

# Report of 5<sup>th</sup> Online Care Leavers' Café

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## ONLINE CARE LEAVERS CAFE

TOPIC

HOW TO BE(COME) A GOOD  
CL ADVOCATE?



**ORGANISING NETWORKS**

YOU'RE ORGANIZATION VIETNAM  
SOS CHILDREN'S VILLAGES THAILAND



## Section 1: About the Café Session

### Introduction

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



### About the organizing team

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

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

### Session Program

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

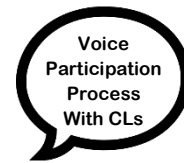
- **Phong Le** is the representative from Vietnam Care Leaver Network, a Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) Advocate, with a focus on quality education, reducing inequalities, and acting to stop the irreversible consequences of climate change. He is a founding member of the Leadership Development Fellowship by Teach for Vietnam and the Leading from Lived Experiences Fellowship by Teach for All.
- **Fabienne** is the representative from SOS Children's Villages Austria and also the care leaver self-advocate who currently works as Youth Development Intern at SOS Children's Villages International Office.
- The River of Self-empowerment workshop
  - Life drawing session
  - Break out room for sharing session
- Group sharing & self-reflection.

### **Where the participants and organizers were from?**

(from the Chat and registration information)



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



### What is Advocacy?

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



### THE KEY WORDS

"Equality"

"Rights"

"Bringing changes"

"Problem solving"

"Taking actions"

"Speak for those who have less voice heard"

### Why Advocacy?

Some comments answered by the participants;

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

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

"To strengthening law reinforcement"

"Empowerment"

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

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

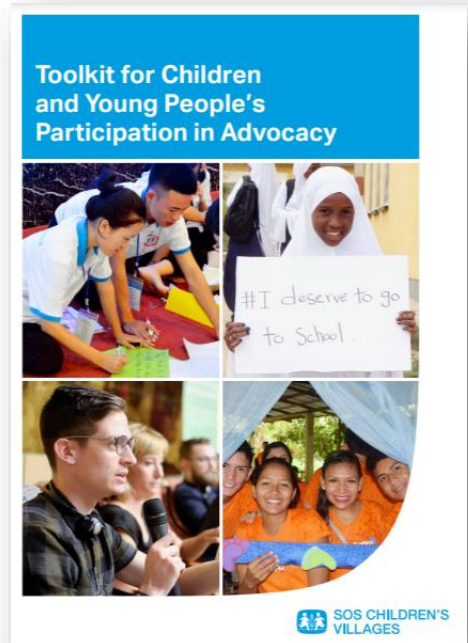
- **Law reinforcement** wasn't strong. We have to fight for social justice, child abuse, and other issues. It's important for the care leavers, and those who have been in alternative care to share experiences to form recommendations so that the service providers can improve the quality of the child care,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

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

## How Advocacy?

There are several forms of advocacy e.g.

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



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

[https://www.sos-childrensvillages.org/getmedia/2ee87f70-bf9f-4c06-ba6f-5d9738d53586/CYPAToolkit\\_web\\_ENGLISH.pdf](https://www.sos-childrensvillages.org/getmedia/2ee87f70-bf9f-4c06-ba6f-5d9738d53586/CYPAToolkit_web_ENGLISH.pdf)



### How to become a good advocate?

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

## Section 3: Care Leaver Panelists Interview

### Guess speaker No.1: Phong Le

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



**Phong Le**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

### *How to advocate during the Covid-19?*

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

### **Guess speaker No.2: Fabienne Landerer**



**Fabienne Landerer**  
Care Leaver Leader from Austria/France Care Leaver  
Network.

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

“I’ve attended so many projects for care leavers previously. Once, my care giver send message to me about the experience to become the speaker; it was the first time that I knew about the care leaver, and after that, I never left.

There were several projects that I got involved with. Along the way, I have been making my own networks from meeting with several people. And there were things in common that was condensed into the collective discourse to fight for.”

### *What is the issue you and your network fight for?*

“In Austria we fight for the better situation for the care leavers in general. For example, we demand the government so to support for care leaver in extending the age for leaving care, from 18 to 26 year-old due to the average age of teenagers leaving home in Europe is 26, then it is not fair for care leavers to have to be independent on 18.

The leaving care period is quite vulnerable as most care leavers from child care institution don’t have supports, and parents or anybody to go to when needed.

**These young people did not choose their situation. So they need someone to speak for their rights and their situation.** This is the kind of fairness I’m fighting for. The moment when the child comes into the care system,

the parents are no longer responsible due to many reasons. In the end, the institutions and the government takes on responsibility, which is the huge thing. It's important that someone is there and support the education continuation and fairness in other perspectives as well. **The young person should be able to start adult life without any weak point."**

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

"We come from different care institutions. And we connect this kind of round table where different people working in different care settings all come together and discuss what's happening. The meeting happens every two months. We get new information, connect to the direct on the source, we get attention from the media because they know that we exist and have a stable network. Sometimes they do television show on care leavers. They sometimes ask care leavers for interview. We work on all kind of opportunities.

Many of them already work on the setting as social workers. For me, I'm super interested in this issues. So now, I'm working in SOS Children's Villages as a professional. I have the opportunities in engaging with care leavers in so many ways. There are many types of opportunities. It's significant to know what opportunity is out there, by sometimes simply just Google it, or getting connection."

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

"It takes some resources. For some people in Austria, it's really hard to come up with this because many of them are struggling in other areas of life like getting their first jobs. It has to be like a team work where we can hand-in-hand work together. It's easier for people who have time flexibility."

*Why is it significant to become self-advocate?*

"I really encourage everyone to be the care leaver self-advocate because it is really important that we have such a rich experience in this topic. I don't think that people who haven't been through this experience will be as good as the care leavers as an advocate. We are strong. A lot of people know how to use their voices."

*How to advocate during the Covid-19?*

"Covid-19 is affecting everyone, especially the young care leavers that could lost their jobs, having less safety network to go to when they face such problem. When you go through such hard time, it's more difficult to advocate for own issues.



On the other hand, it's a lot easier to advocate if you are stable. For example, if there are something in UN, care leavers could just reach there and be the part of it without having to plan how to fly there. We could just be online like this, participating the café with connection from all around the world."

## Section 4: The River of Empowerment

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

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

### **Need for further support**

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