

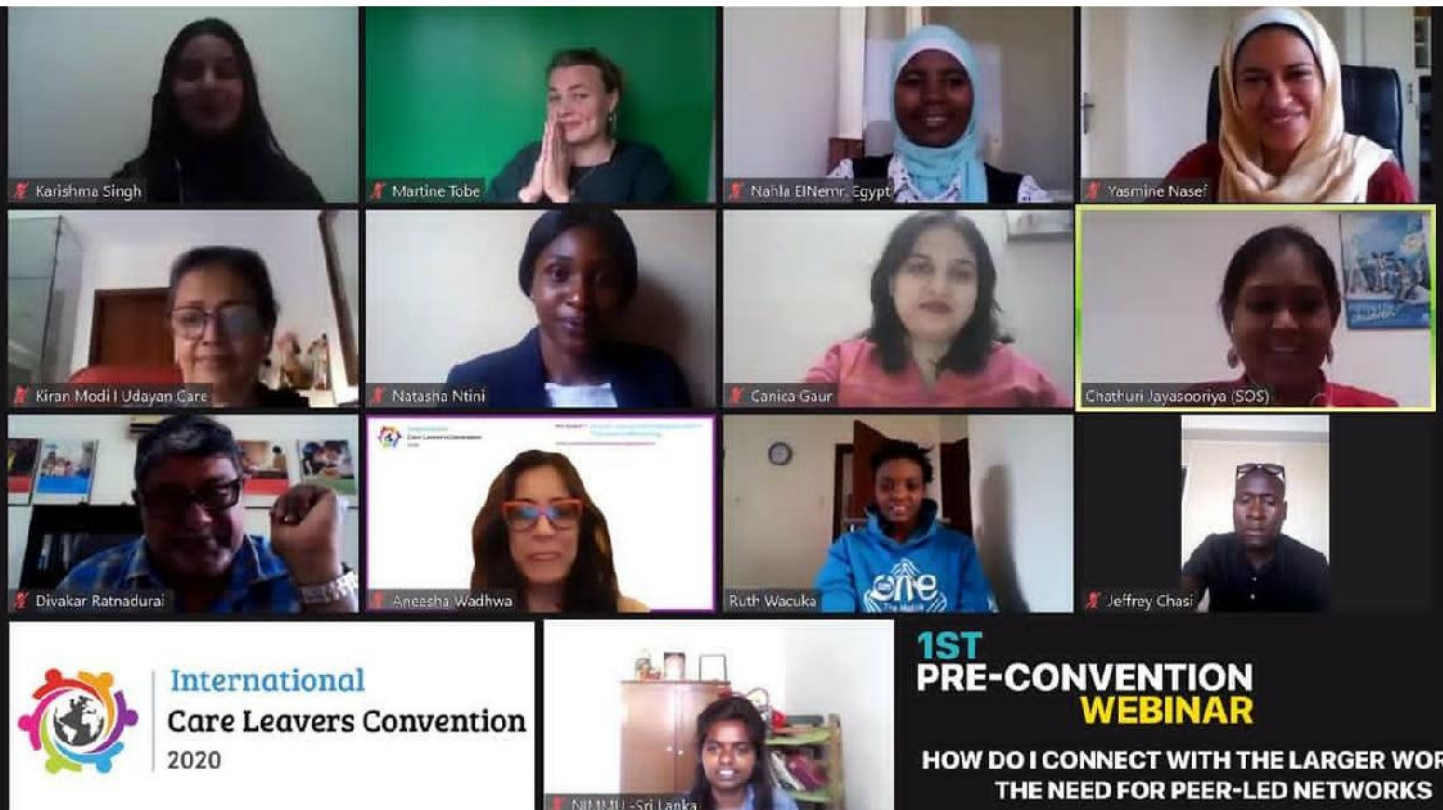


**International
Care Leavers Convention
2020**

How Do I Connect with the Larger World? The Need for Care Leaver Networks

**A panel discussion webinar:
October 24, 2020, 1330IST / 0800GMT / 0900CET**

*A panel discussion: The role and importance of Peer
led networks of Care leavers.*



Organised By



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How Do I Connect with the Larger World? The Need for Peer-Led Networks

Pre Event 1 Webinar: October 24, 2020, 1330IST / 0800GMT / 0900CET

A panel discussion was conducted where representatives of Care Leavers Networks and representatives of Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) supporting such networks came together to discuss the role and importance of peer-led networks of Care Leavers.

This was the first of the four webinars leading up to the [International Care Leavers Convention](#) planned to be held November 23-25, 2020

This dialogue was organized to understand the need and role of Care Leavers' Networks, and the role of civil society in this collectivization process, from the perspective of Care Leavers themselves and CSOs and draw out learnings from there. The session was organized by SOS Children's Villages, one of the partners of the International Convention. The session was led by **Chathuri Jayasooriya**, Regional Advocacy Advisor of SOS Children's Villages International Office Asia. **Ruth Wacuka** (Care Leaver Representative, Kenya Society of Care Leavers (KESCA) and **Karishma**, Care Leaver Representative, Care Leavers' Association and Network (CLAN), India.

The panelists represented Care Leavers' Networks and CSOs from different parts of the world - Africa, Asia, Europe and the Middle East.

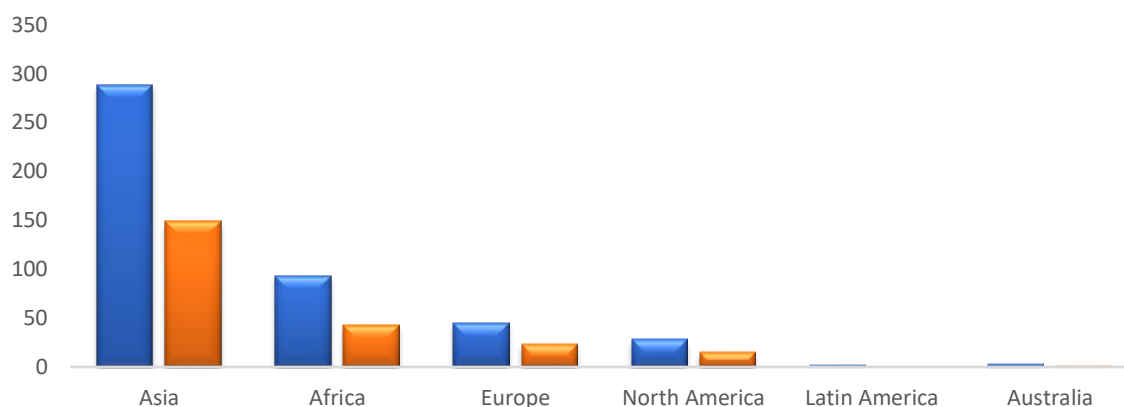
	Name	Designation
1	Fabienne Landerer	Association Care Leaver Austria
2	Jeffrey Chasi	Zimbabwe Care Leavers' Network
3	Nahla ElNemr	Care Leavers' Network in Egypt
4	Nimmu Kumari	Generation Never Give-up Network. (GNGN), Sri Lanka
5	Karishma Singh (Moderator)	Care Leavers' Association and Network (CLAN), India
6	Ruth Wacuka (Moderator)	Kenya Society of Care Leavers (KESCA)
7	Divakar Ratnadurai	National Director, SOS Children's Villages Sri Lanka
8	Martine Tobe	Director, Kinderperspectief, Netherlands
9	Yasmin Nasef	Youth Development Senior Specialist, Wataneya Society, Egypt
10	Natasha Ntini	Gender and Public Policy Specialist, Southern African Parliamentary Support Trust, Zimbabwe

In addition to the above, Latin American Care Leavers sent in their pre-recorded videos

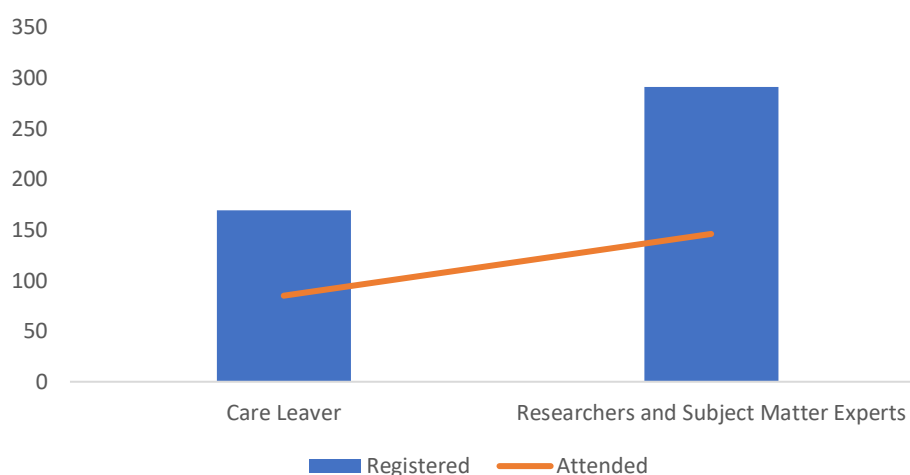
	Name	Designation
1	Lady Cobena	Latin America Network of Care Leavers of the Child Protection System(Ecuador)
2	Jasmin Perez	Latin America Network of Care Leavers of the Child Protection System (Argentina)
3	Mario Luis Bustious	Latin America Network of Care Leavers of the Child Protection System (Bolivia)

Participation

Registrations and Attendance



Registration and Participation Type



Voice of Care Leavers

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 their driving motivations, responsibilities, challenges, achievements and support requirements with special reference to the COVID 19 pandemic.

- **Lady Cobena from Ecuador** spoke on the need of peer led networks especially in the new normal of COVID-19 pandemic where the world has forced them to remain isolated. She said, *"Knowing that they have a group of young people who can listen to them, help them and give them a word of support means all the difference to keep going on in such a crisis."*
- Responding to a young person Mario's comment that "it is not a sprint", **Ruth Wacuka from Kenya**, said that *"Care leaver networks are like a safety net, where you can fall back and survive to see another day"*. She further added that, *"If you want to move fast, go alone but if you want to go far, go as a team"*. This is important because alone even if you have the right message, you do not have the right audience for it. Advocacy requires the right message to be delivered to the right people for it to initiate change. She was appreciative of the idea of this

International convention and that everyone is contributing to build this empire so that Care Leavers don't have to achieve this alone.

- **Karishma Singh from India** – spoke about the importance for all residential care providers to educate the Care Leavers. It is important for them to know them in order to be able to take a stand and raise their voice on the rights they do not enjoy. But before that they need to know their rights. She said, *“Meeting people with similar experiences from different cities made me feel supported and a lot has to be done starting from the mentoring to overall development of care leavers”*..
- **Fabienne Landerer from Austria** – In a well-articulated manner, she talked about the need for care leavers to be taken into account, to be heard and to be integrated in the process of decision making for change. Mostly it is the CEO's, government and everybody else but not care leavers, who try to improve and change the laws.
- **Nahla ElNemr from Egypt** shared her experience of working with the Care Leavers' Network in her country since 2017 and the different ways in which they support young orphans towards their integration in society and helping Care Leavers to come together.

Adding to the dialogue, the representatives of the CSOs spoke about the importance of policy advocacy focusing on the core issues of housing, employment, higher education and legal support. **Martine Tobe of Kinderperspectief** spoke on the important issue of how Care Leavers deal with different issues and questions of life, than if they are in parental care. She spoke how a boy who was a Care Leaver taught her the importance of her work by saying *“Your job, is my life”* thus stating how proper functioning of Care Leaver organizations and networks are responsible for the day-to-day well-being of Care Leavers. She emphasized on the point that some kind of economic compensation is required for Care Leavers to be able to meaningfully engage in these systemic reform processes, in a sustainable manner.

The second part of the session focused more on the challenges and needs of peer led Care Leaver Networks and the proposed solutions for their urgent necessities of job opportunities, housing information, tools of policy advocacy financial resources and emotional and mental support. The session ended on a hopeful note with the proposed need for an International Care Leavers Network. **Chathuri Jayasooriya of SOS IO** summarized the key points at the end.

Best Practice Sharing

Kenya Society of Care Leavers (KESCA) shared about their initiatives “Singing to the Lions” dealing with trauma healing of Care Leavers and “Thousand Memories Project” dealing with capturing photos of Care Leavers from their childhood to adulthood to give them a sense of belonging and to see how they have evolved over the years giving them identity.

Nimmu of Sri Lanka, spoke how her **Generation Never Give Up (GNGN)** network has been successful in implementing landmark policy changes especially in Birth Certificates by being in constant communication with the government and policy officials. Due to their efforts, it is not mandatory now to have marital status on their Birth Certificates thus giving them (the Care Leavers) entry into mainstream society where such documents are necessary for employment. Nimmu succinctly explained their struggle in a heartfelt quote *“Some people will hate you, break you, shake you but how strong you stand will make you”*. She shared how 155 Care Leavers have been supported through the GNGN during the pandemic as a good practice for Care Leavers Networks to become relevant during times of crises.

Karishma Singh shared her experience of being a member of the **Care Leavers Association and Network (CLAN)** that has been functional in Delhi, India since 2018 and how they offer workshops and

engage otherwise with younger children living in residential care to support them in being better prepared for transition from care to adulthood.

In a similar vein, **Zimbabwe Care Leavers Network**, through their arduous efforts have made the government of Zimbabwe mandating for policy changes. They conducted a detailed survey and as an output, wrote recommendations for policy changes, since most policies are old and thus cannot cope with requirements of the current age and times. The government has undertaken to draft new set of policies and target to complete the same by December 2020. According to **Jeffreys Chasi** from the Zimbabwe Care Leavers Network only “policy changes “can bring about a favourable sustainable change” to the life standards of Care Leavers.

Natasha Ntini of **Southern African Parliamentary Support Trust**, shared how important it is to sensitize Care Leavers and their networks in parliamentary procedures so that their voice is heard in the parliament. Emphasizing on the importance of access to information, she shared how her organization simplifies bills and budget analysis to let the Care Leavers know, what programs are specifically targeted towards them and how such information is important for them to be able to share their challenges with Government and policy makers. Working with parliamentarians who may be unaware of the Care Leavers’ challenges is crucial for informing policy changes.

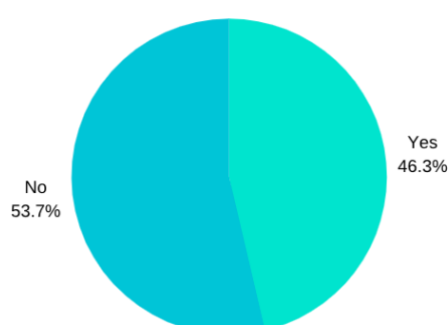
Divakar Ratnadurai, the National Director of **SOS Children’s Villages Sri Lanka** spoke about the need to collectivise formally to sort out most of the issues especially related to the 4 core issues of Employment, Education, Health and Legal Support for Care Leavers. He explained that one of the biggest bottlenecks that Care Leavers face is that the government still does not have a proper database for Care Leavers, which impedes policy making. It is also important that the governments recognises Care Leavers’ Networks through ease of access to bank accounts and the provision of a registered place with proper address for Care Leavers.

Yasmin Nasef from **Wataneya Society**, Egypt shared her experience of working with the Youth Forum and the richness she finds in their coming together, staying connected and engaging with each other. She hoped that the young people will globally be able to come together to exchange the knowledge and be able to undertake advocacy for themselves at a global level and be supported by organisations in areas such as finding resources and connections to empower the global Care Leavers’ Network.

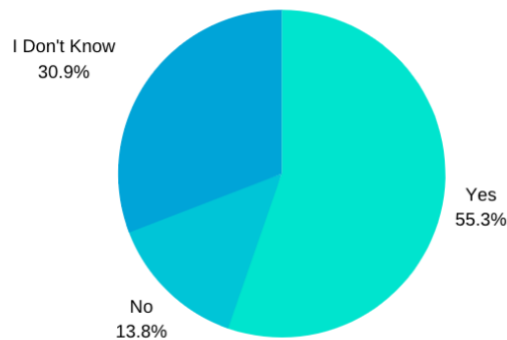
Poll Results

Polls were run during the session, to gauge the pulse of participants. To one of the poll question regarding satisfaction on service being provided by civil society organizations, the audience was divided 50:50. A big 31% participants were not aware of any Care Leavers Network existing in their country.

1. Have you ever engaged with any Care Leavers’ networks?



2. Are there any Care Leavers' networks in your country?



3. Are you satisfied with the support given to Care Leavers' network by Civil Society Organizations?



Key Takeaways

Following were the key takeaways from this interactive session attended by Care Leavers and people who care for Care Leavers from across **41 countries**:

- Key challenges faced by Care Leavers are Employment, Housing, Education, Health (including mental health) and Legal Support.
- **Governments** are willing to help but need support from Civil Society Organisations
- **Civil Society Organisations** working with Care Leavers can help in multiple ways
 - They can help governments build up a proper database of Care Leavers. Networks serve the purpose but a large number of Care Leavers are still not part of a formal network
 - They can help simplify policies and make the government services as well as information accessible to Care Leavers.
 - They can help policy makers by building awareness about the issue
- **Care Leavers** want to be given the opportunity to participate in policy-making processes. They truly value the Care Leavers Networks that they are part of as their fall back mechanism as well as a space that offers them a voice. The networks do not let them feel alone and act as a lifeline in times of crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic and hence it is important to explore resources and connections that support the initiation of a Global Care Leavers Networks

In Conclusion

The webinar highlighted the importance of Peer Led Care Leavers' Networks and the good existing practices shared during the session served as an inspiration to young people globally.



International Care Leavers Convention 2020

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