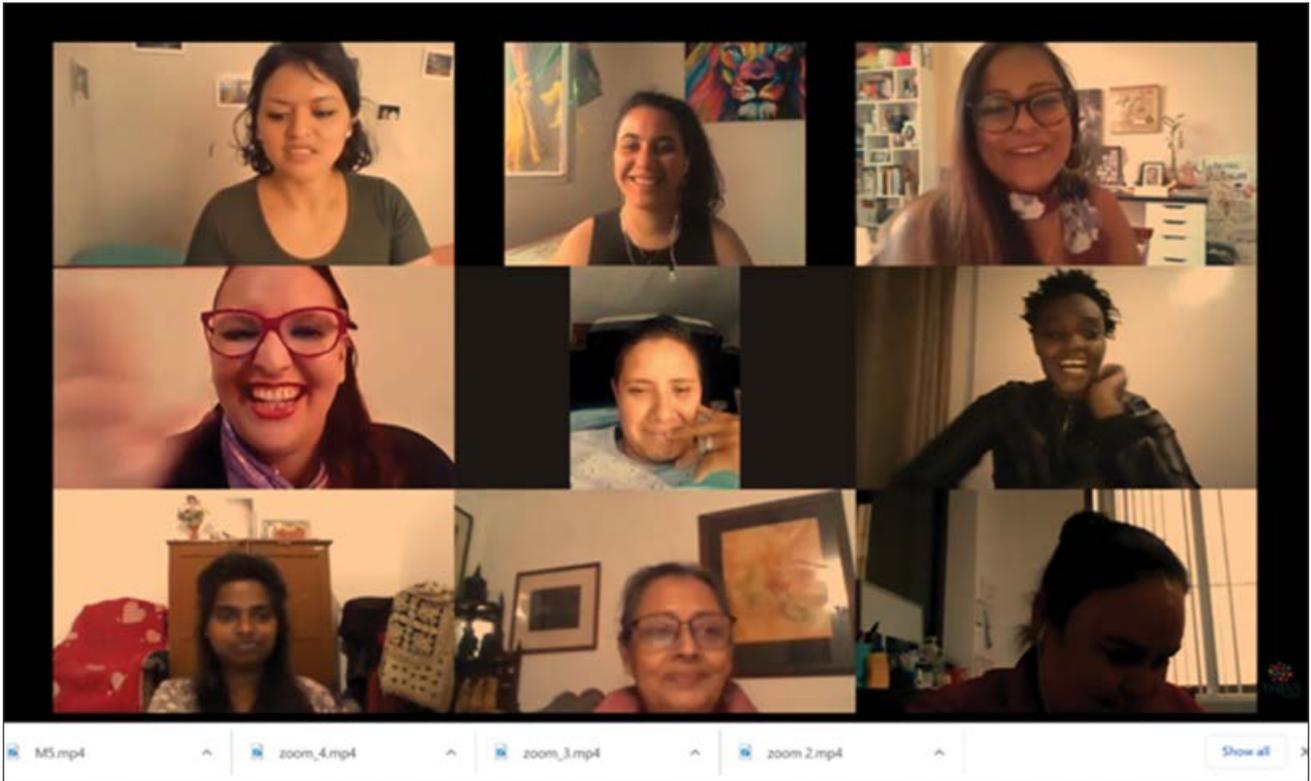
She shared that in 2021, there is Day of General Discussion (DGD), where there is an opportunity for Care Leavers to set the agenda, topics and content. Some Care Leavers are in that but more are needed. This will help to influence the Community of Child Rights too, at the end.

Another opportunity, she shared, was nationally, where every 5 years each country will be judged by UN bodies either by Community of the Rights of the Child, Disabilities, Migrant Workers. If the Care Leavers team up with the National Children's Rights Organisations in respective countries you can make sure that Care Leaver issues are part of the solution and thus these communities would include them as recommendations to the state. She said that "Real opportunities are needed for Care Leavers to approach the right forum and that UN Committees are just that, as well as they are more likely to hear if you are a network. Together you have more chances to be heard and make a difference."

Dr. Kiran Modi of Udayan Care India, expressed that Collective action is now more important than ever. She said, *"We need to go beyond advocacy."* She passionately expressed that like the motto for the International Convention, they need to move 'Together. Towards Empowerment.' Care Leavers really need to take this momentum ahead in terms of collectivising and going beyond advocacy and improving the system itself. She hoped that the next International Convention in 2022 would be organised successfully by a driven and strengthened Global Care Leavers Network.

As per commitments on part of the organising committee, she expressed their decision to come forward with policy and practice papers and come up with a website which would have all the Care Leaver resources such as research, legislation, good practices, information, knowledge and solicit support.

The day was aptly summarised towards the end by **Dr. Severine Thomas, Professor of University of Hildesheim and part of the Organising Committee**, who said, "I hope that new networks would be formed, no child should suffer from being in Care or being a Care Leaver. WE WILL NOT STOP!!



Convention Café

A special session was planned on the third day to suit the time zone of participants from the Americas (US, Canada, Latin America). The session was planned to ensure that Care Leavers from Americas, if they had missed the live discussions during the convention, can get a quick list as well as be provided with a platform to listen to their voices.

Ruth Wacuka of Kenya spoke of the 17 key takeaways from the 1st International Care Leavers Convention 2020. Stating the importance of the Care Leaver Networks, she mentioned that she always thought that only Kenya had this issue. And that other countries are handling it better than Kenya. She was initially shocked to know that the Care Leavers' issues are there even in Europe. She spoke ecstatically - *"I am celebrating that I am not alone"*. She spoke on the parable of the forest- *"For a forest to become forest, it always started with one tree, two and then three. Together we will face the rainfall, wind, which may come our way"*. Some of the Care Leavers who shared about their life experiences and challenges, in the session were:

| **Jimena del Castillo**, coordinator of the **Latin American Network of Care Leavers**, was the Moderator who introduced the agenda with **Daniela Perelta** (Director of Despiértate, Ecuador) as the translator. She asked Care Leavers to share their experiences and the need gaps in the Care Leaver systems in their respective countries.

| **Cheyenne Ratnam from Canada** spoke about the Child Welfare System in Canada. At the tender age of 13- 14 she became a youth offender due to unsavoury circumstances and then was in the Child Welfare System. She was the only person of South Asian descent in the Child welfare system and faced racism in Canada. Now she is an independent consultant in equity, diversity and inclusion. She makes sure that for every community, the community people themselves are leading the conversations, which is a need in Canada as well. Care Leavers in Canada should lead the conversations on Care Leaver policies.

| **Tatiana Lustig Da Silva from Argentina** spoke on the importance of research to improve the lives of children in Alternative Care and to bring visibility to the issue. She spoke from her experience- “When I lived in residential care and just before leaving, I had a few job interviews. They never called me back as they never understood the plight of living in a children’s home.

| **Viviana De La Cruz from Peru** spoke that she lived in a children’s home for 14 years. “At 18 I left care, supported by an organization. It was a youth home and I was there for 4 years and was able to study. At the children’s home where I lived, each caregiver had to look after 50 children. So, each child had to fight for affection and attention. When leaving care, we couldn’t even talk to strangers as we were not clever enough to be in the world.” She said that “I was a little girl trapped in the body of an 18 year old.”

| **Laura Trejo from México** spoke “I have been working for 2 years as an education assistant. My greatest motivation is to be able to work with kids and teenagers.” She told about her difficulties in gaining employment since as a Care Leaver, you are always asked to have “some sort of reference” which hinders employment chances.

| **Timothy Bell from USA** from International Foster Care Alliance (IFCA) spoke that he aged out of foster care at age 18. He was homeless at age 13. He spoke about the painful memory because he had lived there for 6 years and suddenly, he was not welcome back. He said that one of the most important focus should be on building and clarifying relationships.

Post Event: Interface of Care Leavers and Policy Makers

The closing event of the First International Care Leavers’ Convention 2020 was conducted on December 11, 2020, where senior policy makers in the form of government representatives, Care Leaver practitioners and Care Leavers’ representatives from different Care Leaver Networks came together to discuss the key takeaways of the Convention and how to bring about a lasting change to secure healthy, independent lives for Care Leavers around the world and bring about a change in global care reform and policy. The focus of the discussions revolved around:

| Key minimum standards at a policy and legislative level on care-leaving policy at national and international level

| Policy and legislative mandate to bridge the gap, mitigate the risks and actualise the entitlements of Care Leavers in a global world

| Minimum standards of care and social service support system that is needed at national and global levels

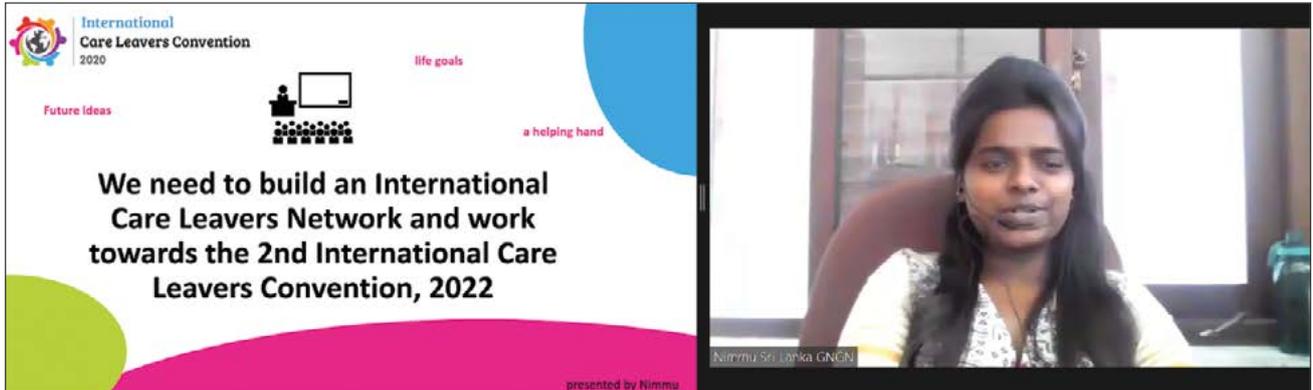
| Support to peer-led networks and associations of care leavers at national, transnational and international levels

| Commitments of the research community at local, national, regional and international level to support the cause of Care Leavers through evidence and data that influences policy and practice

Gift Dzorai, from Zimbabwe Care Leavers, moderated the proceedings spread across voices of Care Leavers, listening to how the Scottish Care Leavers Covenant came about and two panel discussions with policymakers.

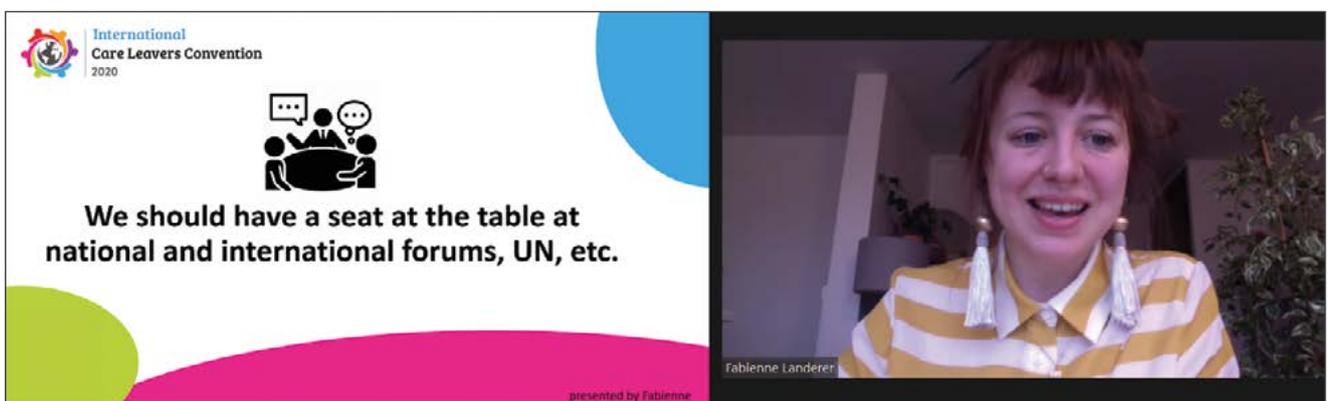
First up were the 8 key takeaways of Convention, presented by different Care Leavers:

1. **Nimmu from Sri Lanka**, explained the first takeaway - "We need to build an International Care Leavers Network and work towards the 2nd International Care Leavers Convention, 2022".



She said that now is the right time to set the ball rolling and move to the next orbit based on the success of the First International Convention. She said, "Some of the strongest and longest standing forms of friendship are born from networks. As long as we have a strong network of care leavers and supporters, we can also be confident that someone within ourselves will be able to answer our hardest questions".

2. **Neelam from CLAN**, India, explained the second takeaway – "We need to spread and advocate for our Declaration by Care Leavers in times of COVID-19" amongst policy makers around the world.
3. **Fabienne Landerer from Austria**, explained the third takeaway - "We should have a seat at the table at the national and international forums". She reflected that the need of the hour is to increase the visibility and attention of Care Leavers at international, national and regional levels and involve Care Leavers into decision making since in most cases, "those who decide about our lives have not lived our lives". For this an International Day for Care Leavers too should be approved by the UN.



4. **Karishma Singh from CLAN**, India explained the fourth takeaway – "We need free and quality access to mental health services after leaving care." She opined that need for mental health services is paramount as "Not all wounds are visible, and just because these wounds are not visible, this doesn't mean that it doesn't hurt or need no treatment, care or attention."
5. **Hallan from Kenya** explained the fifth takeaway- "We need proactive rather than a reactive approach to mitigate challenges and adjustment difficulties faced by Care Leavers. Implementation is the key."

6. **Sabiti Jack from Uganda**, explained the sixth takeaway - “25 should be the new 18 (soft landing from planet Youth Care to Planet Earth)”. Sabiti Jack said that Care Leavers belong to “different, poor and traumatic” backgrounds and hence they live in a different world and being thrust suddenly into the normal world at 18 has devastating consequences for them as they are not mentally prepared for the change.
7. **Robin Loh from Germany**, explained the seventh takeaway - “We want caregivers who understand, accept and nourish us. We want to be better prepared for leaving care.” Robin Loh explained that Care Leavers need some time for preparing to leave care, they need to be informed about their rights, they need different perspectives, social care and aftercare support.



8. **Ruth Wacuka from Kenya**, explained the eighth takeaway - “We want more participatory research on our strengths, resilience and challenges”. Ruth explained that “A single story presents someone something particularly, single story creates stereotypes. They are true but they are incomplete.” Hence more research is needed to get a holistic view of Care Leavers since they are not only pitiable creatures. According to her-
“ Care Leavers are not what they went through but what they became from it.”

These clearly spelt-out, precise and comprehensive set of demands set the tone for the Panel discussions with Policy makers. The moderator, Dhuwarakha Sriram said, “the Care Leavers really need the assurances of the Policy makers as at the end only systemic policy changes can outdo many of the issues faced by the Care Leavers”. Some of the key insights from the discussion were :

- **Mr. MK Singh** (Director, Women and Child Development Ministry, India), promised that the key takeaways and requirements of the Care Leavers will be taken into consideration when policies are revised so that the Care Leavers can be mainstreamed into the society. He explained about the Juvenile Justice Act (2015) and the responsibilities of District Child Protection Officers whose responsibility is to select organizations for developing After Care services. He spoke about other initiatives of the Government including the need of peer counselling for rehabilitation services, stipend during vocational training to tide over the crisis and of temporary housing support.
- **Mr. M.M Mahamdullah** (Addl. Director, Department of Social Services, Bangladesh), acknowledged that currently there is no specific policy for Care Leavers in Bangladesh. There is a National Youth Policy of



2017 though, that gives special benefits to all youth, including Care Leavers. He stressed on the need for stronger collaboration and networking at a global level for Care Leavers and also paying attention to the needs of people with disabilities.

- **Mr. Madhab Prasad Dhunge** (Executive Vice Chairperson, National Youth Council, Ministry of Youth and Sports, Nepal) stressed on the criticality to move from intent to action and explained about the National Youth Council's work in Nepal. He said that the Care Leavers can be linked and integrated to the activities of the Youth Council and thus be part of mainstream society.
- **Mrs. Harshika Ediriweera** (Asst. Commissioner, National Department of Probation and Child Care Service, Sri Lanka) said that the Alternative Care Policy has been approved by their cabinet and has a section on Care Leavers. The government is also consulting the National Housing Development Authority and the Ministry of Women and Child Affairs to set some quotas for housing for Care Leavers in future. They have also signed an MOU with the National Apprentice Training Authority to provide training in residential care for free. There is a vision to create a platform where Care Leavers can work with them closely.

The second panel discussion was moderated by **Maxmillian Ulrich**, Founder and Managing Director, Make Me Smile International. The key discussions that emerged were :

- **Ms. Emanuela Rossini** (Member of Chamber of Deputies, Italy) spoke about the special fund set up in Italy for Care Leavers as an emergency fund supporting the Care Leavers with mentors and tutors so that they are not lost after leaving care. She mentioned that she is in talks with the Ministry of Education to provide Care Leavers with access to higher education and a bursary from the Universities. In Italy, the age of supporting Care has been extended to 21 and they are further working to extend it to 25 years. She added that there is a need that Care Leavers are part of the ongoing dialogue with institutions so there are efforts to bring about Care Leaver representatives from every region to represent their community in Council. She suggested a network of politicians too who can support the cause of Care Leavers.
- 
- **Dr. Matthew Nyashanu** (Member of Parliament, Zimbabwe), promised that his government would revisit the Children's Act and ensure amendments to incorporate solutions to the issues in Aftercare and protect children. He spoke about the review of the Children's Act in the country where the provision of 18 years may be revised to 25 years.
 - **H.E. Nivine El Kabbag** (Minister of Social Solidarity, Egypt) spoke that the issue of Care Leavers is a rights-based issue and a social justice one. There is a need for an empowered approach as well as a participatory approach where *"we do not do it for them since we do it with them"*. There is a need for collective social responsibility which includes the state, community and coordination with multiple partners. Resources need regular planning with a tailored approach with specificity in every case i.e. with special focus on disability, gender, substance abuse so that these categories of Care Leavers are not excluded. There is a urgent need for secured health care, social care, referral services and subsidised higher education
 - **Mr. Tran Van Thao** (Dept of Children's Affairs, Ministry of Labour, Invalids, Social Affairs, Vietnam spoke on the need for a common global network of Care Leavers to protect them. In Vietnam he assured them that they are with the Care Leavers and improving the aftercare system there.

➤ **Dr. Rinchen Chopel** (Member, UNCRC-2021-25 and Director General of South Asia Initiative to End Violence against Children) fervently promised that he would take the issue bilaterally with SOS Children’s Villages and Udayan Care, and ensure that the key takeaways are discussed in the UNCRC (United Nations Convention on the Rights of Child) Committee and at the DGD and beyond so that these demands can be rationalized and mainstreamed in different countries. He promised to be the “friend” and be the “voice” for the Care Leavers in global policy and discussion forums.



➤ **Jo Derrick**, the CEO of Staff explained the “National study: Through Care and Aftercare Services in Scotland’s Local Authorities” where she highlighted the inconsistencies which included variable level of engagement of Care Leavers, rationing of services based on eligibility and criteria, weakness and inconsistencies in data, impact of resource demands and service restructure and lack of consistency in prioritisation and implementation of corporate parenting responsibilities towards Care Leavers. This study led to the Scottish Care Leavers Covenant which was launched in 2015 which has 4 pillars which would be implemented in all supporting Care leaving organisations in Scotland. The four pillars include (a) Care-proofing of policy, (b) Assumption of entitlement, (c) Staying put and continuing care, (d) Relationship based practice. She explained in conclusion that listening to the voices of those with experience of care is vital to understanding the solutions for the Care Leavers and the supporting organisations need to be patient while ensuring a rights-based approach.

Dr. Kiran Modi, Founder and Managing Trustee of Udayan Care, India reminisced that a year earlier in a FICE conference in Israel, she met Wolfgang Schroer from University of Hildesheim, Martine Tobe (Director of Kinderperspectief, Netherlands), Chathuri Jayasooriya (SOS Children’s Villages International) and discussed passionately on the issue of Care Leavers. It was a coming together of souls with similar perspectives which has culminated in the form of this global convention. She also acknowledged the support from technical



partners like UNICEF, Wataneya Society, FICE, etc. and the four Care Leaver networks- CLAN India, GNGN Sri Lanka, Zimbabwe Care Leavers and Latin America Care Leavers who joined the organising committee itself and made the convention successful.



She made the concluding remarks that now there is a need to come together and drive the power of exponential growth. She then asked **Aviral Apurva**, from **NuSocia**, which was the partner organization which helped the organising committee put together the convention to showcase the global website for Care Leavers - “Care Leavers Community” (<http://careleaverscommunity.org/>).

Martine Tobe of Kinderperspectief, Netherlands explained that the Global website is already functional and it is now up to us - (Care leavers, practitioners, researchers, policy makers) to bring the movement forward.



OUTCOMES

The rich discussions that spanned across the pre-events and the main convention generated crucial insights and advanced the understanding about Care Leavers. While every point that got discussed was important and relevant, some of the key findings and reflections are indicated below:

Importance of Care Leaver Networks

Care Leaver networks work like a safety net or a fallback mechanism for most Care Leavers, besides being the platform to amplify their voices to take it to those who can make a difference. These platforms/ groupings are important because alone even if you have the right message, you do not have the right audience for it. In the words of Ruth Wacuka, a Care Leaver from Kenya, *“Advocacy requires the right message to be delivered to the right people so as to have change.”*

It is also important to note the **role of Child Care Institutions**, which must educate the Care Leavers on the law and provisions, enabling the Care Leavers so they can take a stand and raise voice on the rights they do not get. Martine Tobé, CEO of Kinderperspectief, shared a story of a Care leaver who once mentioned to her *“Your job is my life”* citing the importance of Child Care institutions earlier and the networks ought to play towards the urgent needs of Care Leavers, of job opportunities, housing information, tools of policy advocacy and emotional and mental support.

Divakar Ratnadurai, the National Director of SOS Children’s Villages Sri Lanka, explained that one of the biggest bottlenecks that the Care Leavers face is that the Governments still do not have a proper and effective database for Care Leavers which impedes policy making and this is something that child care institutions as well as Care Leaver networks can help the government with.

Care Leaver Networks across the globe are carrying out some noteworthy initiatives on above issues. E.g. *Kenya Society of Care Leavers* initiative called *“Singing to the Lions”* deals with trauma healing of Care Leavers; *Generation Never Give Up (GNGN) network* from Sri Lanka and *Zimbabwe Care Leavers network* have been successful in implementing landmark policy changes by being in constant communication with the government and policy officials. Due to their collective efforts with many other stakeholders, it is now not mandatory in Sri Lanka to have marital status of parents on their birth certificates thus giving them (the Care Leavers) entry into mainstream society where such documents are necessary for employment. *Southern African Parliamentary Support Trust* simplifies bills and budget analysis to let the Care Leavers know, what programs are specifically targeted towards them and how much money are they getting from the budget in layman terms. Such information is important to state their plight and case to the government and policy officials. On the other hand, they also train the parliamentarians who may be unskilled and inexperienced to the issues of the Care Leavers so that after proper understanding, policy changes can be made. Awareness in both cases (Care Leavers and Parliamentarians) is deemed essential for change.

With respect to COVID-19 situation, **Lady Cobena, a Care Leaver from Ecuador** shared that just knowing that you have such a group can mean a world of difference in a crisis. **Yasmine Naseff of Egypt**, while presenting a poster about the Wataneya Society for the Development of Orphanages program “Forsa”, raised an interesting question to fellow Care Leavers, “*What can each of us do as Care Leavers?*”.

Need to Communicate Effectively for Voices to be heard: Power of Storytelling

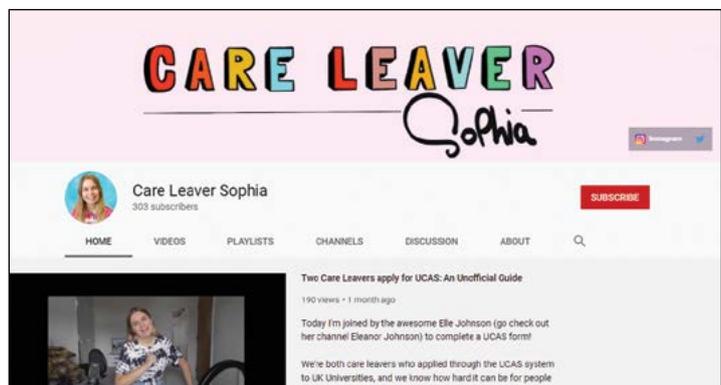
Dr. Delia Pop, a sought-after speaker, brought focus on the importance of storytelling. She said, “*Storytelling is a fantastic avenue for Care Leavers to bring about policy change and also for onboarding other people to their issues. A story links their heart and emotions with their minds and ultimately when the heart and the mind are connected, then only we are led into action.*” According to her, lived experience need not just be part of participatory research but also can be pivoted to lead and inform policies and services.

There are three kinds of stories which Care Leavers can share to influence.

- | Stories of Self (the individual Care Leaver),
- | Story of Us (the Care Leavers’ community)
- | Story of Now (the Action to be brought about).

Prof. Umar Sheraz from Pakistan shared that one needs to take care of sensitizing part (Linking your story to strategy) since narratives and inner stories need to be reflected upon. He also talked about getting feedback from participants through their stories. Stories need to be shared so that other people can share their stories too. One of the most powerful modes of storytelling is through videos. “Over 500 million hours of YouTube content are being consumed on a daily basis making it the most effective medium to get your message across far and wide. Through the help of videos, Care Leavers can better advocate change in policies since it can provide the needed “evidence and proof”.

To enable the Care Leavers with the skillset – one of the convention pre-event was organized in the form of a workshop on video making. It is important that “*If you want to change society, you would have to create content that they want to consume,*” as mentioned by **Isha Chitnis, the facilitator for the second pre-event of the convention.** Vlogging about their lives and the challenges they face while applying for loans, housing, university, and jobs can be showcased which will make policy makers aware of their issues and create affirmative action-based policies accordingly. Videos are engaging, emotional, educational and empathetic and are the reasons why it can help to better connect with the audience. People who are strangers to their cause would become their biggest advocates in both financial and emotional support, once they can relate to their fight and movement. Videos need to be leveraged to challenge stereotypes as well. The ‘right facts’ need to be brought in front of general citizens by showcasing the talent of Care Leavers and thereby destigmatize their condition and make the society



perceive them as normal fellow citizens. “**Care Leaver Sophia**” who has her own YouTube channel which showcases her journey from foster care to Oxford University, UK is a great example of this.

Videos can also be helpful to inspire and influence other Care Leavers who might be facing the same situation as they are. The inspiring story of Sakshi who is the first Care Leaver from Udayan Care to study abroad on a full scholarship is an example of this inspirational journey. Syrian Olympic swimmer Yusra Mardini, who survived the Syrian Civil War and realized her dream of becoming an Olympian swimmer, is another similar story. There are numerous such examples from across the globe, which need to be brought forth. Gurmeet Kaur from India, a Care Leaver, after leaving care, graduated in mass communication and journalism and currently works as a script writer in the Indian television industry. She gave an example of how her poetry on Instagram got very few likes when it was written in text format however, her page turned viral when she started making videos of her poetry. Moses Akash from Sri Lanka, spoke about his experience in the GNG (Generation Never Give Up) network where he leveraged the video mode by creating a short video of their work, edited on his phone with free apps such as Kinemaster, Inshorts and You Cut, and was published on social media. That video post reached across 600,000 people. With support pouring in, they have managed to reach out to 40,000 families and 600,000 people overall utilizing 38 million Sri Lankan rupees that they have raised. So, “evidence and proof” works in case of fund generation and utilization as well. He said that the video format works because people are simply too busy to be reading text. You can simply use your phone to record and with free editing software; create a positive narrative, which can be shared with multiple networks across social media.

To make effective videos, there are some basic principles like knowing the purpose / audience of a video to decide the messaging or being cautious of good light. Video making is a four-step process from start to finish with (a) Coming up with a storyline (b) Planning the video shoot (c) Filming the video and (d) Editing and uploading the video. While planning the video content, the 3-step process must be implemented (a) Hook and Intro (b) Story and Main content (c) Outro and Call to Action.

Through the convention, **the need of a collective voice** was felt including a dedicated Care Leavers YouTube channel, where all Care Leavers can share their own videos and amplify their voice and impact for change in policies and attitudes towards Care Leavers.

Research in the Domain of Care Leaving

Leaving Care is a transnational challenge. There are issues with discrepancies in legal entitlements and implementation in practice. There have been a few global comparative studies in the domain of Care Leaving. These researches deal with frameworks, challenges and solutions for Care Leavers.

An International Survey of Care Leaving Policies and Practices was done across 39 countries by Dr. Varda Mann Feder of Concordia University Montreal (Canada) along with Dr. Benjamin Strahl, Dr. Wolfgang Schröer from University of Hildesheim, Germany. Basis the study, a 10-point Declaration charter representing universal entitlements for all Care Leavers around the globe, was drawn and presented at FICE (International Federation of Educative Communities) conference held in Vienna in 2016. They found out that out of 36 countries, only 8 countries (22%) have well developed frameworks for Aftercare for adults leaving care. The biggest Care Leaver challenges according to their study included:

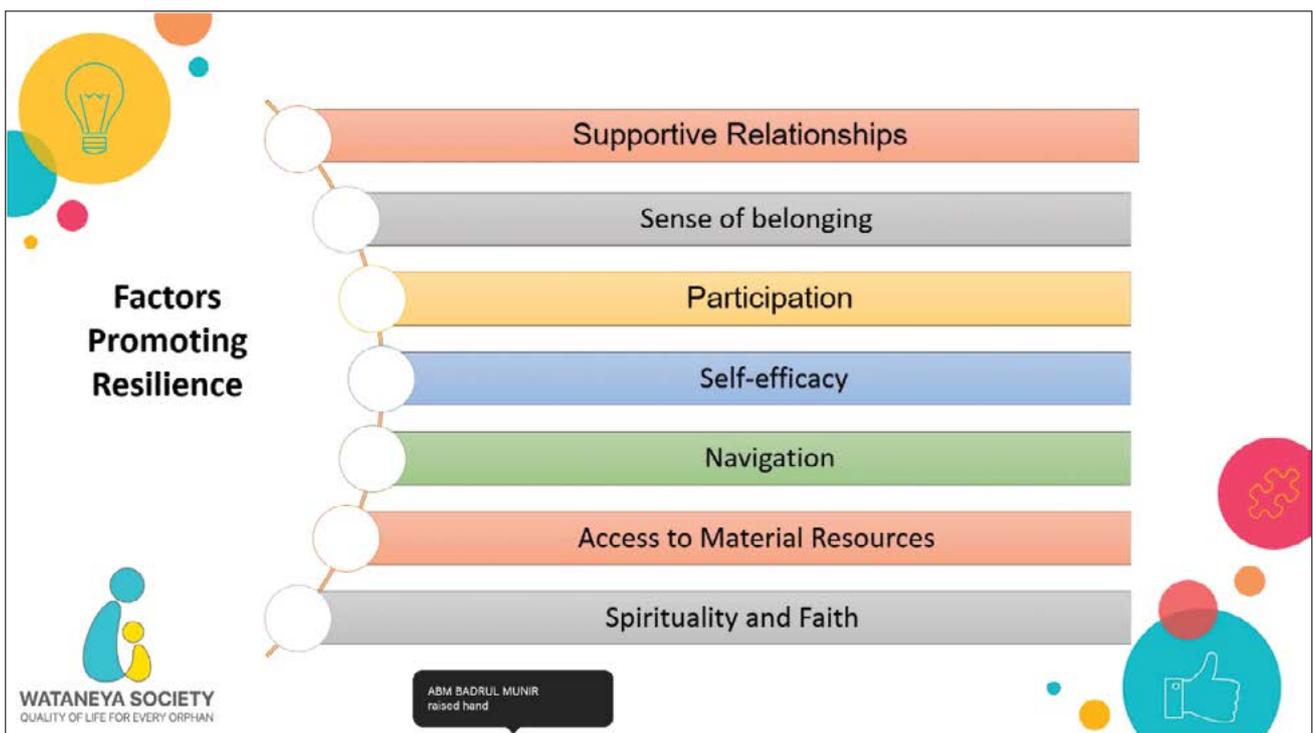
- | Employment (94.4%, 34 countries agree)

- | Education, Housing, Poverty (86.1%, 31 countries agree)

- | Isolation/Loneliness (80.6%, 29 countries agree)
- | Mental health (75%, 27 countries agree)
- | Delinquency, Substance Abuse (61.2 %, 22 countries agree)
- | Teenage parenthood (55.9%, 19 countries agree).

An important aspect about researches being conducted on care leaving is to respect their rights and dignity, while undertaking research. **Maria Groining, Academic Researcher from University of Klagenfurt, Austria** in her study “Participatory Care Leavers Research and Activities in Austria” which was conducted from 2016 to 2018, focused on the importance of bringing Care leavers into participatory research since interview and participatory group work has the benefit of “*a reflection space*”. Also listening to the stories of Care Leavers “*contribute to the process of healing*”.

Another area of research in Care Leaving is the factors promoting resilience among adolescents transitioning from care. **Noha Emam Hassanin, Research and Knowledge Management Senior Specialist at Wataneya society in Egypt** suggested following key factors:



A study in India conducted by **Udayan Care** with support from UNICEF, Tata Trusts across five states puts forth the ‘Sphere of Aftercare’ as a comprehensive ideological framework for Care Leavers, towards independent living.

COVID-19 crisis and its impact on Care Leavers has become another important area of research in this year 2020. **SOS Children’s Villages** conducted a research on this topic across 9 countries and suggested a way forward for Care Leavers in the post COVID-19 period.

Way forward for Young People planning to leave care post COVID-19 era

Ensure Mental Health & Well-Being

- Young people and educators should attend **Psychological first aid training**.
- Young people should attend trainings on **COVID-19 awareness**, its effect on health and economy and recovery mechanism to build confidence in themselves.
- Young people should engage themselves in **Sports activities and yoga sessions** for healthy mind and body.
- Young people should **limit their time on social media** and concentrate more on productive activities like reading books and newspapers.

Participate Actively

- Young people should mobilize their energy and passion **to support COVID response initiatives**.
- Young people should participate or lead **Youth-led initiatives** and speak up for themselves and other young people from their communities.

Digital Infrastructure for Education Continuity

- Young people should avail **uninterrupted, high speed broadband connection**. They should have access to sufficient ICT equipment.
- Wherever feasible young people should be supported with **extra allowances for mobile data**.
- Young people should explore **online courses** and **develop their employability skills**.
- Young people should create their profiles on all the leading virtual job portals and platforms.

Partnerships & Networking

- Young people should **connect with government relief programmes** and avail related benefits.
- Young people should connect with local employer and **avail internship opportunities** to get work exposure.
- Young people should **connect with industry mentors** to develop market relevant skills.
- Young people should **connect with leading manpower agencies** for better employment opportunities.

Skill Development for Employment

- Young people should prepare their **Individual Development Plans** and monitor their progress.
- Young people should **keep a check on rising and falling industries** during their COVID period and align their choice of higher studies & skill development accordingly.
- Creative industries like **Mobile Application and content development** will provide better job opportunities in coming times.
- **Digital literacy** is very important moving forward.
- Young people should explore more around Technical and Vocational Education & Training (**TVET**) & **Entrepreneurship opportunities** based on evolving labor market trends.
- Young people should **attend career guidance webinars/sessions** on employment/ self-employment opportunities in post COVID-19 era.

Care Leavers themselves are also undertaking research on different aspects of Care Leaving. **Dr. John Paul Horn, a Care Leaver Representative from California** followed two basic research questions: “*how do Care Leavers define ‘success’ in their own words?*” and “*what kind of resources do they need to help them achieve it?*”. In his study he understood that the biggest barriers to success were related to growing up in foster care itself which prevented them from actualising their potential as they grew out of care. In the lessons learnt from Life After Care Study (LAFCS) study, he learnt that Care Leavers want more research on their “strengths” and less on their “deficits”. **Katharina Höffken from Germany** did her masters from University of Hildesheim and is a Care Leaver herself. From her studies, she explained that Germany overemphasizes on being “independent” while ignoring the “social ties”. An important point was mentioned that “*Support for Care Leavers should end when Care Leavers themselves no longer need it and not on the basis of age and specific qualification*”. **Tanja Abou from Berlin, Germany, a Care Leaver, a social worker and a researcher** found out that there was a huge normalization of violence for young people in care. **Gabriella Rask from SOS Austria** shared about a 10-country study leading to a practice guide and training manual - Prepare for Leaving Care Practice Guidance. The extension of this research is being done in a participatory approach, involving Care Leavers themselves thus giving care professionals the opportunity to hear first-hand how young people are experiencing the leaving care process.

These research inputs need to be fed into policy and advocacy campaigns of different Care Leaving organizations. Further, the need and scope of more research on Care Leavers cannot be emphasized enough. The poster presentations during the pre-event brought forth inputs like best global practices that can be useful in policy advocacy and also for customized adoption by individual Care Leaver networks.

COVID-19 and its impact on Care Leavers

Care Leavers are a marginalized group who often face significant social and economic disadvantage. With COVID-19 crisis, as people become more and more reliant on close family and friends support, Care Leavers with limited social networks faced increased social isolation and economic challenges, and also leading to mental health challenges. In one of the key discussion areas of the Convention, COVID-19 impact on Care

Leavers was taken up, moderated by **Mr. Patrick Reason of FICE, Brazil**. Care leavers from across the globe brought forth their views on challenges, support and what more needs to be done.

Fabienne Landerer of Australia shared how a lot of Care Leavers are sitting on a pile of debt because they lost jobs during the pandemic. **Le Phong from Vietnam** shared how the lockdowns caused hardships and how SOS Children’s Villages helped the Care Leavers, highlighting the importance of institutional care. In the same light, **Tasha Reynolds, Care Leaver from Australia**, felt that the age of leaving care needs to be raised from 18 to 21 and Care Leavers must be supported with workplace and living arrangements. Access

International Labour Organization

Towards Decent Work for Young People

- Supporting enterprises, jobs and incomes**
 - Youth guarantees
 - Investment in (digital) education and training
 - Social protection, transfers
 - Public employment services
 - SME support
 - Subsidised employment, targeted public works programmes
- Protecting workers in the workplace**
 - Occupational health and safety (OSH)
 - Psychosocial support measures
- Relying on social dialogue for solutions**
 - Promotion of youth rights, incl. right to disconnect
 - Integrating young people in social dialogue mechanisms as response policies are designed
- Stimulating the economy and employment**
 - Countercyclical fiscal policies
 - Economic and employment policies
 - Investment in sectors that can absorb young workers (digital, green)

zoom
Source: ILO Policy Brief

to therapy emerged as a key need too. **Tanja Abou, Care Leaver from Germany** brought focus on the need to change the narrative from “Functioning” to “Nourishing”. She also urged the media as well as caregiving organizations to focus not only on “success stories” but also “who are lost in the way”.

According to **Susana Puerto of ILO** COVID-19 pandemic has pushed young people into a trilemma- (1) Disruption of their Education and Training, (2) Increased difficulties for young jobseekers to transition to decent jobs,(3) Job and income losses for young workers. She also shared a solution including- supporting enterprises, jobs and incomes, protecting workers in the workplace, relying on social dialogue for solutions, stimulating the economy and employment.

Around 100 Young people with care experience, from over 25 countries came together on a webinar on June 6, 2020 to explore and discuss the challenges faced by Care Leavers globally and how the COVID-19 outbreak intensified their vulnerabilities and suggested solutions/recommendations to ensure Care Leavers feel supported. After two months of consultative discussions with experts, a Declaration was drafted that identified eleven domains of gaps and

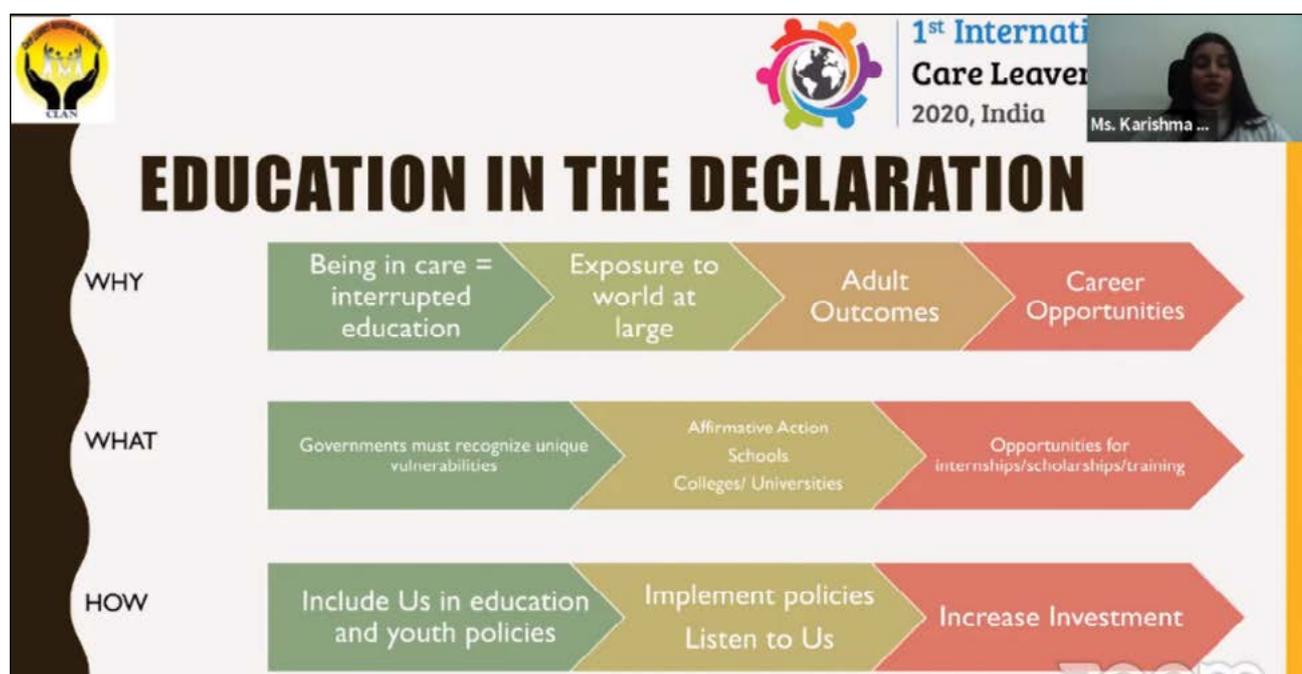


offered recommendations specific to the issues affecting children and youth from Alternative Care settings globally. The same was endorsed by various Care Leavers' networks from across the globe. The Declaration has been promoted by various national and international agencies as well.

Each of these 11 declarations were discussed in detail during the convention – each being presented by Care Leavers themselves. **Konrad and Laura (video) from Poland** spoke on Financial security Gap. Pandemic related lockdown had restricted mobility and had caused job losses and income losses, affecting Care Leavers who are already hard pressed financially. **Laura, a Care Leaver Representative from Poland** said that she could not afford college and the state should support their families. The Care Leavers demanded a financial assistance program for themselves.



Nimmu a Care Leaver representative from Sri Lanka and a member of Generation Never Give Up network spoke on the housing situation gap in Sri Lanka with case studies from different Care Leavers who had to face great problems while shifting from their care homes. Some had to reside in places of worship, some had to live in hostel rooms without proper electricity and some had too many restrictions which made working in night shifts impossible. She also listed out the housing security demands that Care Leavers in Sri Lanka want and also portrayed what would happen if Care Leavers were given a home. Nimmu also explained how Generation Never Give Up (GNGN) is connecting with both policy makers as well as potential sponsors to support them with the housing project to raise funds.



Karishma from CLAN (Care Leavers Association and Networks, India) spoke on Education Gap and how it is the most powerful weapon for Care Leavers and she explained it in a three prong- “Why, What and How”.

Some of the recommendations spoken by Karishma to mitigate the Education Gap include:

- a. Acknowledging the unique situations and circumstances of Care Leavers in universities, schools and providing them with adequate financial help and training.
- b. Relaxing the need of documents for Care Leavers. For EWS (Economically weaker sections) in India there are scholarships however what is needed is to provide the annual income certificate of your father which is not possible in case of Care Leavers.
- c. Need for reservation of seats in Universities like people from other minority classes. This would help the Care Leavers to access quality education.
- d. Include them in education and youth policies.
- e. Departments of Care Leavers in India as is available in UK and Ireland for customised help and support.
- f. Adequate Financial assistance and support.

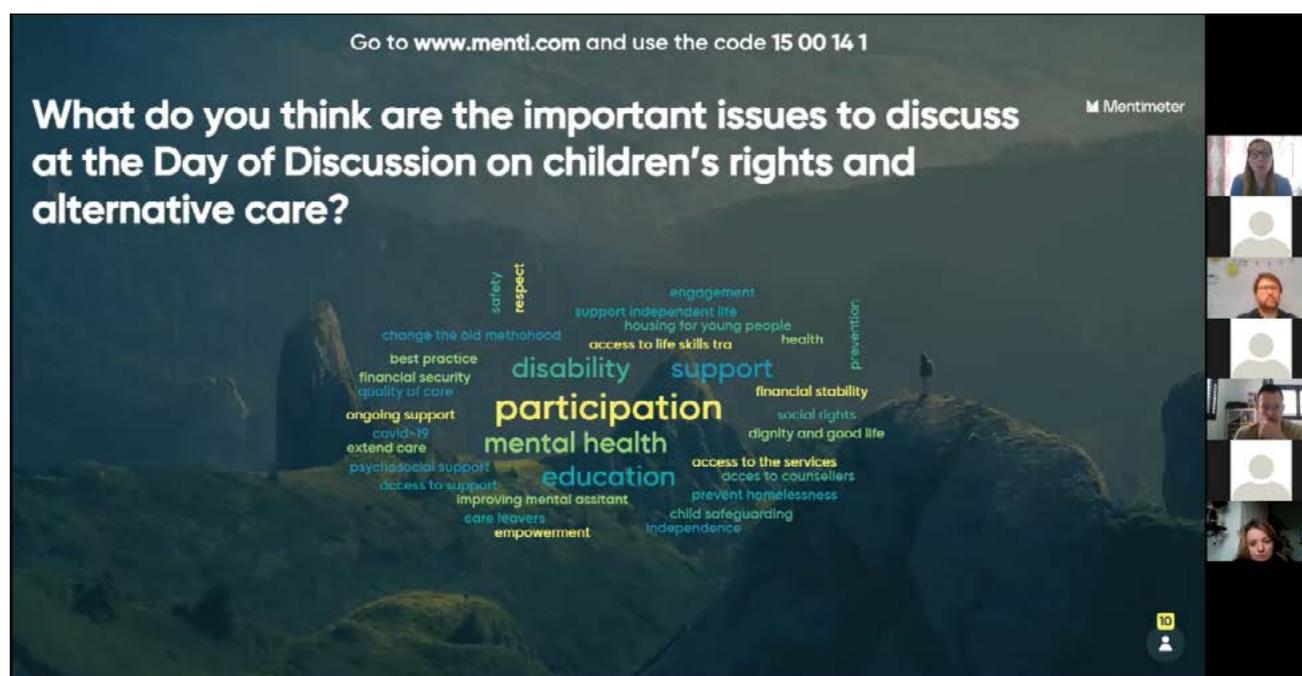
Karishma also spoke on the Gap of Psycho-social support and how the access to mental health services is a need for Care Leavers. **Sabiti Jack** of Uganda Care Leavers spoke about the career support and employability gap. It was highlighted that there is a lack of evidence-based research since many Care Leavers leave institutional care and the size of the problem is unknown. **Lilly and Joelle from Netherlands** spoke on the gap of participation and said that what is most important is that Care Leavers should be included in decision making on local, regional, national and international levels especially when it deals with advocacy with authorities. They also shared about their campaign “Message in a bottle”, where they shipped messages to the mayors of all counties in the Netherlands.

Policies and Legal Framework on Care Leaving

As part of the Convention, dedicated sessions were planned where Policy makers were invited as panelists – one, for them to listen from the Care Leavers directly and secondly, to know their own perspectives on the topic of Care Leaving. **Ms Severine Thomas, part of organising committee of the convention, from the University of Hildesheim** posed the questions to policy makers that how could the conditions of Care Leavers be improved by political decisions and what expectations do they have in their own lobbying. **Josef Koch, Director of FICE Germany** said that most support goes to the young people in care and not adequate support reaches Care Leavers. She cited examples from FICE’s work wherein they do projects with academia and Care Leaver Networks to build good cases to support care leaving youth. They then take these cases as models to policy makers in Germany including government, youth agencies and even church organisations. With their efforts, she shared, that the federal government is coming up with a new law - which includes a coming back option for Care Leavers, obligatory support and financial security for young people. **Mr. Chandrika Khatiwada from Nepal** shared that a new law has been introduced in “Children’s Act 2018” with a separate section on “Alternative Care” arrangements. He further mentioned “Standard for operations and management of Residential Child Care home” now includes reintegration plan in accordance to individual needs and interest of the child and provides opportunities, assigning clear responsibility to concerned agencies for social development, vocational training so that their employment opportunities can be increased and social protection measures are organised for the Care Leavers. **Mr. H. H. Leelananda from Sri Lanka** acknowledged that several social housing programs have been implemented for low and lower middle income populations, however, Care leavers have been missed out but now they would be having a meeting with the Department of Probation and Child Care services and SOS Children’s Villages Sri Lanka and implement the program with Care Leavers in 2021 with proper allocation of land.

During a moderated panel discussion during the convention, **Prof Mike Stein** talked about the importance of Policy and Legal framework for Care Leavers. The session saw speakers – a combination of Care Leavers and representatives of organisations working with Care Leavers, from across the globe. **Yasmin El Hagry of Wataneya Society, Egypt** spoke about the need to standardize and unify Alternative Care legislations. **Joseph McDowall of Create Foundation Australia** spoke on the need to exert pressure on parliamentarians to make the adequate changes. **Mark Riley of Uganda** spoke how their organization is helping to rewrite the Alternative Care framework. **Tanja Abou of Germany**, who spoke from a triple perspective of being a Care leaver, a social worker and a researcher, strongly proposed that “25 should be the new 18” giving “7 years more to get ready for life” and its challenges. **Reda Ali from Egypt** spoke that there is a need for Care leavers to be included in their fight for rights.

An important aspect of participation in policy making would be the representation of Care Leavers at the United Nations. In this regard, it was discussed that every 2 years, there is a Day of General Discussion (DGD) organised by the Committee on the Rights of Child, in Geneva. The discussion was co-facilitated by members of the DGD 2021 youth advisors and supported by **Aisling Ledwith** and **Caroline Rose**. A quick poll among the participants of the convention revealed that the biggest issues which need focus and discussion at DGD are participation, mental health, education and disability.



Expectations and Challenges of Mainstreaming

This important topic was taken up for discussion during the breakout session on Day 2 of the main convention where **Ms. Nahla El Nemr** from Egypt and **Ms Pratima Kamble, senior coordinator-education, Miracle Foundation India** spoke on expectations of Care Leavers which included financial support, emotional support, financial help for Housing, education, and health insurance, confidence in communication, financial awareness and literacy. The challenges they face are that they have no familial support, not enough money for housing, administrative stuff, loneliness, limited opportunities for higher education.

The discussion on solutions focused on life skills like communication skills, managing households, knowing support services especially in need, relationship skills, knowing about their own rights. The recommended

timeline for successful transition includes either when the child is ready or doing a step by step transition in all areas of life before stepping out in the actual world.

Becoming a giver from receiver

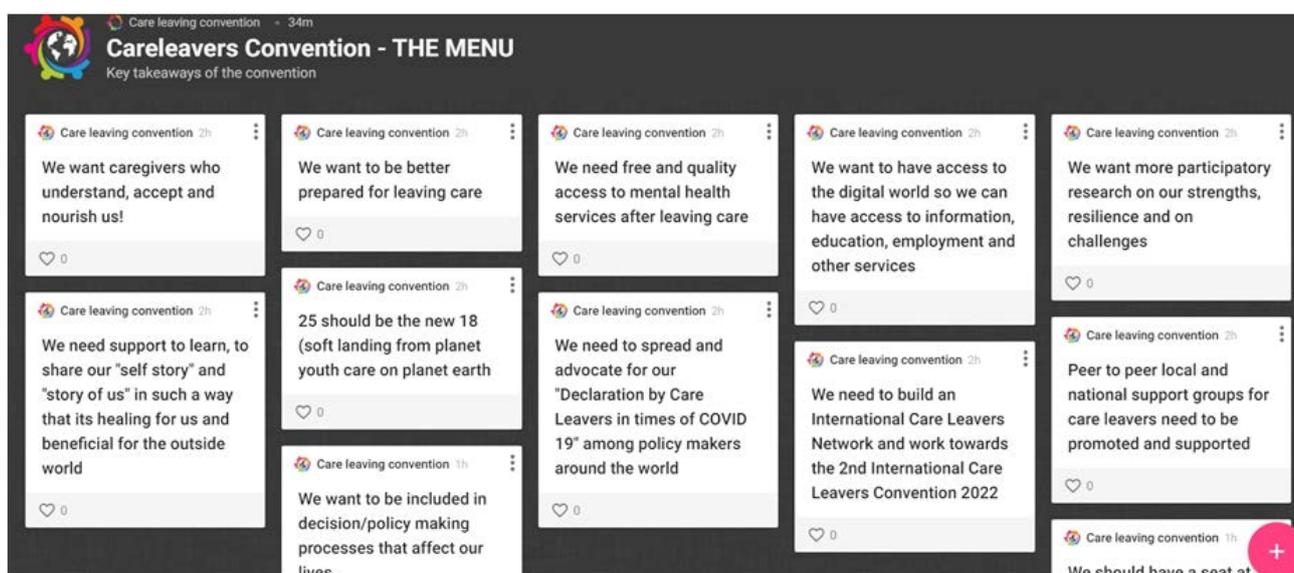
Moses Akash from Sri Lanka remembers the first time when he finished bachelors of social work and his friend told him: “I am proud of you”. That moment was significant for him as being a Care Leaver is often a lonely journey. This important topic was taken up for discussion during the convention of how Care Leavers should fight for finding their feet in the society and once done, they are quite keen on giving back to the society as well. It adds to their self- esteem. **Nimmu, Care Leaver** from Sri Lanka is a pivotal member of GNG (Generation Never Give Up) helping Care Leavers and is just “happy to be there”. **Tanja Abou of Germany** spoke that it is a “gift to have this exchange, it’s a constant exchange of giving and receiving. I was a caretaker for young siblings. Now I am in social work giving back to the networks which raised me”. **Pooja of India** said that the gift of giving goes back ultimately to the cause of Nation building and guidance to be a better citizen.

Key Takeaways

At the end of the Convention, Care Leavers spelt out the 17 key takeaways which they had listed from the Convention, in their own words:

1. We want **caregivers who understand**, accept and nourish us!
2. We need support to **learn, to share** our “self-story” and “story of us” in such a way that its healing for us and beneficial for the outside world.
3. We want a **digital platform** to be created where the children under Alternative Care can speak their minds, challenges and ideas to meet individual needs.
4. We want to be better prepared for leaving care.
5. **25 should be the new 18** (soft landing from planet youth care on planet earth).
6. We want to be **included in decision/policy making** processes that affect our lives.
7. We need a **proactive rather than a reactive** approach to mitigate the challenges and adjustment difficulties faced by care leavers.
8. We need free and quality access to **mental health services** after leaving care.
9. We need to spread and advocate for our “**Declaration by Care Leavers** in times of COVID 19” among policy makers around the world.
10. Our network as Care Leavers is our net worth. Never underestimate what we share for it is a life line impact in influencing each other to think differently, grow and be connected with our clan. No one should feel alone, let’s continue to reach out to each other. It is **in giving that we receive**. We all have something to give.
11. We want to have **access to the digital world** so we can have access to information, education, employment and other services.
12. We need to build an International Care Leavers Network and work towards the **2nd International Care Leavers Convention 2022**.

13. **Care leavers Networks** should be resourced, funded to take the lead and not really left behind organisations.
14. We want more **participatory research** on our strengths, resilience and on challenges.
15. Peer to peer, local and national **support groups** for care leavers need to be promoted and supported.
16. We should have **a seat at the table** at international forums like UN, etc.
17. **International Day of Care Leavers:** The UN to approve an International Care Leavers Day and have a commitment fund for care leavers which is accessible to the different care leavers networks in the world



These 17 takeaways from the Convention were summarised in form of Eight Demands / Expectations that the Care Leavers have from different stakeholders. These are also clear inputs for policy makers to work on, as well:

1. We need to build an International Care Leavers Network and work towards the 2nd International Care Leavers Convention, 2022.
2. We need to spread and advocate for our Declaration by Care Leavers in times of COVID-19.
3. We should have a seat at the table at the national and international forums.
4. We need free and quality access to mental health services after leaving care.
5. We need proactive rather than a reactive approach to mitigate challenges and adjustment difficulties faced by Care Leavers. Implementation is the key.
6. 25 should be the new 18 (soft landing from planet Youth Care to Planet Earth).
7. We want caregivers who understand, accept and nourish us. We want to be better prepared for leaving Care.
8. We want more participatory research on our strengths, resilience and challenges.



NEXT STEPS AND WAY FORWARD

A few days post the First International Care Leavers Convention, an email was received at Convention secretariat, which stated –

“I want to thank you again for making me part of this Convention. It was more a series of coincidences that made me part of the convention and I couldn't be more happy that after my registration you sent me that mail, that you want to include me in the conference – without knowing me. I have tried to follow all three days, sometimes on my way to work with headphones, in public transport, on walks and at home. I smiled, I laughed, I connected, I was impressed, I cried, I learned so much. Thank you for making this happen. Thank you really from the bottom of my heart to bring all these people, all of us together. I can't wait to see where this is going”.

From the month-long pre-events and 3 days of enriching main convention, there has been a plethora of ideas, suggestions, feedbacks and inputs which emerged. Some of these were aptly summarised on the last day of the convention by the Care Leavers (refer previous section). The way forward for different key stakeholders are as summarised below:

Inputs for Policy Makers

While there were many discussions which had inputs for policy makers, below mentioned is a crux of the inputs for policy makers, which can help create a meaningful difference in the lives of Care Leavers. First and foremost, it's important to involve Care Leavers while making/ framing policies governing their lives. **Care leaver Fabienne from Austria** said *“Those who decide about our lives have not lived our lives”* It is important to involve care leavers into decision making.

1. **Co-Creating policies:** It is important that the policies are co-designed with multi stakeholders and care leavers at the center. The principles for creating policies for Care Leavers should be:
 - i. Rights based Approach
 - ii. Social Justice
 - iii. Empowerment
 - iv. Participatory
 - v. Collective Social Responsibility
 - vi. Multidimensional
2. Setting up **funds** at national and international level for care leavers, accessible to the civil societies and care leavers networks supporting the transition period.
3. **Support:** The pandemic has caused financial, mental, food, housing and well-being constraints to the Care Leavers. Government can provide financial support, scholarships, reservations to Care Leavers, subsidized access to mental health services and support in the smooth transition. It is equally important to support youth and child care facilities financially to have good qualified institutions.
4. **Increasing the age** of Care Leaving from 18 to 25.

Inputs for Care Leavers and their Networks

1. **Be part of Care Leavers Networks:** It is important for the Care leavers across the globe to unite to show solidarity. This will inspire and influence others in the network and outside the network.
However, just creating a network of Care Leavers will not suffice – what it needs is to make the network alive and also the networks to coordinate at, local, regional and international level to influence the stakeholders and policy makers.
2. **Being Informed:** The Care Leavers network should ensure to spread awareness about their rights and policies before and after leaving the care. Enabling digital access to information, education, employment and other services can help Care Leavers stand on their feet much faster.
3. **Training leads to empowerment:** It is important for Care Leaver networks to arrange for and Care Leavers to participate in skill building training. E.g. video making skills / Writing skills which can help the Care Leavers share their stories. Some of the training programs have to be initiated as part of preparation to leave care and would need the networks to work closely with Child Care Institutions.

Care Leaver Nimmu from Sri Lanka says *“Some of the strongest and longest standing forms of friendships are born from networks, as long as we have a strong network of Care Leavers and supporters, we can also be confident that someone among ourselves will be able to answer even our toughest question.”*

Inputs for Practitioners working with Care Leavers

1. For Care Leavers’ **recognition** by the government is important, once this is recognized, Care Leavers will be a part of the agenda and policy. While NGOs are non-state actors, influencing policy making, they shall play a key role in increasing visibility of care leavers at government levels through research, stories, campaigns, competitions, conclaves, etc.
2. The **stories and experiences** shared by various NGOs are admired and form an emotional connection. Care Leavers’ resilience and strength is often overshadowed by the negatives. NGOs and civil society organizations must be involved in supporting the change through sharing complete stories of Care Leavers.
3. **Counselling support:** NGOs can support the Care Leavers by helping them access to mental health services.
4. **Play the role of enablers and not doers** – As Care Leavers enter adulthood, they need to be enabled to live an independent life, and therefore empowering them is the key. Hence practitioners need to perform the role of enablers, rather than caregivers themselves.

Care leaver Karishma from India said *“Not all wounds are visible, and just because these wounds are not visible, this doesn’t mean that it doesn’t hurt or need no treatment, care or attention.”* Youths staying in the institutions face various trauma and hardships, they should not be ignored but addressed through mental health support sessions and counselling.

Inputs for Researchers

1. **Participatory research on their strengths, challenges and resilience-** Much focus has been towards the weaknesses of Care Leavers. Now the focus must shift to their strengths and what challenges need to be overcome to make them resilient to the vicissitudes of life.
2. **Develop robust methods for evaluating services for looked-after children and young people** by working with multidisciplinary research specialists in health, social care, and economic evaluation.

3. **Identifying Interventions-** Effective and cost-effective interventions need to be identified for minority groups from black and minority ethnic communities who are lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender and immigrants. Minorities like Blacks, Asians, Hispanic Care Leavers in white communities, LGBTQ in Homophobic communities need special attention since their color of skin and sexual orientation make them vulnerable to the various prejudices of society. They should be counselled about their rights and have access to various services including legal support after they leave Care.
4. **Research on effective Aftercare practices for disabled Care Leavers-** Since the needs of disabled Care Leavers are complex, they need better preparation in transitioning out of care especially regarding their shelter, education and employment which should be safe and amenable to their special needs.

Inputs for donors

1. **Identify and support the emerging organisations in Care Leaving** – Supporting emerging organisations in Care Leaving can ensure better advocacy and better delivery of Aftercare practices to the last mile.
2. **Support transition and after care services-** Donors can support the various aftercare services including good counselling services, healthcare, sound financial and housing advice etc.
3. **Connect Care Leavers to education and employment opportunities-** Donors can help in connecting the Care Leavers to higher education and decent employment opportunities as that will sustain and help them succeed in the long run.
4. **Support prevention for being in Care in the first place-** Poverty, immigration, racism, homelessness are structural issues that can prevent the youth from being in care in first place.
5. **Provide resources for Care Leavers who want to establish an organization-** There are many former Care Leavers who want to now give back to the Care Leaving community. They can co-create interventions with young Care Leavers which would be much more effective since they have lived the care experience.
6. **Integrate the voices of Care Leavers while funding any intervention-** Ask for the opinions and stories for Care Leavers from them itself through surveys, baseline studies to better identify the needs.

Conclusion

The Care Leaver Convention brought about vast amount of insights from researchers, Care Leaver practitioners, policy makers and Care Leavers themselves. All the 900 + participants who engaged witnessed the beginning of a social movement of collectivising Care Leavers for structural changes en masse. The 17 key takeaways would ensure the snowball effect taking place in the coming future including in the upcoming DGD (Day of General Discussion) and in the individual Care Leaver networks in the respective countries. The pre events and the 3-day First International Care Leavers Convention 2020 was a tour de force into the lives and world of Care Leavers.

Finally, the key outcome of the Convention can be summarized in below two quotes - **Ruth Wacuka from Kenya Society of Care Leavers's** - *"We are not done. We have just started"* and **Nimmu Kumari, Care Leaver from Sri Lanka** and member of GNG (Generation Never Give up) says **"What we feel now is a heart to heart connection of Care Leavers global family! No looking back and nothing about us without us"**.



ANNEXURE

Speaker Profiles (in alphabetical order)



Adham Khedr is a care leaver from Jordan and the general manager of Sakeena foundation (Princess Alia Foundation Project (PAF)), where he works with care leavers and care residents in empowering youth programs to develop skills and maintain better wellbeing. He was recently selected to become an Ashoka fellow. He is also a Child Protection Consultant for USAID FHI360 and King Hussein Foundation Project, where he provides strategic guidance and technical support for the development and implementation of policy and programme documents related to care leavers. He is a holder of Nursing Diploma (2000-2001) from Al Quds College and a Psychology Bachelors from Amman Al Ahleye University (2011-2016).

Prof Adrian van Breda, Department of Social Work, trained as a clinical social worker at UCT and did his doctorate at RAU in multicultural scale development. His research focus is resilience theory – how people, particularly individuals, families and organisations, bounce back from adversity, or even thrive in the face of adversity. He is currently doing much of his research looking at the processes that youth follow as they transition out of the care of the child welfare system and journey towards independent living. Adrian teaches introduction to social work and casework at undergraduate levels, and psychotherapy and clinical practice at postgraduate levels. He is the coordinator of the Masters in Clinical Social Work. Adrian is the editor of the Southern African Journal of Social Work and Social Development. He serves on the Board of the Centre for Social Development in Africa at UJ and the Centre for the Study of Resilience at the University of Pretoria. He is Vice President of Resilio (The International Association for the Promotion and Dissemination of the Research on Resilience), the founding member and co-Director of the Africa Care-leaving Research Network, an Executive Committee member of the International Research Network on Transitions to Adulthood from Care, a member of the Professional Board for Social Work, and a member of the Econometrics Panel and the Clinical Social Work Specialisation Panel of the SA Council for Social Service Professions.





Dr. Aida Essaid is the Director of the Information and Research Center – King Hussein Foundation (IRCKHF). IRCKHF’s aim is to mobilize data for positive social change with a focus on human rights issues, gender and social justice, and civil society empowerment. Aida received her Honours BA from the University of Toronto where she double majored in Political Science and Near and Middle Eastern Civilizations, and an MA in Middle East Politics and PhD in Politics from the University of Exeter.

Amanda Bissex is from the UNICEF South Asia regional office as Regional Advisor for Child Protection. Amanda has more than 18 years of experience in leading child protection system strengthening in Asia, Pacific and Africa. Prior to joining the regional office, Amanda was the Chief of Child Protection for UNICEF in Indonesia from 2016. She has also held child protection leadership positions in the UNICEF Multi-Country Office for the Pacific covering 14 Pacific Island countries, Thailand, Lao PDR and Zambia. In her previous positions with UNICEF she has supported strengthening child protection system, capacity development for the social welfare workforce, strengthening alternative care including family-based care, social norms change programmes, research and advocacy and law reform. Prior to joining UNICEF she worked with international NGOs in Cambodia and Lao PDR. She has a Master’s Degree in International Relations with a focus on human rights and humanitarian law.



Aneasha Wadhwa is the Executive Director of Udayan Care, based in Delhi, with a footprint in 25 cities in India and chapters in USA, Germany and Australia. She has served on the Board of Udayan Care for 15 years. Her passion lies in applied research, policy advocacy and development of models of care for young adults leaving child care institutions. Prior to this, she was a media marketing professional, and worked with the Discovery Channel and the India Today Group. She was awarded the Chevening Fellowship at the Department of Politics and International Relations, Oxford University by the UK government in

2018, has an MBA in Communications Management from Symbiosis Institute of Business Management, Pune and read English Literature at St. Stephen’s College, Delhi.

Anna Katharina Schmid is a psychologist, co-creator, researcher; board member of FICE Switzerland. My special interest is how young people take charge of their lives and realise their own ideas of the future, and how youth homes can best support them. In my project “Creating Futures”, Young Experts (aged 14-24), leaders and staff from youth homes in Switzerland and Hungary together develop new, better solutions for this support.





Benjamin Strahl, PhD, is a research associate and lecturer at the Institute of Social Pedagogics and Organizational Studies, University of Hildesheim (Germany). His research interests are: children and youth care (esp. alternative care), transitions to adulthood, social work & religion, school education of children and youth in care. Beside others, he is member of the German FICE section (IGfH) and INTRAC (International Research Network on Transitions to Adulthood from Care) and Co-Initiator of the German Care Leavers Association.

Dr. Carolin Ehlke is a researcher and teacher at the Institute of Social Pedagogy and Organisation Studies, University of Hildesheim (Germany). For many years she has been doing national and international research on the topic of leaving care from residential and foster care. She finished her PhD in 2019 (title of the PhD-thesis: “Care leavers from foster families. Coping with the transition from foster care to an independent living from the young people’s point of view”). Other research focuses for her are: biographical and institutional transitions, child and youth care in the German Democratic Republic, socio-pedagogical professionalism.



Chandrika Khatiwada is currently working as Director of Institute for Legal Research and Consultancy (ILRC), Kathmandu, Nepal. He is an Advocate from Nepal, working for promotion and protection of rights of the child since 1992 by engaging in research, education and training. He has written a number of books, research reports and articles on different aspects of the rights of the child. He has been part of several research projects such as “the Study on Towards the Right Care for Children: Orientation for reforming alternative care systems in Africa, Asia, Latin America”, the “Social Impact Assessment of SOS Children’s

Village Programs in Nepal” and “Assessment of Quality Care in Alternative Care System in Nepal”. He has contributed in State party reporting of Nepal on the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) as a consultant. He has supported/ facilitated the process of Children-led report on CRC prepared by children in 2014 and Girl-led report on the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) in 2018. He has contributed as an advisor to Consortium Nepal that facilitated children to prepare Child-led report on Universal Periodic Review of Nepal (cycle III) in 2020.

Cheyenne is Jaffna Thamizh (Tamil) from Toronto, Ontario, Canada. She is a Child Advocate who has lived and professional expertise in child welfare and homelessness. In 2016, she was the recipient of Bryden ‘One To Watch’ Award awarded by her alma mater, and in 2017 was recognized by the United Way of Greater Toronto as 1 of 3 Women who inspire for International Women’s Day. She is the Co-founder and Executive Lead of the Ontario Children’s Advancement Coalition (OCAC), and a provincial representative on the National Council of YIC Advocates. She serves on the Board of the Children’s Aid Society of Toronto as Vice-Chair, Diversity Equity and Inclusion, on the Board of Scarborough West Community Legal Clinic, on the Association of Community Legal Clinics of Ontario’s Race-Equity Group, is a member of the Children in Limbo Taskforce and is also an advocate regarding Childhood Sexual Abuse and Gender Based Violence/Intimate Partner Violence. She co-leads the Gender Equity and Women’s Rights Committee at the Tamil Canadian Center for Civic Action, is an independent consultant, a public speaker, an ambassador of the Children’s Aid Foundation of Canada.





Deepak KC was grown up in SOS Children Village Jorpati, Kathmandu, Nepal. He is an architect and an active leader in the disability movement. He is a cofounder of Independent Living Center Kathmandu, which leads Nepal's efforts for the implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disability. He is a registered life member of the Society of Nepalese Architects. In addition, he is an active member of National Paralympic Committee and currently serves as its deputy secretary-general. Currently, he is working as a short-term accessibility consultant at Work Bank Group Nepal in Earthquake Housing Reconstruction Project.

Delia Pop, a sought after thought leader and communicator, regularly contributing to conferences and events on care reform, as a key speaker, facilitator or trainer, is the Director of Tanya's Dream Fund, a time-bound, grant-making special initiative supporting families so children can thrive, in Bulgaria. Delia is a passionate advocate for children rights, with over 20 years' experience in leading, advocating and implementing care reform and deinstitutionalization across over 30 countries in Europe, Africa, Latin America, the Caribbean Region and Southern Asia. She has a successful track record in developing new initiatives, supporting change at scale both at organizational and at systems level, working with children and young people and in child protection and care reform strategies.. She co-authored 'De-institutionalization of Children's Services in Romania', published by UNICEF in 2004, 'IMPACT', a custom curriculum for providing support for children and adults with special needs, published in 2011, 'Preventing the separation of children from their families in Bosnia and Herzegovina' published in 2012 and 'The Financial Impact of the Child Protection System Reform in Romania' published in 2013 and 'A Practical Guide to Deinstitutionalization – Tools, Standards of Operations and Models of Implementation'. Delia's most recent contribution to care reform is Beyond Institutional Care, a Roadmap for Care Reform, a collaboration with UNICEF Latin America and the Caribbean Region Office.



Dhuwarakha Sriram, is an international development expert, with more than 18 years of strategic planning and programming experience with UNICEF and UNHCR in the areas of adolescent/youth development and participation, child protection and gender. As the Chief of Adolescent Development and Generation Unlimited with UNICEF India Country office, she currently leads and coordinates one of the largest adolescent and youth development and participation initiative of UNICEF. She has previously worked in the Regional Office of West and Central Africa and Sierra Leone, where she managed the programme on child protection

and adolescents including the support to the Ebola response. Prior to this, she worked in Afghanistan and Sri Lanka with UNICEF and UNHCR, and she was involved in design and implementation of child protection and education programs in complex emergency settings including the Tsunami response in 2004 – 05. She has also worked as a Research Fellow with University of Melbourne in 2007 and she has contributed to research articles and studies in the area of adolescent development and participation and child protection. Ms. Sriram is a national of Sri Lanka. She holds Masters in in Law specializing in Child Rights Law from University of London, leadership courses from University of Melbourne and INSEAD and Bachelors in Business Administration from Curtin University of Technology, Australia.



Divakar Ratnadurai has over 30 years of experience at SOS Children’s Villages Sri Lanka. He is currently serving as its National Director. He started as an Accountant at the Nuwara-Eliya SOS Children’s Village in 1987. Since then, he has dedicated his career and life to childcare and development of children who have lost parental care, in order to support them in regaining a family life at SOS Children’s Villages through its unique care system called SOS Family Care. Participated in several planning phases of the organizational strategies specially the 2008 – 2016 strategy phase, one child development strategy, drafting the quality management approach policy and emergency relief policy of the organization. A team member developing the Youth Development User Guide for SOS Children’s Villages international.

Ebrahim Salama is a care leavers and a fresh graduate with a Bachelor of Mass Communication. His passion has lead him to receiving a film and television production course and his hobby for creative drawing (painting) has allowed him to participate in several exhibitions of figurative art. Ebrahim professionally received a (drawing skills) Training at the Faculty of Art Education for 3 years. He has also been an ambitious member of an acknowledged Egyptian choir since 2015 and has participated in numerous concerts. His work in the film industry as an audio engineer, has lead him to participate in a number of films, series and advertisements. For the past two years, Ebrahim has been a dedicated and active member of the Care Leaver’s Forum.



Ms. Emanuela Rossini is an Italian politician, a linguistic and a cultural policy maker. As a Member of the Italian Parliament she has been appointed Vice-President of the Commission in UE Policies. She has extensively worked to improve policies and legislatives measures for the care leavers, including the Care Leavers Fund. She is a great supporter of the European Care leavers network.



Emmanuel Grupper, Ph.D, is Professor for child and youth care at the Ono Academic College in Israel. On the international level, serves as President of the International Federation of Educative Communities (FICE), chairman of its Editorial Board and the President of FICE-Israel. Until 2012 was Director of the Residential education and care department in the Israeli Ministry of Education. His academic work encompasses child and youth care work, with special focus on out-of-home care for children and adolescents at risk situations and also the professionalization process of child and youth care workers. Emmanuel Grupper has published numerous researches, papers and books regarding adolescents and young adults in residential education and care facilities.





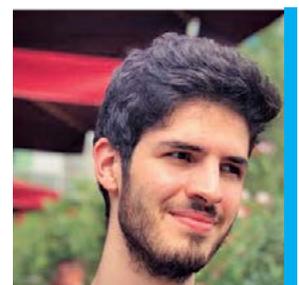
Fabienne Landerer is a care leaver from Austria. After leaving Care, I travelled around Europe to broaden my horizon, and then started my university studies in Vienna and proceeded them in France. Since I left Care, I'm participating in a lot of Projects and Organizations whose aim is to improve the life of Care Leaver. I'm striving to change things to help them to more rights and thus more freedom and peace in their lives. Life hasn't been easy for them, so we need to change things in order to give the same chances as everyone when they start into their life as adults.

Farah Al Sayyed has a bachelor in business administration but her passion of community service especially working with orphans, vulnerable youth and children at risk led her to finish recent diploma degree in child developmental skills in 2014 by affiliation from Wisconsin university. Her diploma analyzed the relevance of early childhood wellbeing on parenting, care and awareness of children needs. She created the program of TLC Tender, love and Care that focuses on improving the wellbeing of orphans in care centers as much as possible by interactive programs as a mechanism to engage and respond to the social, emotional, cognitive needs and aspirations of children deprived from family ties. Farah has extensive experience in working on projects related to protection program as well as knowledge in policies and regulations related to children right. She led Sakeena which started working with Care leavers responding to the urgent situation of these youth. Managing Humanitarian aid programs, responding to emergencies and mitigating vulnerability is another area of Farah's experience and competencies. She led emergency response program in sheltering, psychosocial intervention, conditional cash, health and non-food, during her work. Her expertise essentially include resource mobilization, monitoring and evaluation on a programme and project level, networking and donor relations, which is demonstrated in Farah's ability to secure only individuals funding until this moment, mentioning that sponsoring an orphan to study medicine abroad was the largest. Farah was recently nominated to Ashoka Fellowship social interpreneurship , was selected and in the process of becoming an Ashoka Fellow.



Gabriella Rask is a project coordinator in the Youth & ICT4D team at SOS Children's Villages International. For the past four years, she has been working on the cross-national EU co-funded projects "Training Professionals Working with Children in Care", "Prepare for Leaving Care" and "Leaving Care". The projects have aimed at building the capacity of child and youth care professionals with a focus on child rights, leaving care and youth participation. Gabriella is also coordinating the work of SOS Children's Villages International Youth Coalition, which is the highest body in the federation representing young people.

Georg Thurnwalder is a care leaver from Austria. He was in care between the ages of 15 to 18. After leaving care a legal gap and the lack of flexibility of social welfare institutions became a problem. Eventually, a local private social-profit-company helped him to gain a new perspective and become independent. He is currently studying business law in Vienna. In 2018 he participated in the EU-project "Care Leaving Dialog" which aimed at better conditions and laws for supporting care leavers. Georg believes that providing young people with the right opportunities to build a purposeful life is an important investment that benefits not only the individual but also society as a whole.





Gurmeet came to be cared for in small group home care in India after she lost her parents. She soon started participating in dance and theater while in school and college and after leaving care, she soon realized her calling, and too a career in the entertainment industry. She has a graduation in Journalism and Mass Communication and currently works as a script writer for the Indian Television industry in India.

Hadeel Al-Amayreh is the Senior Communications Specialist at the Information and Research Center – King Hussein Foundation (IRCKHF), a center that mobilizes knowledge for positive social change in Jordan and the region. Since 2011, Hadeel has been closely involved in various projects researching children’s rights, focusing on sensitive and critical issues, and where possible using participatory action research methods with children. Hadeel has more than 8 years of experience in designing, implementing and managing research, advocacy and awareness projects. She was part of the first national civil society organizations (CSO) network for care leavers in Jordan in 2018.



Mrs. Harshika Ediriweera is an Assistant Commissioner in the National Department of Probation and Child Care Service in Sri Lanka. She has a Bachelor of Science in Human Resources Management (Special) Degree and a Diploma in Public Administration Management from the Sri Lanka Institute of Development Administration, and is currently following a Master’s in Public Administration and Management at the University of Colombo. She joined the Sri Lanka Administrative Service in 2015 and has been serving the Department of Probation and Child Care Services since then. As a member

of the main government organization mandated to create a child sensitive environment, she is engaged in the planning, implementation and monitoring of programs to ensure child rights, identification of vulnerable children and taking preventive measures to ensure their Rights, promote deinstitutionalization, reintegration, strengthening foster care system, and strengthening the child rights ensuring community structures like VCRMCS and Child Clubs in order to promote safer environment for children.

Ian Anand Forber Pratt, MSW works in the field of child protection and child care system reform in India, Sri Lanka, the United States and globally. He lived in an institution for a short time in India and is an international adoptee. Ian completed his Masters in Social Work (MSW) from Washington University’s George Warren Brown School of Social Work [Brown School] and serves as the Director of Global Advocacy at CERJ, USA and the Executive Director of the Institute for Child Welfare Innovation in St Louis, Missouri, USA. He lives with his wife, their son, his sister-in-law and an ever-revolving door worth of family and guests in St Louis, Missouri, USA and travels often.

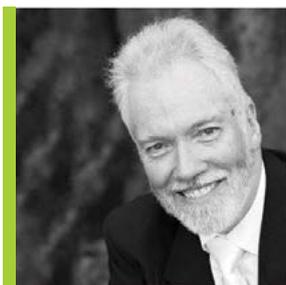




Jeffrey Chasi is a care leaver from Zimbabwe. He studied arts management with specialization in Filmmaking and Sound Engineering. He has worked with different art companies in Zimbabwe. Jeffrey has done lots of films, locals and international and was the Tour Manager for Edith WeUtonga a renowned jazz artist. In 2006-2007, Jeffrey worked with Kuaba Humanitarian Organization which was based in USA, and he worked as a project coordinator, where he could teach others young people from the home how to do sound, lighting and other different things in arts. He is one of the founding members of the

Zimbabwe care leaver's network since 2006 and it is a passion for him now to give back what he has received. Currently Jeffrey Chasi is working as a Programs Coordinator voluntarily for Zimbabwe Care Leavers Network.

Josef Koch is the managing director of the German national section of Fédération Internationale des Communautés Éducatives (FICE International) in German „IGfH“. As a politically independent professional association of extrafamilial child and youth care in Germany, FICE Germany (IGfH) is the biggest foundation in the area in Germany consisting of individual members, NGOs, universities and youth welfare offices. FICE Germany (IGfH) sees itself as a lobby for the rights and needs of young people and their families in public care. Together with the University of Hildesheim and the German Care Leaver Association, FICE Germany (IGfH) has carried out numerous projects and conferences with Care Leavers in Germany over the past 10 years and has also published numerous statements and brochures on the topic of Leaving Care (www.igfh.de). Josef Koch also has a guiding and moderating role in central expert panels in the field of foster child care and residential care on behalf of the German Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth.”



Dr. Joseph Mcdowall Executive Director of Research Joseph has a PhD in social psychology from the University of Queensland and has lectured at both the University of Queensland and Griffith University in the areas of research methods, statistics, social skills training and the theory and practice of photography. His research interests range from empirical aesthetics to his current concerns with child protection. Joseph authored the 2008 and 2009 CREATE Report Cards dealing with Transitioning from Care in Australia. He also has served as a consultant to the Queensland Department of Child Safety. He became a Director of CREATE in 2008.

Karishma is a care experienced young adult, passionate about bringing about meaningful changes in people's lives. She started her career in 2017 as a Human Resource professional and she loves meeting people. She believes in herself no matter what the situation may be like. In 2018, along with a group of young people with care experience in Delhi, India, she set up the Care Leavers Association and Network (CLAN) with the help and support of some Civil Society Organizations. CLAN is a youth-led initiative which envisions to collectivize, support and mentor Care Leavers and to sensitize people about the concerns, needs and rights of Care Leavers. She has represented CLAN at various platforms and strongly feels that a plethora of domains related to Care Leavers remains untouched and unrecognized.





Katharina Höffken is a Care Leaver as well as a Social Worker from Germany. She has her Master's Thesis on the subject of self-reliance of Care Leavers and how the child and youth care organizations can support Care Leavers to become independent. She is currently working in a Child Care Institution for traumatized girls and young women.

Dr. Kiran Modi is the founder managing Trustee of Udayan Care. She founded Udayan Care, in Delhi, India, in 1994, with the vision of 'Making Young Lives Shine', which runs group homes for orphaned and at-risk children, amongst many of its projects. With a doctorate in American Literature from IIT, Delhi, Dr. Modi is a person of varied experiences in diverse fields, such as child protection, media, health and children's theatre. Besides running programs for Alternative Care of 'Out of Home Care' children, education and Livelihood programs for disadvantaged girls and youth, she is keenly interested in raising standards of care in Alternative Care, and has been organizing trainings and research, and publishing papers on Child & Youth Care. She is Founder Editor of an international bi-annual journal on Alternative Care: 'Institutionalized Children: Explorations and Beyond' (ICEB). Besides her management responsibilities, she is a "Mentor Mother" to many children and youth, giving them personalized care and attention. Recipient of many prestigious awards, Dr. Modi continues to strive towards ensuring the rights of the underprivileged children and youth with the same passion and zeal as when she started out more than two and a half decades ago.



Laura Trejo, is a native of Mexico City and a care leaver of EDNICA (Education for kids at the streets), which promotes and defends the human rights of working children or those at risk of being, as well as children, adolescents and youth living on the street or at risk of street, so that they can build alternatives for a dignified life. She is now an educational assistant at Fundación Pro Niños de la calle (Pro Street Children Fund) whose mission is to understand and attend in a personalized way, young people who live on the street, and help them to choose and maintain another option of life. Her motivation is to be able to work with boys, girls, adolescents and young people who are in situations similar to hers and to be able to motivate them to meet their goals; meeting care leavers and pre-care leavers from other countries has given her the motivation to be able to deliver initiative in her country to generate a change in the conditions in which they live within the institutions.

Ljiljana Ban was born in Zagreb, Croatia. She finished formal education at University of Zagreb, Faculty of Law, Department of Social Work, with the degree of Master of social work. After finishing formal education, she started working for organizations of civil society with prime focus on children and youth at risk and youth in alternative care. During her work in Croatia and Austria, she gained rich experience in managing international projects for young people leaving care, some of which received various awards. She was the first president of FICE Croatia. Worked as project manager, support expert for care leavers, counsellor for international cooperation, trainer for professionals working with children and youth in care. Currently works at SOS Children's Village Croatia as project assistant on the topic of trauma informed practice and mentor for care leavers in need. During the years, enriched her work with different non formal educations, mainly in the field of drama work and other creative techniques. She is also certificated practitioner of reality therapy.





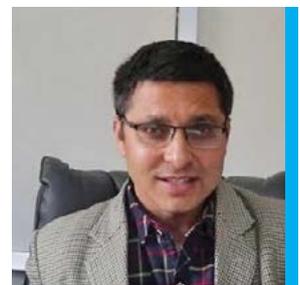
Lucas Moore is the National Marketing and Communications Manager for the CREATE Foundation, where he works to promote the voices and experiences of young care leavers to the out-of-home care sector and wider community. Lucas has worked with children and young people in out of home care for the twelve years and believes that children and young people's opinions provide a crucial contribution to the design and delivery of any service. He believes the state has a moral obligation to ensure care leavers are supported to overcome the impacts of childhood trauma to lead fulfilling lives.

Mr. Manoj Kumar Singh is currently the director of the Director (CARA, Child Protection Services (CPS) including Child-line, JJ Act, Foster Care/Aftercare) in the Ministry of Women and Child Development, India.



Mr. M. M. Mahamudullah is currently working as Additional Director, Department of Social Services under the Ministry of Social Welfare, People's Republic of Bangladesh. He has a long experience in ensuring the best interest of children in conflict and contact with law as well as disadvantaged children. He has expertise in family/community/social reintegration & rehabilitation of children who are in Juvenile Development Centres and in different alternative care settings.

Mr. Madhab Prasad Dhungel is the Executive Vice Chairperson of the National Youth Council, an autonomous government organization under the Ministry of Youth and Sports, Nepal since 2016. He received the Future Policy Award, 2019 as recognition of youth friendly policies in place, where Mr. Dhungel played constructive and decisive role. He has been a Central Committee Member of Nepal Communist Party, the present ruling party of Nepal, since 2014. He has been playing a significant role to mainstream and empower Nepalese youth through providing policy feedback to the government of Nepal, suggesting the government to allocate enough budget on youth development and engagement, creating youth networks and connections to them, envisioning and creating model youth enterprises, encouraging and motivating youth to be the first-class-citizens prepared to get involved in nation building process. He holds master's degrees in Sociology and Political Science, and has been undertaking his PhD research on Socialist Education System in the context of Nepal and dreams of preparing skilled and entrepreneurial youth for prosperous Nepal.



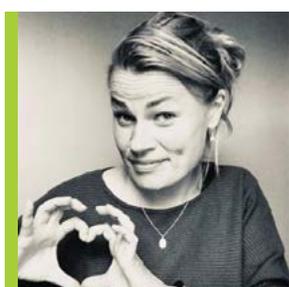
Maria Groinig, MA, born in Austria; studied educational science and educational research (BA) and inclusive research (MA) at the Alpen-Adria-Universität Klagenfurt (Austria); psychotherapeutic propaedeutic (Austria); since 2019 training at the Anne Ancelin Schützenberger International School of Transgenerational Therapy; since 2016 research assistant, lecturer and PhD student at the Alpen-Adria-University Klagenfurt in the field of social pedagogy and inclusive research; Work and research focus: Child and youth welfare, leaving care, educational and inclusive research, qualitative and participatory research, violence protection; participation in the international Care Leaver

youth exchange at the FICE Congress in Vienna and further commitment for Care Leaver.



Mark Riddell left local authority care in 1984 and spent years working with a range of organisations to campaign for better support for care leavers before training as a social worker in 1990. He was the Service Manager for children in care and leaving care at Trafford council until 2017. In 2015 Ofsted rated the Trafford's quality of Care Leaver provision at the council as 'outstanding'. Trafford was the first in the country to achieve this. In 2017 he received an MBE in the Queen's New Year Honours list for his outstanding contribution to children in care and care leavers. He was appointed as the National Implementation Adviser for Care Leavers within the DfE. Previous to this he worked informally alongside the Children's Minister Edward Timpson on the Care Leavers Strategy – Keep on Caring and the C&SW Act that introduced a new set of Corporate Parenting Duties, the consultation and publication of the local offer to care leavers and the PA duty to 25 years for all care leavers. Mark also penned a book called The Cornflake Kid which about his time in the care system and subsequent travels around the world – including a chance casting in one of Sylvester Stallone's Rambo movies.

Mark Riley, MSc, Alternative Care Consultant, Hope and Homes for Children, is an international child protection and international development consultant. He has worked with a wide range of actors including government ministries, foreign embassies, international organizations and private foundations. Mark's work is focused on systems strengthening and child protection, with particular emphasis on de-institutionalization and alternative family based care for children. Mark authored the Uganda National Alternative Care Framework, the Child Policy for Uganda and undertook the 2012 study on institutional care in Uganda which prompted a significant emphasis and investment to address the high levels of children in institutional care in Uganda. Since July 2016 Mark has been working for HHC supporting CINI in Jharkhand, India. In addition to Mark's work on care reform he helped establish a Uganda Care Leavers Network (Ugandan Care Leavers) to support children and young adults coming out of institutional care. The research carried out with Ugandan Care Leavers is documented in the report 'The Uganda Care Leaver Experience (2019)'. Before moving to East Africa in 2010, Mark worked for over 15 years working with the Welsh Assembly Government delivering both public and private consultancy and project management programs.



Martine Tobé (MSc.) is a creative change maker and working as director of Stichting Kinderperspectief (NGO) in her daily life. On behalf of Kinderperspectief Martine initiates projects focused on children without parental care in the Netherlands, Bosnia, Serbia, Croatia and Albania. Main topics: participation, identity building, care leaving & international exchange. Besides Martine Tobé is coordinator of the JWB (umbrella organization for youth councils in child and youth care institutions in the Netherlands), president of FICE NL, member of the steering committee of Better Care Network Netherlands and Founder of Lifebook for Youth. Her main believe: "Change will not come if we wait for some other person or some other time".



Marwan Khalil El-Husary is an Egyptian care leaver who is currently studying theatrical arts with a specialization in Decoration. Marwan worked as a technical theatre engineer and is an artist too. He did one solo exhibition in 2018 and participated in nearly 20 group exhibitions from 2016 until now. Marwan is a volunteer in more than one charitable organization to provide community aid and give lectures to support children morally. Currently, he is a member of the Egyptian Care Leavers Forum at Wataneya Society and volunteers with Wataneya to provide assistance in youth programs and participates in brainstorming activities to achieve quality life for every orphan.

Hon. Dr. Mathew Nyashanu is a Member of Parliament in Zimbabwe. He is one of the child rights champions in the country, having been a founding member of the Child Parliament of Zimbabwe, which was opened in June 1990 in commemoration of the Soweto Massacre. Currently he is the Chairperson of the Parliamentary Steering Committee on Child Rights and a member of the Parliamentary Portfolio Committee on Budget, Finance and Economic Development. Hon Dr. Nyashanu believes in placing children at the center of all development efforts and through his work in Parliament, he has pushed for legislation and national budgets that respond to the needs of children and youth



Matthias Hild is programme manager at “Brückensteine Careleaver” (Brückensteine = bridge stones). It is a collective impact initiative of several projects and organizations in Germany. We involve care leavers as experts of experience on each level of decision making and planning. Matthias has a focus on using digital approaches to prevent increasing digital disadvantages. He will share insights of our digitization project and the crucial role and involvement of care leavers in it. Prior to Brückensteine, Matthias was project lead and manager at the Stiftung der Deutschen Wirtschaft (Foundation of German Economy), one of the largest educational institutions in Germany

Maximilian Ullrich, studied African Studies in the University of Vienna and is the founder and managing director of Make Me Smile International; the Chairman of the Board of Make Me Smile, Kenya and member of the Board of FICE Austria and FICE Europe. He has long-term experience in project development, coordination and implementation, fundraising, proposal writing, project dissemination, M&E, with abundant knowledge about good practices for supporting care leavers across Europe and has recently coordinated several EU-funded Projects around CYC and Leaving Care, such as the “Leaving Care – An Integrated Approach to Capacity Building of Professionals and Young People” project, which aimed to train care professionals in how to apply a child rights-based approach in their work with young people leaving care and works to strengthen support networks for young care leavers.





Mia Dambach is the ISS/IRC Director based in Geneva, with over 15 years' experience in child protection matters, starting her career as a children's lawyer in Sydney, Australia and joining ISS/IRC in 2008 as a Children's Rights Specialist. She likewise coordinates Advocacy and Policy Development for the ISS network, focusing on alternative care, migration, adoption and international surrogacy in the UN arena and with regional bodies. She has provided technical assistance (i.e. law reforms, training and evaluation missions) in twenty countries related to these fields as well as co-led a number of international initiatives including three massive open online courses, which have jointly reached over 60 000 participants.

Professor Mike Stein is an Emeritus Professor in the Department of Social Policy and Social Work at the University of York. A qualified social worker, he has worked in probation and children's services. From 1975 at Leeds University and from 1995 at York University he has been researching leaving care and the neglect and maltreatment of young people. He was a founder member and coordinator of the International Research Network on Transitions to Adulthood from Care (INTRAC). Between 1973 and 2011 he was an adviser to the rights movement for young people in care in England. Mike has also been involved in the preparation of Guidance for Leaving Care legislation in the UK (the Children Act 1989; the Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000 and Planning Transition to Adulthood for Care Leavers, 2010) and consulted internationally on the development of leaving care law, policy and practice.



Mohamed Othman was raised in an institutional home in Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA), but overcame many challenges that faced him as an orphaned youth and graduated with honors from Hael University. He has become an orphans' advocate in KSA. He currently is working the Ministry of Labor and Social Development as an assistant social researcher. His initiative "Strong orphan" was honored by the Minister of Labor and Social Development within Qadwa program, as one of the distinguished examples who are spreading awareness of issues with an aim to make the world a better place. He also was honored by Kayan Society for Family Care in Kuwait for being successful example from Saudi Arabia, Kayan is an NGO working on breaking stereotypes and encouraging families to foster children without parental care to help integrate them into society.

Moses Akash grew up in an orphanage since he was two weeks. He is currently leading the Little Heaven Kids Foundation and works as the national director of the Voice Foundation in Sri-Lanka and is traveling the world with his amazing story. Currently he works with over 1800 children across the nation and is also the team member of the GNG care leaver's network in Sri Lanka. His wife Sumudu is also a care leaver who is supporting his work.



Naglaa Fathy Khalil is from Egypt and she is currently a student in journalism to pursue her dream in order to become broadcaster. Naglaa has been a member of Care Leavers Forum at Wataneya Society since 2019. She is passionate about writing and reading. She is also a singer in an acknowledged Egyptian orchestra.



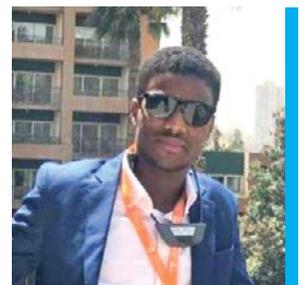
Nahla ElNemr is a care leaver from Egypt and the first Social Surveillance ambassador for Ministry of Social Solidarity Senior institutional development assessor at Wataneya for the Development of Orphanages. She is a senior assessor for the Institutional Development Unit at Wataneya Society for the Development of Orphanages as well as a trainer at Aman Center for Learning and Development. She is a member of the technical committee for Beit el Helm Award for the best institutional homes. She holds a bachelor's degree in social work. She also holds the vocational certificate Pearson- Excel which is internationally accredited from the United Kingdom and specialized in fostering child development from age 0-18 years old. Nahla ElNemr joined Wataneya Society as a volunteer and a representative for orphaned youth, participating in several workshops related to the quality standards for Alternative Care and contributes with her life experiences to orphaned youth and children in order to change their perspective towards themselves and society. She delivers workshops and trainings for Kafala and volunteers about the "Etiquette of visiting orphanages.

Nancy Maguire is the Child and Youth Participation Manager at international NGO, Lumos. She also leads the participation work for Changing the Way We Care, a global initiative driven by Catholic Relief Services, Maestral International and Lumos. She is a qualified social worker with fifteen years' experience working with children and young people globally. She is passionate about all children and young people's right to have an active role in decisions that affect them: from simple choices about what they eat to the global policies needed to protect them. Nancy is also a proud disabled person, advocating for disability equality issues for over two decades.



Natasha Ntini is a gender and public policy specialist at the Southern African Parliamentary Support Trust (SAPST), based in Zimbabwe. She has over seven years' experience in parliamentary work focusing on public finance and social inclusion. Through her knowledge and experience in parliamentary processes and procedures, Natasha's work involves promoting the participation of women and children in parliamentary businesses, including the national budget process. Over the past five years, she has been working with children and youth networks in the Eastern and Southern African Region, promoting advocacy around public investment in children.

Nawras Khalid Haroon is a Care leaver from the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan. He graduated from one of the orphan's associations SOS Jordan and has been working with many humanitarian organizations as public servant, with Syrian and Palestinian refugees' affairs and with local public establishments and believes that public service is a great gift from God to inspire humanity.





Neelam Udayan is a Care Leaver who embarked on the journey of an Independent life in 2013. Presently she works with IBM India and is immensely happy to be able to give back to society and be able to raise her voice and amplify the voices of other care leavers to seek support for their welfare, healthier and more robust future and present. She is passionate about the cause of betterment of the forgotten segment of society, the care leavers

Nimali Kumari, known as Nimmu is a Care leaver from Sri Lanka She grew up in three child development centres. On 2010 she got a scholarship to India and went Indian NIILM University, Haryana for study and she is having a degree of BSc, Journalism, Advertising And Mass Com. She has been a still photographer and assistant costume designer for Indian movie name DREAMZ on 2013. She drives the youth group call Generation Never Giveup Network which is Asia's very first Care Leavers Network .Her ambition is to become a Crime Reporter and Carry the good works by GNGN network.



H.E. Dr. Nivine El Kabbag is the Egyptian Minister of Solidarity. She has more than 28 years of experience in the field of Development Policies and Social Protection. Before this, she has been Director of Takafol Wa Karama (Solidarity and Dignity), a national targeted social safety net program funded by the World Bank and implemented by the Ministry of Social Solidarity, with the aim of financially empowering the impoverished. She also managed the Middle East and North Africa Regional Consulting (MENARC) from May 2013-July 2014. In 2005, she joined the UNICEF to work as Children Protection Program Head in

Egypt then later became Head of Planning, Follow-up, assessment programs from 2007 to 2013. She also worked as Deputy Head at America's Development Foundation (ADF) from November 1999 to May 2003.

Noha Emam Hassanin is the Research and Knowledge Management Senior Specialist at Wataneya Society for the Development of Orphanages. She received her Master's degree in Community Psychology from American University, Cairo; her thesis being on assessing resilience of adolescents raised in orphanages. She worked as a researcher on a project (American University in Cairo's transition to a culture of sustainability) and as a graduate teaching assistant at the Psychology Department at AUC for 3 years. Noha received the HUSS (school of humanities and social sciences) award in May 2018 for her outstanding contribution to the school of HUSS.





Mr. Patrick Reason is UK national, naturalized Brazilian, based in Brazil since 1997 and co-representative for FICE Brazil. He is the founder of the NGO Encontro com Deus, which runs therapeutic care shelters for children and their mothers as well as offering out-of-school care for vulnerable and at-risk children in the city of Curitiba, Southern Brazil. He coordinated the first national survey on care leavers in Brazil. He has extensively lectured and contributed towards the elaboration of public policies on the rights of children to live in family and community in Brazil and abroad. He is also the Councilor on the Municipal Council for the Rights of Children of Curitiba and the National Council for the Rights of Children, the National Secretary of the National Movement for the Rights of Children to Live in Family and Community, which has representation in all the 26 States of Brazil. He has participated in the development of the 10-year Municipal and State Policy for adoption and out-of-home care in the State of Paraná.

Phong Le is 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. Phong trained in International Studies, and he gained in-depth knowledge of sustainable development and political sciences. He uses his expertise to serve as Field Advocate for UNDP Asia-Pacific under the initiative MY World 2030, which raises awareness about SDGs to all the youth in the region. He has been a European Forum Alpbach Scholar and his new SDGs journey is to grow the Alumni Social Entrepreneurs Community of 53 countries in Teach For All global networks. To him, sustainability is all about ecology, economy, and equity. Therefore, leading as the CEO of Thu Quan Doanh Nhan, a social enterprise in the educational field, Phong is dedicating himself to the goal of ensuring inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all. Phong also appointed as Green Ambassador of Green Point, a leading SDGs app that connects green living communities, encouraging people to integrate the SDGs into their lifestyle.



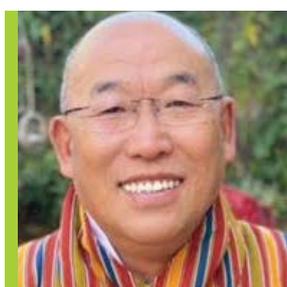
Pratima Kamble is the Senior Coordinator-Education for the northern and western region of India and the lead for Child Participation and Youth Advocacy (CPYA) program at Miracle Foundation India. She has presented papers at the National and International seminars.



Purnima K Jindal Designation: Regional Programme Coordinator- Youth Employability and Participation Organization: SOS Children’s Villages, International Office Asia. Over a decade experience working in development sector. I have worked on various projects with UNICEF, Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan, Ministry of Rural Development, Ministry of Skills Development & Entrepreneurships, Govt. of India. I have extended my services to children, women and especially young people. I am working with SOS Children’s Villages, International Office Asia as Regional Programme Coordinator for Youth

Employability and Participation since 2018. I am responsible of youth care and development in 11 Member Associations in Asia. Together with these member associations we work towards making our young people employable and confident to face the world of work when they leave care. We work towards making our young people successful and self-reliant.

Reda Ali, is the communication specialist at Wataneya Society for the Development of Orphanages. He is a member of the policy and legislation committee at the Youth Forum for youth without parental care. He acquired a marketing strategy and sales diploma from the Canadian Center for Development and has volunteered in several sectors and with different entities and local non-governmental organizations. He received the United Nations Prize as one of three best volunteering experiences in Egypt in 2015 and also the Amateur Dragon Boat Championship from the Chinese cultural center in 2017. In 2018, he earned first place in the Egyptian Rowing Federation. Reda is also the owner of “Keda Reda” project for food



Dr. Rinchen Chopel is the Director General of SAIEVAC (South Asia Initiative to End Violence Against Children) with Chapters in all 8 SAARC Member States. He enjoys high regards as an expert on Gender, Human Rights and in particular as a key champion of Child Rights and Ending Violence Against Children, nationally, regionally and globally. He continues to support multitude of agencies including the SAARC Secretariat in many key regional projects and initiatives. He has extensive experience in working with the Governments of South Asia as well as with the UN, INGO, NGO and research organizations in the Region. He also takes

great pride in being called Grand Pa Rinchen by children of Asia and the Pacific. He is also a member of the CRC Committee and will serve from 2021-2025.

Ruth Wacuka is a care reform advocate with a focus on de-institutionalization, promoting positive mental health and ending voluntourism. She is a member of Kenya Society of Care Leavers. Ruth is trained in journalism and mass communications and uses her skills to advocate for the rights of children, inspired by her upbringing in residential care in Nairobi. Ruth is also a One Young World Social Justice Ambassador, a global community of young leaders across 196 countries each pursuing the Sustainable Development Goals.





Dr. Severine Thomas is a researcher at the Institute of Social Pedagogy and Organisation Studies, University of Hildesheim (Germany). She studied Social Work and Social Economy and worked in different practical fields of ambulant and residential child and youth care and a women's shelter. Since 2010 she is member of the University of Hildesheim. Her main research focuses are research on youth, residential child and youth care and leaving care. Selected research projects: ESF-Funding: "Social Innovation" (in Lower Saxony): TRANS-FAIR. Equal Opportunities after Residential Care and Foster Care; in cooperation with the child and youth care office Hildesheim and jobcenter Hildesheim; 2017-2019 Funding by the

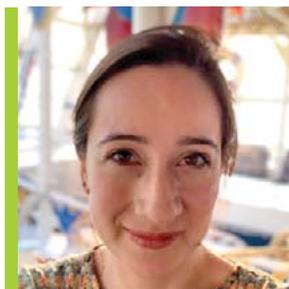
German Ministry of Child and Youth Affairs (BMFSFJ): Transition from child- and youthcare to adulthood – management of transition from residential and fostercare – development and transfer; in cooperation with the German section of FICE (International Association of Child and Youth Care (IGfH) Frankfurt; 2016-2019 Funding by EU Erasmus+: Abeona. An Effective Response to Care Leaver' Professional Integration, 2015-2017

Ms. Shubha Murthi is currently serving as Deputy Chief Operating Officer of the SOS Children's Villages International handling the operations of over 14 countries in the Asian region. Shubha is an Indian National who has been a part of International development community for almost three decades. She has worked extensively in child rights and protection, childhood care and development, participatory community development, post-conflict displacement, emergency response / rehabilitation / reconstruction, governance and organizational development, negotiations with the government, policy framework & country programmes. A dynamic grounded leader who, has always ensured to connect herself with the ground reality to serve the unserved communities. She has been fortunate to get an opportunity to work & travel across remotest corners of the globe. Over the years she has held various positions within the organization working for the least developed countries in Asia & ESAF. During her early part of her career she had set up Operation of SOS – Cambodia. Shubha is an alumna of India's prestigious college (Lady Shri Ram College, Delhi University) and a post graduate in Business Finance and Computer Applications. For the last decade she has been on different boards of SOS Children's Villages & has focused work on the "Core Policies" of the organization. She has been actively involved in shaping SOS Children's Villages policies on Alternative Care, Care Promise and Child Safeguarding. She has been focusing on law and policy to improve the lives of vulnerable children globally. She has worked on capacity building with various governments for child rights policy frame work especially socialist countries.



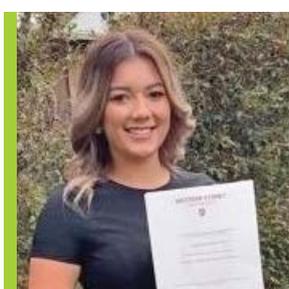
Susan Barton AM is a revolutionary Australian leader in the area of youth homelessness and the founder and director of the Lighthouse Foundation for homeless young people. She is a well-known and highly awarded for her replicable approach towards restoring disadvantaged youth into their rightful place in society. Susan has co-authored 'Build your Teenager's Self Esteem (2000) and Therapeutic Residential Care for Children: An Attachment and Trauma-Informed Model for Practice (2011)' and her book features a foreword by former Human Rights Commissioner, Prof Brian Burdekin, urging Australian governmental bodies, academics, companies and societal leaders to pay attention to the ground-

breaking work of the Lighthouse Foundation. In recognition of her committed dedication and work has been acknowledge and received numerous award including being inducted as a Member of the Order of Australia in 2002 and received Melbourne's highest accolade, was recognized as one Victoria's thirty most influential women in 2020, our Melburnian of the Year in 2009. In 2012 she was inducted into the Victorian Honour Roll of Women for her significant achievements and contribution to the Victorian community. Susan has been named among Australia's influential women in "Top 100 Educators 2012" International Biographical Centre Cambridge, England as well as her inclusion in seventh edition "2000 Outstanding Intellectuals of the 21st century 2013" – Melrose Press's International Biographical Centre. In 2014, Susan was recognised by The Australian Financial Review and Westpac as one of Australia's 100 Women of Influence.



Susana Puerto leads the Global Initiative on Decent Jobs for Youth, an inclusive multi-stakeholder partnership chaired by the International Labour Organization to scale up action and impact on youth employment within the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Her latest work through Decent Jobs for Youth has focused on understanding the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on young people and advising on policy solutions. With over ten years of experience on the promotion of youth employment, Susana has managed and contributed to multiple efforts boosting employability and job creation. Prior to joining the ILO, Susana worked at the World Bank and the Inter-American Development Bank. She serves on a number of executive boards of youth employment partnerships. Susana is an economist from Georgetown University.

Tanja Abou is a careleaver who currently lives in Berlin, Germany. She brings a triple perspective to the convention; she was in residential care between the age of 14 and 18, she is a social worker, who works with kids in residential care and she did a research project on experiences of violence of young people in care with a focus on childrens rights and gender. She was part of a project on leaving care in Berlin for three years, that unfortunately ended because of lack of further funding. Tanja considers herself more an activist than an academic, or an academic activist. She published a gender neutral childrens book in 2010, that focussed on family of choice and workers rights. In october she started a masters programme at Alice Salomon.



Tasha Reynolds is a 22-year-old Disability Support worker. Tasha is part of CREATE's National Influencing Committee and is a NSW Young Consultant. Tasha has recently graduated her university studies in a Bachelor of Health Science (Paramedicine). She is one of eleven children, and had experienced living in Out of Home Care for eight years. Tasha is now – alongside her sister, a certified foster carer to her 17-year-old sister and actively engages with CREATE to advocate for children in out-of-home-care. Tasha is the 2016 recipient of the Sisters of Charity Tertiary Education Scholarship awarded to young people with a care experience looking to pursue further education.

Tatiana Lustig Da Silva is an Argentinian, student of Social Work at the University of Buenos Aires (UBA) and care leaver from the protection system. She works in the Legislature of Buenos Aires. Member of the Latin American Network of Protection Care Leavers and Doncel NGO. 10 years ago, along with young care leavers, founded Guía Egreso, the first group of young care leavers from the Latin American protection system that is part of a Doncel NGO program. Through peer methodology, it works with and to improve the quality of care in the protection system through advocacy, communication, and research activities. Through hard work, they achieved the enactment of Law 27364 on assisted discharge, a pioneering law in the region. She represented the group in different events at the regional level: congresses in Bolivia and Colombia organized by the LATAM Network, Regional Consultation in Panama organized by the UN and international webinars.





Terry Dignan, is currently CEO of EPIC (Empowering People In Care), a national voluntary organization that seeks to empower and amplify the voice and influence of children and young people in alternative care. He has more than 20 years' experience working at executive and Board level in both the statutory and voluntary sectors in Ireland and internationally. Terry was former Director of Trinity Consultants, a leading provider of consultancy services to organizations working with children and youth with additional needs globally as well as former CEO of the Sheredar Foundation – Spearheaded the development of the first rehabilitation centre of its kind in Russia, providing psychosocial services to children and families. As Director of programs with Barretstown from 1997 to 2009m he successfully positioned the organization as the European flagship within the SeriousFun Children's Network. Terry has extensive experience of governance and policy development gained through membership of a number of Boards and Committees, including Chair of Home-start Ireland a leading international family support charity. Currently a board member of Don Bosco Care and the Kildare County Childcare Committee. He has been selected as one of a team of four to lead the Rapsody Project, a European initiative led by Eurordis <http://www.eurordis.org> designed to improve the quality of care, information and social services for people living with a rare disease.

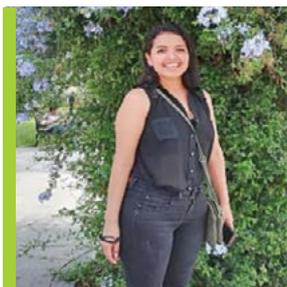
Timothy Bell after joining IFCA as a foster youth member in 2013, has traveled to many cities in Japan to speak at events and facilitate conferences. He is now the Vice President of IFCA's Board of Directors and works for an agency that leads the national research and reform efforts on child welfare policies and practice. I believe that Tim's current professional expertise combining with his earlier experience as a care leaver and as a strong local, state and national advocate for policy and system change would make him a great addition to your international discussion panel



Mr. Tran Van Thao is the Senior Official of the Department of Children's Affairs (DCA), Ministry of Labor, Invalids and Social Affairs (MOLISA), Vietnam and working as Focal Point Person for the International Co-operations of DCA, emphasising on development of child protection system, comprehensive child development, alternative care.. He has been working for the Ministry of Labor, invalids and Social Affairs (MOLISA) since 1997 and has contributed to the development of policies and legal documents for child care and protection in Vietnam. Fom 1998 to 2002, Mr. Thao was Child Rights Monitoring Officer and Secretary of the Viet Nam – UNICEF Country Programme for Child Protection. He has also worked for the Family Department of National Commission for Population, Family and Child Affairs and focused on family policies. In addition, Mr. Thao has participated in a number of policy drafting teams to develop policy and legal, technical documents related to child care and protection.

Umar Sheraz is an Innovation Policy Analyst and Futurist, based at COMSATS University Islamabad, Pakistan. A social change researcher, cross-disciplinary collaborator, and foresight practitioner, he brings academic and professional experience in the arena of innovation and futures thinking. He has applied, taught, and researched Strategic Foresight and Scenario Planning for 12 years. He has designed and led dozens of International Foresight and Scenario Planning workshops in Pakistan, Malaysia, Bangladesh, Iran, and Nepal to facilitate the making of real-world strategic decisions by corporations, government agencies, and universities. His original insights relevant to futures thinking have been published in academic journals, practitioner-focused blogs and media





Viviana De la Cruz, lived almost 14 years of her life in a State Shelter, when she turned 18 she was fortunate that the NGO Buckner Peru selected her for their youth residency program. She was there for almost 4 years and able to study a technical career, but above all, heal wounds from the past that had never been spoken out. She is currently a student of Psychology and independent and uses her story and life experiences as a former shelter resident so that it can be heard and not repeated, if not enhanced.

Dr. Wolfgang Schröer is a Professor at the Institute of Social Pedagogy and Organisation Studies, University of Hildesheim. His main research fields are: child and youth welfare, residential and foster care, care leaving, youth research and transitions to adulthood, transnational social exchange and support. He is the chairman of the consulting group in children and youth task for the German government.



Ms. Yasmine El Hagry is the Deputy Executive Director of Wataneya Society for the Development of Orphanages. She has more than 16 years of experience in strategic planning, project management, alternative care, social marketing and advocacy. Through her work as an External Relations Manager, Yasmine participated in developing and advocating for the National Quality Standards for Care within care homes in Egypt, developed by Wataneya in participation with the civil society. These standards were accredited by the Ministry of Social Solidarity in 2014. She initiated and managed various events and awareness campaigns such as “Know me! I’m not Just an Orphan” and “A Chance to Know Us!” to build positive perception towards children without parental care and their caregivers. In 2017, Yasmine was responsible for managing Wataneya’s strategy implementation being the Strategic Projects Unit Senior Manager.

Ms. Yasmine Nasef is a Youth Development Senior Specialist at Wataneya Society for the Development of Orphanages. Yasmine is passionate about collaborating with children and youth to create safe spaces where they can freely express themselves and share their experiences and aspirations. She has been in the field of social service for 8 years and truly believes in the importance of participatory community development. Yasmine has been in charge of the Care Leavers’ Youth Forum at Wataneya for the past two years. The Forum aims to create a safe platform for youth to reflect and learn from one another and from professional speakers in various fields of life and is a space where youth have the opportunity to give back to the cause and to their local and regional communities.



Agenda of the Convention

International Care Leavers Convention, Nov 23-25, 2020						
DAY 1 3.5 hours						
Session #	Key Area	Theme	Speaker	Time (IST)	Time (CET)	Time GMT
1	Convention Opening Session	Welcome by Organising Committee Representatives	Dr. Kiran Modi , Founder and Managing Trustee, Udayan Care, India	13.30-13:40	09.00-09.10	08.00-08.10
	Emcees • Ms. Mai • Ms. Karishma	Address by OC committee Representatives	Ms. Shubha Murthi , DCOO/IDR, SOS Children's Villages International Prof. Wolfgang Schröer , University of Hildesheim, Germany Ms. Martine Tobe , Director, Kinderperspectief, Netherlands Ms. Nimmu Kumari , Generation Never Give-up (GNG) Network, Sri Lanka Mr. Jeffrey Chasi , Zimbabwe Care Leavers' Network	13:40-14:00	09.10-09.30	08.10-08.30
		The COVID-19 impact on Care Leavers: Global Experiences	Moderator: Mr. Patrick Reason , FICE, Brazil Mr. Adham Khader , Jordan Ms. Fabienne Landerer , Austria Mr. Le Phong , Viet Nam Ms. Tanja Abou , Germany Ms. Tasha Reynolds , Australia Md. Ebrahim Salama , Egypt (video)	14:00-14:40	09.30-10.10	08.30-09.10
		The international Commitment to Youth, with particular focus on Care Leavers	Moderator: Mr. Terry Dignan , CEO, EPIC, Ireland Ms. Amanda Bissex , Child Protection Regional Advisor, UNICEF Regional Office, South Asia Ms. Dhuwarakha Sriram , Chief of Adolescent Development and Generation Unlimited, UNICEF India Mr. Douglas Ragan , Programme Management Officer, Specialist-Youth and Children, Human Rights and Social inclusion, UNHABITAT, Canada Ms. Susana Puerto , Senior Youth Employment Specialist, Employment Policy Department, International Labour Organization, Switzerland	14:40-15:20	10.10-10.50	09.10-09.50
			Prof. Emmanuel Grupper , Ono Academic College, Israel Ms. Nancy Maguire , Child and Youth Participation Manager, Lumos, UK			

		Release of Booklet on Case Studies from India	Prof. Mike Stein , University of York, UK	15:20-15:30	10.50-11.00	09.50-10.00
		Keynote Speech – Expert	Mr. Mark Riddell , National Implementation Advisor, Dept. of Education, UK	15:30-15:50	11.00-11.20	10.00-10.20
		Break (time to visit exhibition halls for posters, videos, sponsor section)		15:50-16:00	11.20-11.30	10.20-10.30
2	Plenary 1:	Panel Discussion <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Policy and Legal Framework on Care Leaving: Overview, Concepts and Strategies on Leaving Care 	Moderated by Prof Mike Stein. , UK Mr. Ian Anand , Director of Global Advocacy, CERI, USA Dr. Joseph Mcdowall , Executive Director Research, CREATE Foundation, Australia Mr. Mark Riley , Alternative Care Consultant, Hope and Homes for Children, Uganda Mr. Reda Ali , Communication Specialist, Wataneya Society, Egypt Ms. Tanja Abou , Germany Ms. Yasmine El Hagry , Deputy Executive Director, Wataneya Society for the Development of Orphanages, Egypt	16:00-16:50	11.30-12.20	10.30-11.20
		Wrap Up Announcements	Emcees	16:50-17:00	12.20-12.30	11.20-11.30
DAY 2 3.5 hours						
1	Emcees Ms. Neelam Ms. Fabienne	Opening: Recap of day 1 and Plan for today	Emcees	13:30-13:40	09.00-09.10	08.00-08.10
		The Development of the Care Leavers Declaration and Strategies for the Way Forward (Care Leavers from different regions present overview of the declaration)	Moderators: Ms. Karishma , India, Ms. Nimmu , Sri Lanka with Dr. Severine Thomas , Germany and Ms. Martine Tobe , Netherlands Response by policy makers <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hon. Muchi Chinyanganya, Member of Parliament, Zimbabwe Mr. H. H. Leelananda – Deputy General Manager (Property), National Housing Development Authority, Sri Lanka 	13:40-15:10	09.10-10.40	08.10-09.40
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mr. Josepf Koch, Managing Director, IGFH (German national section of FICE) and Advisor- German Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth. Mr. Chandrika Khatiwada, Director, Institute for Legal Research and Consultancy, Nepal 			
		Break (time to visit exhibition halls for posters, videos, sponsor section)		15:10-15:20	10.40-10.50	09.40-09.50

2		<p>Breakaway Sessions</p> <p>30 mins group discussion</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 10 min presentation by groups in plenary session 	<p>1. Mainstreaming-Expectations, Challenges and Possible Solutions: Ms Pratima Kamble, senior coordinator-education, Miracle Foundation India, Ms. Nahla El Nemr, Egypt and Mr. Krishna Kumar, India</p> <p>2. Effective Participation of Care Leavers at the DGD 2021: co-facilitated by members of the DGD 2021 youth advisors and supported by Aisling Ledwith and Caroline Rose (Lumos), Bharti Mepani (Save the Children) and Mr. Adham Khedr and Farah El Sayed, Jordan</p> <p>3. Exploring Future Aspirations of Stakeholders in the Care Leaving Ecosystem: Prof. Umar Sheraz, COMSATS University, Pakistan</p> <p>4. The Power of Story-telling in Care Reform: Dr. Delia Pop, Global Care Reform Specialist, International Md. Othman, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (video)</p> <p>5. Becoming a Giver from a Receiver – Ms. Pooja Udayan, India</p>	15:20-16:50	10.50-12.20	09.50-11.20
		Wrap Up Announcements	Emcees	16:50-17:00	12.20-12.30	11.20-11.30
DAY 3 3 hours						
1	Way Forward Emcees: Ms. Nimmu Ms. Ruth Wacuka	Opening: Recap of Day 1 and 2 and Plan for Day 3	Emcees	13:30-13:40	09.00-09.10	08.00-08.10
		Plenary Session Good Practices on supporting Care Leavers: Global, Regional and National Commitments	Moderator: Ms. Anna Schmid , FICE Switzerland Dr. Aida Essaid , Director, Information and Research Center - King Hussein Foundation, Jordan and Dr. Rawan W. Ibrahim , German Jordanian University, Jordan Ms. Aneesha Wadhwa , Executive Director, Udayan Care, India	13:40-14:20	09.10-09.50	08.10-08.50

			<p>Ms. Gabriella Rask, Project Coordinator, Youth and ICT4D, SOS Children's Villages International</p> <p>Mr. Matthias Hild, Programme Manager, Bruckensteine Careleaver, Germany</p> <p>Ms. Susan Barton, Founder-Director, Lighthouse Foundation, Australia</p>			
		What Do Young People want as a Good Practice?	<p>Moderator: Mr. Maximilian Ullrich, Founder and Managing Director, Make Me Smile International, Austria</p> <p>Mr. Deepak KC, Nepal</p> <p>Mr. Georg Thurnwalder, Austria</p> <p>Mr. Marwan Khalil El-Husary, Egypt</p>	14:20-15:00	09.50-10.30	08.50-09.30
		Break (time to visit exhibition halls for posters, videos, sponsor section)		15:00-15:10	10.30-10.40	09.30-09.40
		Key Takeaways: The Global 2020 – 2022 Care Leavers Agenda	<p>Ms. Fabienne, Mr. Jerome, Ms. Karishma, Ms. Mai, Ms. Neelam, Ms. Nimmu</p>	15:10-15:40	10.40-11.10	09.40-10.10
		The Commitment to the Rights of Care Leavers in a Global World: A Road Map	<p>Moderator – Ms. Ljiljana Ban, Social Worker, SOS Children's Villages, Croatia</p> <p>Dr. Delia Pop, Director, Global Care Reform Specialist, International</p> <p>Ms. Deborah Jones, Chief Executive, Voices From Care, Cymru, UK</p> <p>Dr. Kiran Modi, Founder Managing Trustee, Udayan Care, India</p> <p>Ms. Mia Dambach, ISS/IRC director, Geneva</p>	15:40-16:20	11.10-11.50	10.10-10.50
		Conclusions and Vote of thanks and Announcements	Dr. Severine Thomas , University of Hildesheim, Germany	16:20-16:30	11.50-12.00	10.50-11.00
DAY 3 2 hours (Special Session)						
2	Convention Café Special session for USA, Canada, Latin American Care Leavers	Special session for USA, Canada, Latin American Care Leavers	Key discussions from the main convention and reflections from the region by experts and care leavers	22.30 - 00.30	18.00-20.00	17.00-19.00

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