**Project Title:** Co-creative workshop on the Prevention of Family Separation in Addis Ababa

**Applicant:** Alternative to Separation (ATOS), Copenhagen

**Partner organization:** Integrated Family Service Organization (IFSO), Addis Ababa

**Objective and relevance (the world around us)**

What do you want to achieve through the intervention?
The overarching aim of this intervention is to reduce the number of children in institutional care in Addis Ababa by identifying pathways to better support families, in particular single-parent families, who are at risk of needing to send their children to institutions despite wanting to take care of them[[1]](#footnote-1). This involves re-imagining and reorienting the child & family care system in Ethiopia towards systematic social support for families so that institutionalization becomes obsolete while also focusing on advocacy strategies that could promote this move towards a preventative approach to institutionalization. In Addis Ababa, poverty, displacement, disability, early marriage and lack of access to basic services are the most common factors that push parents to a point of desperation, compelling them to place their children in orphanages or other forms of institutions. Eighty+ years of research proves that institutionalization of any sort is detrimental to child health and development and puts children at a higher risk of abuse, trafficking, poor physical and mental health outcomes and criminality[[2]](#footnote-2). Despite this, many countries, Ethiopia included, have continued to rely on and support orphanages as a cornerstone of alternative care. In 89% of cases in Ethiopia, children living in orphanages have living parents or family members who could take care of them, but the families lack the support they need[[3]](#footnote-3). Children have the right to grow up in a family environment and, as far as possible, be cared for by their parents or family members.

In the pursuit of contributing towards a broad shift in alternative care towards prevention, deinstitutionalization and social support for families, this intervention will host a 3-day workshop with stakeholders in Ethiopia to generate ideas, identify pathways for change and build collaborative capacity between local and international actors. In terms of concrete outcomes, this intervention will (1) identify 10 best practices for supporting families as risk of separation, (2) create a network of actors working towards the common goal of reducing the institutionalization of children, (3) identify and develop and advocacy strategy for change and (4) develop plans for a scaled-up project involving more partners.
This can therefore be viewed as a kick-off or pilot project, with the goal of building a strong foundation for future collaboration and scaled-up projects in Addis Ababa on this critical topic.

Why is the intervention important?
This intervention is important because an estimated 11% of children in Ethiopia are living without parental care, or are vulnerable to losing their parental care[[4]](#footnote-4). Given that 53% of the Ethiopian population is under the age of 18[[5]](#footnote-5), that means that approximately 4.5 million children are in this situation. At the same time, it is estimated that 89% of those children have at least one living parent who could take care of them. In Ethiopia, poverty, displacement, disability, early marriage and lack of access to basic services. Rural poverty, draught, famine and conflict have driven millions to internally migrate, putting the number of internally displaced people (IDPs) in Ethiopia at nearly 2 million[[6]](#footnote-6). When families are on the run, children can easily fall through the cracks and end up without parental care. Research has undisputedly shown that institutions are bad for children, leading to troubling outcomes such as higher rates of suicide, abuse, criminality and trafficking. This body of research has been used across the West to support the deinstitutionalization of alternative care for children since the 1970's[[7]](#footnote-7). By moving towards a preventative approach that centres families, services, inclusion and accessibility, it is possible in the long run to greatly reduce the number of children in orphanages and institutions by making it possible for their families to care for them, and thus improve life outcomes for children and families while also strengthening social cohesion at a societal level. Additionally, in December 2019, the annual Resolution of the Rights of the Child addressed for the first time ever, children without or at risk of losing parental care. The new resolution opposes the unnecessary separation of children from their families and the unlawful or arbitrary deprivation of the liberty of children. It emphasizes the importance of growing up in a family environment and the right of the child to a family. Further, it strongly encourages efforts to reunify families, to de-institutionalize where in the best interest of the child and stresses that children should not be separated from their families solely due to poverty or lack of access to resources[[8]](#footnote-8).

Describe the conditions that apply in the area where the intervention will take place, and which are expected to influence the intervention:

Ethiopia is a fragile context with persistent draught, famine, high rates of HIV/AIDS and TB, political instability and pervasive poverty. In the COVID-19 era, and in light of the recent conflict that has erupted in the Tigray region, these issues manifest even more severely. In relation to this project, it is expected that COVID-19 regulations will impact the intervention. We will need extra space for social distancing and extra resources for PPE to conduct the workshop safely. Insofar as the conflict is concerned, we expect that this will not have a great impact on this projects implementation, due to the fact that the conflict is regionalized to a different region that IFSO is not engaged in. Moreover, the main activity of this project is a 3 day co-creative workshop on the topic of prevention as discussed thus far. Given the short nature of the activities and the nature of the project as a "kick-off" project, there is a good amount of flexibility in timing of the workshop and is unlikely to encounter problems outside of potential travel restrictions.

Describe how this intervention can contribute to supporting collaboration, public engagement and civil organising and how this in time will contribute to social justice:

This intervention will contribute directly to supporting collaboration, public engagement and civil organizing by bringing together a variety of actors and stakeholders, including social workers, students, health care professionals, municipality and government workers, NGOs, and families, to discuss, dialogue and plan for pathways to prevention of family separation. This intervention will produce a concrete advocacy strategy and plans for a scaled up project based on the knowledge, information, and ideas generated through the dialogue. Decreasing the amount of family separation and institutionalization of children will, in the long run, contribute to important social justice outcomes. Children who grow up in a family environment are shown to have better physical and mental health outcomes throughout their lives than those who grow up in institutions, meaning that prevention can in the long run improve a societies overall health and reduce class-based inequalities[[9]](#footnote-9). Improving social support for families can contribute to a reduction in generational poverty by providing economic stability and improving access to education and health care services. Keeping families together is important in supporting cultural and linguistic knowledge and tradition that is passed between generations[[10]](#footnote-10). It also supports a strong and vibrant rural life, as many of the children without parental care in Addis Ababa come from the country side to the city when they are institutionalized, leading to overcrowding in cities[[11]](#footnote-11). Moreover, in 2019, Ethiopia eased up on it's regulations regarding civil society, opening up new room for advocacy work. Due to previous restrictions, there is a need for capacity building advocacy skills that are key to effective public engagement.

What climate- and environmental conditions do the partnership and/or the intervention need to respond to?

From a climactic perspective, this is a low-impact project. There will be only 2 flights needed - for the ATOS staff from CPH-AA and back, and the workshop will be sure to use sustainable and locally sourced products (food, materials, etc.) whenever possible.

The partnership/collaborators

Describe any previous acquaintance or cooperation between the partners, and how these experiences have fed into the development of the proposed intervention:

ATOS was created as a result of the merging of AC Barnehjaelp (ACB) with DanAdopt. A group of ACB employees made ATOS as a way to continue with the development projects & partnerships that were started by ACB but risked being lost during the merger. One of those partnerships was with IFSO.

ATOS and IFSO have a history of shared successful project implementation such as our "Children on The Edge" project funded by Danida, our project "Parental Rights - Vulnerable Children, Youth and Families" funded by CISU, and most recently "Supporting Girls Education Under COVID-19", which is funded by private donation. In 2019, ATOS staff went to Addis Ababa to work with IFSO on producing a research report titled "Children without Parental Care in Ethiopia", which focused on the root causes of institutionalization by region. The idea for this proposal was drafted during that meeting as a logical next step to the research process. This intervention will be a step towards operationalizing the knowledge gained through our joint research.

Describe the partners and other actors’ contributions, roles, and responsibilities:

IFSO will be responsible for logistical aspects of the workshop, including lodging, booking of venues, food, local transport, etc. They will also be responsible for recruiting and outreach to the stakeholders that will join the workshop, with input from ATOS. To date (February 12, 2021) the Addis Ababa University School of Social Work & School of Psychology, Yeka, Arada and Addis Ababa Bureaus of Women and Children's Affairs, African Network for the Prevention and Protection against Child Abuse and Neglect (ANPPCAN), Yeka and Arada Micro and Small Enterprises and Administration offices, and local NGOs Organization for Prevention, Rehabilitation and Integration of Female Street Children (OPFRIS), CHADET and VOFAD have agreed to take part in the workshop. The IFSO team will be led by Abeje Hiruy, IFSO's programme manager and will be composed of employees Hindia Abdulahi, Head of Resource Management, and Meron Kibebe, Project Coordinator. ATOS will support IFSO's efforts with resource persons, feedback and collaboration. ATOS will be responsible for M&E, reporting and dissemination efforts in Denmark. ATOS and IFSO will collaborate in co-designing the content and methods of the workshop. The partners will meet on a minimum monthly basis throughout the project period and will share experiences, expertise and ideas in support of the project and partnership. ATOS's team will be composed of Rita Tisdall, board member and Secretariat chair of ATOS, who will act as supervisor, and Gabriela Kaplan, board member and project coordinator at ATOS who will coordinate the project. Both will attend the workshop in person in Addis Ababa.

Who will benefit from the intervention? How many people will benefit in total? How will they participate in the intervention?

This intervention has two main target groups. The first is 15-20 young women who are either first time parents, or soon to become parents, between the ages of 18-25 who are at risk of being unable to care for their children due to poverty, illness, lack of familial support, early or forced marriage, or other related issues. It is mothers within this age range, and typically mothers with 1 child or expecting, who are the most likely to decide to search for alternative means of care for their child, such as institutions[[12]](#footnote-12). These women will participate in the intervention by joining as full participants in the workshop and contributing their ideas and knowledge on the topic. They will benefit directly by expanding their network, gaining knowledge of the resources available to them, capacity building, gaining empowerment through being part of the solution to their own problems, and through the monetary compensation offered to them. The second target group is the group of stakeholders, consisting of municipal institutions, universities, NGOs and social workers. We aim to have 15 stakeholders present, with each sending 2 representatives to participate in the workshop. These stakeholders will similarly build their capacity, in particular their capacity for advocacy, and will benefit from the networking. Between these two target groups, an estimated 300 people will be reached. This number includes the children and families of the women, who will benefit from the project support and learn about the idea of deinstitutionalization through word of mouth, and the broader organizations represented by the 30 stakeholder participants.

Describe how the intervention will be implemented: what activities will be carried out? With whom? And when?
This project is built around the implementation of a 3-day co-creative workshop, Moving from Family Separation towards Preventative Approaches”, where ATOS, IFSO, local women (15-20 first time mothers, aged 18-25) and 10 stakeholders (mentioned above) come together to;

(1) identify pathways to support women and families so that they are able to care for their children at home, rather than send them to institutions

(2) initiate first steps for developing an advocacy strategy for deinstitutionalization policies in Ethiopia

(3) create a network that can continue the working with the agreed on findings and strategies identified during the workshop, develop future collaborations and projects and advocate for the principals of the new Resolution.

The workshop will kick off with IFSO and ATOS presenting the findings from our **r**eport "Children with out Parental Care in Ethiopia", with input and feedback from participants. From there, we will use dialogue, brainstorming, group work, sharing of best practices, visualization and other collaborative methods to meet the immediate objectives. The methods of the workshop will be based on Robert Putnam's ideas of "bridging and bonding", which constitute the two dimensions of building social capital. "Bridging" refers to the sum of the resources and competences that an individual can draw upon from their local community, where as "bonding" refers to as the positive identification, values, attitudes and behaviour that an individual can gain by belonging to a group of project[[13]](#footnote-13). The project will therefore work within the framework of a developmental workshop that develops both aspects of all target group’s social capital, thereby promoting a strong network and capacity building towards the realization of a preventative approach. An experienced facilitator in the co-creative process will moderate and lead the event, which will take place in the summer of 2021.

Target groups, objectives, and expected results:

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|  | Description | Indicator & Means of Verification | Assumptions |
| Development objective | To reduce the risk of loss of parental care for children in Addis Ababa by moving towards a preventative approach to family separation | A network of 15-20 vulnerable mothers and 15 local stakeholders is established to address this issue via a combination of direct support, advocacy and future projects | At least 90% of the invited target group participants will attend the workshop |
| Immediate objectives | 1.0. Identify pathways to support women and families in building their social capital | At least 10 practices are identified and documented on how to support women in AA in building their social capital  | At least 75% of participants will come with at least 2 best practices on supporting families and building their social capital |
| 2.0. Initiate the build of an advocacy strategy for deinstitutionalization policies in Ethiopia | Participants feel that they have gained advocacy skills through the workshop, verified via evaluation, and a strategy is developed and documented through workshop notes | At least 80% of participants will have improved their understanding of advocacy and at least 5 participating stakeholders will agree to participate in implementing the strategy |
| 3.0. Establish a network that can serve as a basis for future projects and advocacy | Ideas for a future project on deinstitutionalization and prevention are generated, documented via workshop notes and a platform for network communication is establish. IFSO will join the Child Protection Network | At least 2 participating stakeholders will join the network and agree to continue working on developing the future project together with ATOS and IFSO  |
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| Results |
| 1.1 A report documenting the 10 best practices  | Report is completed and disseminated widely, verified by dissemination log | At least 80% of participating stakeholders will disseminate the report in their networks |
| 2.1 Advocacy skills and capacities are improved, and an advocacy strategy developed | At least 60% of participants say they have improved their advocacy capacity via evaluation form. An advocacy strategy is developed and documented | At least 50% of participants will take actionable steps (determined by the strategy) to advocate for prevention of institutionalization within the month following the workshop |
| 3.1 A network platform is establish | A digital platform is selected and set up to support the network (i.e. Google Drive, Teams, Slack, Facebook group)  | At least 60% of participants join the platform |
| 3.2 A scaled up project plan | A documented plan for a future collaborative project involving at least 2 participating organizations, including ATOS and IFSO, is created | At least 4 organizations, including ATOS and IFSO join the partnership for a scaled-up project |
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| Activities | 1.2 Participants present best practices  | Each best practice is documented and compiled in a report. Participation list. | At least 50% of participants will come with at least 1 practice of supporting women and building their social capital |
| 2.2 Advocacy workshop session | Participation list. Notes and photographs from the session. A documented advocacy strategy is produced. | At least 75% of participants will join the session. |
| 3.2 Project ideation workshop  | An outline of a scaled-up project, including 2 new partners, on prevention of institutionalization is produced  | At least 75% of participants will join the session. |
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| Inputs | Funds to cover: travel costs, accommodations, venue, meals, equipment, project staff, COVID-19 PPE, facilitator fees, organizational support and stipends for vulnerable participantsPersonnel/participants from: ATOS, IFSO and local stakeholders | All receipts and invoices are collected and reported. Participation is verified by participant lists at all activities. Working hours are documented using proper timesheets. | Travel and gathering in a group of 30+ individuals will be possible at the time of the intervention although COVID will still be a concern and proper precautions will be taken.  |

1. Intervention-related information work in Denmark

Information work in Denmark will be an important aspect of this intervention. ATOS is a core member of the new Child Protection Network, Denmark (www.childprotectionnetwork.dk).The best practices report produced by the intervention will be shared with Danish organizations working in child protection and care and our partners in the South via the network where IFSO will be a member. Also, ATOS will use the knowledge and experience gained from the intervention to build up and improve our ongoing information work, which includes school workshops and online courses on Canopy Lab, and raise awareness about institutionalization in Denmark.

1. Alternatives to Separation. (2018). *Children Without Parental Care in Ethiopia: A Desk Review*. Unpublished manuscript. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. L. (2017). Ending Institutionalisation: An Assessment of the outcomes for children and young people in Bulgaria who moved from institutions to the community (Rep.). London: Lumos Foundation [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Ibid 1 [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. FHI. (2010). Improving Care Options for Children in Ethiopia through Understanding Institutional Child Care and Factors driving Institutionalization. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Central Statistical Agency(Ethiopia) and ICF International.2012.  Ethiopian Demographic and Health Survey 2011. Addis Ababa, Ethiopia and Calverton, Maryland, USA: Central Statistical Agency and ICF International. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Ethiopia. (n.d.). Retrieved February 09, 2021, from https://www.internal-displacement.org/countries/ethiopia [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Report of the Ad Hoc Expert Group on the Transition from Institutional to Community-based Care, R. (2009). *Ending the Institutionalisation of Children Globally - The Time Is Now* (Rep.). Brussles: 8th European Commission. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. 2019 UNGA Resolution on the Rights of the Child. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. Karen Bos, Charles H. Zeanah, Nathan A. Fox, Stacy S. Drury, Katie A. McLaughlin & Charles A. Nelson (2011) Psychiatric Outcomes in Young Children with a History of Institutionalization, Harvard Review of Psychiatry, 19:1, 15-24, DOI: [10.3109/10673229.2011.549773](https://doi.org/10.3109/10673229.2011.549773) [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. Partridge, C. (2013). Residential Schools: The Intergenerational Impacts on Aboriginal Peoples. *Native Social Work Journal,* *7*. doi:https://zone.biblio.laurentian.ca/dspace/handle/10219/382 [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. ibid 1 [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. ibid 1 [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. Putnam, R. (2013). The Prosperous Community: Social Capital and Public Life. In *Cross Currents: Cultures, Communities, Technologies*. Cengage Learning. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)