

Flygtningenævnets baggrundsmateriale

Bilagsnr.:	670
Land:	Etiopien
Kilde:	Immigration and Naturalization Service of the Netherlands
Titel:	General Report on SOS Children's Village Addis Ababa, Ethiopia
Udgivet:	April 2025
Optaget på baggrundsmaterialet:	4. november 2025

GENERAL REPORT ON SOS CHILDREN'S VILLAGE ADDIS ABABA, ETHIOPIA

**Prepared for: Immigration and Naturalization Service of Netherlands
Ministry of Asylum and Migration**

Prepared by:

5.1.2. d, e en i

April 2025

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INTRODUCTION

1.1. Forword

In the Netherlands, unaccompanied minor foreign nationals may apply for residence permits. However, certain minors do not meet eligibility criteria for such permits. For this group, the Dutch government focuses on facilitating safe and dignified returns to their home countries, emphasizing the availability of proper accommodation and long-term reintegration support.

This report was commissioned by the Dutch government in alignment with its commitment to reuniting unaccompanied minors with their families and exploring viable pathways for returning minors to their countries of origin. Where family reunification is not feasible, the government prioritizes ensuring that adequate care and sustainable reintegration measures are in place for returnees.

As part of these efforts, this report evaluates SOS children's village Addis Ababa care facility in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, detailing its operational conditions and circumstances at the time of investigation.

1.2 Methodology

A comprehensive approach was employed in conducting this general report. The assessment methodology included:

1. Physical visit: A physical walkthrough of the facility was conducted to visit the general condition of the facility which includes the play areas, dining rooms, and sleeping areas for the children.
2. Meeting and Interviews: meeting and Interviews were made with managerial staff.
3. Review of laws: existing rules and regulations in the country concerning the subject matter were reviewed as part of the investigation. This is helpful in finding relevant public authorities responsible in relation to refugee returnees. The relevant authority was consulted to identify the existing monitoring mechanism in ensuring that the facility adhered to relevant child care standards and regulations.

This report was conducted in adherence to the established ethical standards of practicing legal profession in Ethiopia. Children's privacy and welfare were given priority. The investigation team(indicated in the appendices) ensured no disruption to the children's daily routines during the visits.

1.3. Structure of the Report

The report is categorized in to four parts. The first part is an introduction to the report and highlights how the research is conducted. The second part is the main part of the report that describes actual circumstances of the facility in light of the points under the investigation. The third part is devoted to the visual materials (photographs) taken while conducting the physical inspection and visits. The final part is appendices that present the source material used during the investigation and video attachments.

2. SOS VILLAGE ADDIS ABABA

5.1.2. d, e en i

*Address: Sarbet, Besrate Gebreil,
Addis Ababa, Ethiopia*

2.1. Relevant Public institutions in Ethiopia

The Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia's Refugees and Returnees Service is a public organ established in relation to refugees and returnees in Ethiopia.

The very objective of this organization is to provide protection to refugees and asylum seekers, and support to returnees in cooperation with relevant bodies in accordance with the laws of the land and International, Continental, and Sub-continental agreements that the country has ratified, as stipulated under the regulation No. 546 /2024, enacted to determine the powers and functions of the Refugees and Returnees Service.

As per article 5 of the aforementioned regulation, amongst others, the service has the following power and duties:

- Works in cooperation with the concerned bodies towards the repatriation of Ethiopians who are registered as refugees in different countries and voluntarily decide to return to their country;
- Provides psycho-social support to returnees before they reintegrate into society; and may establish rehabilitation centers for this purpose in any part of the country;
- Coordinates the transition of returnees to their former places of residence in coordination with Regional Governments;
- Oversees and coordinates returnee rehabilitation activities in collaboration with partners.

2.2. Background of the Facility

SOS Children's Villages Ethiopia a non governmental organization, a member of SOS Children's Villages International, was established in 1974 in response to the 1973 famine in tigray region of Ethiopia. Its establishment is then directly associated with helping those who were suffering from the famine. The SOS Children's Village Addis Abeba was opened in 1981 as a third SOS Children's Village in Ethiopia.

Funding

The organization relies on contributions from individual sponsors, partners, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs), with no government funding. To ensure sustainability, SOS Children's Villages Ethiopia has currently implementing local fund raising strategic plan to achieve long term financial independence.

Global Network and Collaboration

As part of the SOS Federation, which operates in 137 countries, the Ethiopian village benefits from a collaborative international framework. Moreover, it adhere to standardized policies, use unified branding (including logos and nomenclature), and commit to common principles in service delivery worldwide.

Stuffing and Duties

The facility has well organized day time and night security guards. We are not allowed to access a data and information as far as the facility's numbers of stuffs and their duties are concerned.

2.3. The Placement /Capacity of the Facility

SOS Children's Villages Addis Ababa collaborates with the Addis Ababa City Women and Children Bureau to manage child admissions. An admission committee, comprising representatives from both entities, oversees the placement process. Annually, the facility submits a detailed admission plan to the city office, outlining its capacity to accommodate children. Based on this plan, the bureau refers eligible children to the facility.

If admission requests exceed the annual plan's scope, applicants are placed on a waiting list until vacancies arise or the facility secures additional resources to accommodate them. The children may be provided with temporary shelter in a place or facility administered by the government agencies' until permanent placement is made depending on the nature/ types of the problem and the age of children .

The village consists of 15 family-style homes within a single compound. Each household accommodates 4–10 children under a trained "mother" and "aunties." Currently, the facility has no vacant place.

Duration of Support

Support is typically phased out once a child reaches adulthood or is successfully reunified. As such , the children leaves the facility when they become fully independent and/ or based on reintegration work.

2.4. The Target Groups of the facility

SOS Children's Village Addis Ababa targets and supports children who have lost parental care and at risk of losing parental care. The facility primarily admits children aged 0–6 years from all religious and ethnic backgrounds. Siblings up to age 10 are also accepted to preserve family bonds. While admission is restricted to children under 10, care continues up to age 18 and above until children reach Independency. For youth pursuing higher education, support extends through university graduation.

Family-Based Care Model

Children live in mixed-gender family units designed to mirror natural family dynamics. Each household includes a trained caregiver ("SOS mother") and support staff ("aunties"), where boys and girls grow together as siblings.

2.5. The Living Conditions in the facility

Family-Centered Environment

SOS Children's Village Addis Ababa is designed to replicate a natural family structure, children experience care akin to a typical Ethiopian household. The facility adheres to principle of fostering a nurturing, home-like atmosphere.

Food

The meals provided in the facility is not uniform. Each household follows a meal plan, with caregivers ("SOS mothers" and "aunties") receiving three months of theoretical training and one month of practical training in meal preparation. Children are provided three daily meals (breakfast, lunch, and dinner), supplemented by clean drinking water from the facility's groundwater source. A backup generator ensures uninterrupted access to essentials during power outages.

Clothing and Personal Care

The facility allocates a clothing budget to each family, covering casual wear and pajamas. Families have flexibility to adjust spending based on individual needs, ensuring children are dressed appropriately and comfortably.

Housekeeping and Hygiene

Each family may opt for a dedicated family assistant to manage household cleaning. If declined, the SOS mother oversees cleanliness through family collaboration or other agreed-upon methods. Toilet and shower facilities, always accessible and maintained daily, are shared within the family unit to mirror a natural home environment.

Health and Sanitation

Caregivers undergo comprehensive hygiene training, covering personal care, food safety, and environmental sanitation. Regular refresher courses for Caregivers to ensure adherence to best practices. The facility employs nurses for routine health monitoring and clinical care, supported by volunteer medical doctors.

Living Arrangements

Dormitory-style rooms feature multiple beds cleaned every morning. Every child has its own bed.

With reference to the situation of children who do not stay in the care facility, but who live with their parents at home or with their extended family in Addis Ababa, the living conditions of children in each family is different from the other. Each family has unique situation. As such, we found it difficult to address the question.

2.6. Education in the facility

Schooling

Families in SOS Children's Villages Addis Ababa choose public schools to attend based on proximity, educational quality and budget. While there is primary school up to grade 6 operating based on outsourcing mechanism in the facility, attendance is optional. This primary school is run by Bistrategabriel International School and it is open for children living in surrounding area. For children enrolled in private institutions, the facility covers tuition costs.

Kind of Education

Education follows Ethiopia's state policy, with compulsory primary education, free schooling five days a week. The numbers of hours and number of students in class room are decided by the school based on the government policy direction. Dedicated education specialists monitor academic progress, provide tailored tutoring, and deliver regular reports with actionable recommendations to address gaps.

Higher Education & Vocational Training

- University Students: Financial and emotional support continues until graduation.
- Non-University Paths: Youth receive technical training to build employable skills.
- Post-Graduation: Job search assistance is provided for up to one year after completing higher education.

Entrepreneurship Programs

Youth with business proposals receive startup capital through partnerships with microfinance institutions. The facility covers initial loan down payments and offers entrepreneurship training. In cases of funding shortages, competitions are held to allocate resources equitably, with winners awarded initial capital funding.

The situation of children who do not stay in the care facility, but who live with their parents at home or with their extended family

With reference to the situation of children who do not stay in the care facility, but who live with their parents at home or with their extended family, it is common for the children with average family living standard in the Ethiopia enroll to public schools run by the government which follows governmental educational policy. After completion of secondary school, most of successful student join government university. Others who have family with strong financial capacity and meet minimum requirements, joins private colleges or universities. The remaining usually go to governmental vocational training center and college.

In Addis Ababa, the educational situation for children living with parents or extended families (not in care facilities) can be summarized as follows:

School Structure

- Days/Hours: Public schools typically operate 5 days a week (Monday–Friday).
- Class Sizes: Education occurs in government-run or private schools. Overcrowded classrooms are common, in public schools. Private schools have smaller ratios.

Type of Education

- Curriculum: Follows Ethiopia’s national curriculum.
- Religious Education: Some schools (e.g., Orthodox Church-affiliated) integrate religious studies.

Compulsory and Free Education

- Compulsory: Education is mandatory for ages 7–14 (grades 1–8).
- Free: Public primary education (grades 1–8) is tuition-free, but families often cover indirect costs (uniforms, books, transport). Public Secondary education (grades 9–12) is also free.

Opportunities for Trade Learning/Continued Education

- TVET Programs: Government and private technical colleges offer vocational training. Enrollment requires completing secondary levels.
- Higher Education: Competitive; requires passing the Ethiopian Secondary School Leaving Exam. Public universities are subsidized but have limited slots.

2.7. Guidance in the facility

Mentorship

SOS Children's Villages Addis Ababa emphasizes a natural family structure, where SOS mothers serve as primary mentors. Alumni are encouraged (though not required) to participate in a volunteer "give-back" program, offering support to vulnerable groups such as the elderly, hospital patients, or younger children.

Counseling Support

To protect privacy and reduce stigma, counseling services are outsourced to external professionals.

Individual Development Plan

The facility has crafted Individual Development Plan which is revised every 3 years. Each child receives a personalized development plan, focusing on five pillars:

1. Cognitive Growth: Academic goal-setting aligned with educational achievements.
2. Physical Health: Body Mass Index (BMI) monitoring for children under five, with occasional tracking for older children to ensure healthy development.
3. Social Skills: Community integration through friendships, holiday celebrations, cultural outings, and school engagement.
4. Emotional Intelligence: Training to manage emotions and foster healthy interpersonal relationships.
5. Spiritual Development: Guidance tailored to the child's religious background..

Progress in each area is reviewed regularly to refine strategies and ensure holistic advancement.

Support continues after children reach adulthood, adapting to individual needs. The facility has historically assisted alumni facing challenges, offering guidance to address root causes of difficulties, such as career hurdles or personal crises. The facility keeps bondages with children who left the facility in various forms and situations. In these regards, there are alumni who are helping the facility in its give-back program. There are also alumni who come to the facility to celebrate holidays, marriage and visit their family in the facility on various scenarios.

2.8. Medical Care

SOS Children's Village Addis Ababa provides medical care, prioritizing individual needs and confidentiality. For instance, children living with HIV receive specialized treatment, including CD4 monitoring, with strict privacy safeguards.

Staff and Services

In-house nurses provide daily care, supplemented by volunteer medical professionals. Most speciality care(including dental care) and advanced treatments are outsourced to partner hospitals.

Healthcare Partnerships

The facility has partnership agreements and collaborates with medical institutions to ensure quality care:

- Public Hospitals: Alert Hospital, Yekatit 12 Hospital, Saint Paul Hospital.
- Private Hospitals: Teklehaimanot Hospital, Danu Hospital.

All children admitted through state referrals undergo mandatory health screenings at Yekatit 12 Hospital. Additionally, the Ethiopian Red Cross Society supports first aid training for caregivers, with each household equipped with first aid kits.

Financial Coverage

Medical expenses are fully covered by the facility, guided by budget plans developed in consultation with each child's SOS mother. In exceptional cases, children receive treatment abroad.

The situation of children who do not stay in the care facility, but who live with their parents at home or with their extended family.

Children residing with their parents or extended families in Addis Ababa often lack consistent access to comprehensive healthcare. Unlike institutionalized care settings, these families typically do not have dedicated medical counselors to monitor children's daily health needs. Instead, they rely on reactive problem-solving systems, seeking care at nearby public health centers only when issues arise. Access to specialized hospitals is limited for most children, forcing them to endure prolonged waits for advanced treatments.

Access to Medical Care

- General Practitioners (GPs): Public facilities in Addis Ababa, such as Black Lion Hospital and St. Paul's Hospital, provide GP services but are often overcrowded, with long wait times due to high demand. Private clinics offer quicker access but are costly, limiting use for low-income families.

- Specialized Care: Access to pediatric specialists (e.g., dentists, psychologists) is limited outside major hospitals.

- Referral System: The tiered health system (health posts → health centers → hospitals) aims to streamline care, but delays are common due to overcrowding and resource shortages.

Free Health Care and Financing

- Free Services: Government facilities technically offer free primary care, including child delivery and vaccinations. However, families often incur hidden costs for medications, diagnostics, and transportation.

Generally, while Addis Ababa offers better medical access, the "average" child still faces barriers rooted in overcrowding, costs, and fragmented services.

2.9. Activities

There is a multi-purpose sport field in the facility's compound. This sport field is open to surrounding community. The children from the care facility come together and play football, volley ball, basket ball and etc with the children from the community. There is a reading space for the children in their respective house. There is also a group discussion space with the availability of basic books, reading rooms and family library.

The situation of children who do not stay in the care facility, but who live with their parents at home or with their extended family

There is a shortages of field for sports, games and other activities. The existing fields are also unaccessible for majority of people. It is not uncommon to see children and youth closing public roads and asphalt playing sporting activities on the weekend due to shortages sport field in Addis Ababa.

2.10. Quality and Monitoring

Staff Qualifications

SOS Children's Village Addis Ababa employs educational specialists, social workers, and alternative care managers, all of whom hold at minimum a bachelor's degree. These professionals are responsible to ensure alignment with national care standards and oversee program effectiveness. A safeguarding team collaborates with local police to screen potential employees for criminal records incompatible with childcare roles.

Regulatory Oversight

The facility operates under the oversight of multiple public institutions. The Addis Ababa City Women and Children Affairs Bureau serves as the primary regulatory authority, responsible for ensuring compliance with agreed terms, operational standards, and relevant regulations. Key responsibilities include:

- Conducting quarterly on-site inspections to verify adherence to contractual and legal requirements.
- Reviewing quarterly, semi-annual, and annual reports submitted by the facility.

As a non-governmental organization (NGO), the facility is also accountable to the Authority for Civil Society Organization, which supervises NGOs in Ethiopia under established legal frameworks. This includes:

- Monitoring compliance with national NGO regulations.
- Enforcing standardized reporting mechanisms (quarterly and annual submissions).

Non observance of effective rules and regulations may result in various consequences depending on the nature and gravity of violation.

The relevant authority may give feedback and warnings if there is any misconduct or violation of the standards set. The facility may be fined or face closure in case of grave violation like participation in illegal activities or unauthorized scope of operation.

Child Protection and complaining

Child participation

- Children's Parliament: where children voice concerns, needs, and suggestions. Representatives advocate for improvements, ensuring their rights are prioritized.
- Child and Youth Protection Team: Dedicated to safeguarding children's rights, addressing grievances, and ensuring respectful treatment.

Feedback and Incident Management

- Confidential Feedback Channels: Includes a child-friendly comment box, dedicated phone line, and email address for anonymous reporting.
- Incident Reporting System:
 1. Complaints are logged and analyzed by the incident management team.
 2. An independent investigation team conducts neutral inquiries.
 3. Findings and recommendations are presented to senior management for resolution.
- Staff Support: children elect a trusted representative to address internal concerns confidentially.

3. VISUAL MATERIALS

Exterior of the Facility's Compound



Interior of the Facility's Compound



Interior of the Facility's Compound



A Single Family Unit Homes



Remark: we were not allowed to take photographs' of Family Unit Homes interior due to the facility's privacy policy.

4. APPENDICES

I. MEETINGS AND ONSITE INSPECTION

A. Meeting

- Meeting with *5.1.2. d, e en i*
SOS village Ethiopia, January 2025 (Email: 5.1.2. d, e en i
- Meeting with *5.1.2. d, e en i*
SOS village Ethiopia, February 2025 (Email: 5.1.2. d, e en i
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B. Onsite inspection

- Onsite inspection at SOS Children's Village Addis Ababa, January 2025 (Teams -
5.1.2. d, e en i
)

2. INSTITUTIONS AND ORGANIZATIONS

- SOS children's village Ethiopia
- SOS children's village Addis Ababa
- Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia Refugee and Returnee Service
- Addis Ababa Women and Children Affairs Bureau
- Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia Authority for Civil Society Organization
- Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia Ministry of Women and Social Affairs

3. RULES AND REGULATIONS

- A Proclamation to provide for the definition of the power and duties of the executive organs of Federal Democratic Republic of the Ethiopia No.1263/2021
- The organization and power and functions of the Refugees and Returnees Service Regulation No 546 /2024

4. VIDEO

- Attached to this report as a part of the report on the Facility