

Abstract submission for the CERES Summer School 2017

Title: Drivers of Social Exclusion for Young People Leaving Care - The Case of SOS

Children's Villages in Aboisso, Côte d'Ivoire

Theme: Human welfare and development

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Abstract

Previous studies focusing on young care-leavers in Europe and the US have found that many are unprepared for leaving care, often facing obstacles in finding accommodation, completing their higher education and in finding stable employment. While the few studies that have been conducted in Africa have found similar results, there is a lack of empirical evidence in general on how this youth group fare in developing countries. This research aims to address this knowledge gap by posing the following research question: 'What are the drivers of social exclusion for young people from care in SOS Children's Villages in Aboisso, Côte d'Ivoire during their time in care and their transition to independent living and how do these affect them in their behavior, participation in education and training, and employment?' This research draws on the findings from focus groups, life-history interviews, and semi-structured interviews conducted with care-leavers from the institution SOS Children's Villages in Aboisso, Côte d'Ivoire. This research finds that the main drivers of social exclusion of youth while they are in care include the following: (1) disconnectedness from their biological family; (2) discrimination from their peers due to their care background. Secondly, this research finds that the drivers of social exclusion of youth from care in their transition to independent living are the following: (1) lack of supervision by their supervisors in the process of leaving care; (2) lack of financial support by the care institution to complete their higher education; (3) lack of employment opportunities in the region; (4) lack of work experience prior to leaving the care institution. These drivers of social exclusion all have the effect of facilitating irresponsible behavior in youth from care, as well as a decrease in their participation in education and training, and finally a lack of employment security as they leave care. The paper concludes that there is a deficit in the extent to which the care institution SOS Children's Villages prepares youth for employment after leaving care, and suggests that care institutions should make the preparation of youth for employment a priority at the moment youth enter care and not in the time period youth are leaving care. The findings of this research have implications for SOS Children's

Villages' international and local policies for improving the quality of care provided to youth in care institutions, as well as the preparation provided to them for leaving care.

Keywords:

SOS Children's Villages, care-leavers, Côte d'Ivoire, education, youth employment, social exclusion