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### The Social Exclusion of Vulnerable Youth

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**SOS**  
**KINDERDORPEN**  
Elk kind een familie

# The Social Exclusion of Vulnerable Youth **Country Report: Indonesia**

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AMSTERDAM INSTITUTE FOR  
SOCIAL SCIENCE RESEARCH



UNIVERSITEIT VAN AMSTERDAM

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# 1. Introduction

## 1.1 Purpose & scope of the research

This report presents the results of a scientific research on the topic of **Social Exclusion of Vulnerable Youth**, commissioned by SOS Children's Villages Netherlands and conducted by researchers of the Amsterdam Institute of Social Science Research (AISSR) at the University of Amsterdam, in collaboration with local counterparts within the study countries. The purpose of the research is to identify and understand the multi-dimensional drivers of social exclusion of vulnerable youth, which concerns youth who have lost, or are at risk of losing parental care.

Specifically, the objective of this research is to answer the main question:

***How are vulnerable youth affected by social exclusion in terms of their human wellbeing, employability and social acceptance?***

The research aligns with the new Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) objective to “leave no-one behind” [1; 2] and responds to policymakers and practitioners' interests, whom have recognized the importance of including youth in their social and economic policies and strategic actions on the ground. The research contributes to the global debate on social exclusion of vulnerable youth and provides concrete input to adjust SOS international's existing programmes. The research was carried out in the period January 2016 until December 2017 in six countries: Côte d'Ivoire, Guatemala, Indonesia, Kenya, Malawi, and the Netherlands. The SOS National Offices have supported this research, but did not play a role in the research to warrant scientific independence.

## 1.2 Contribution to knowledge gaps

This research focuses on vulnerable youth, specifically on young people who have lost or are at risk of losing parental care. The social exclusion of vulnerable youth is a context specific problem, but its' driving mechanisms show similarities across different societies. Social exclusion of vulnerable youth can thus be a problem in poor and affluent societies alike. If youth are not faring well, this poses challenges and risks to their own and family wellbeing, and undermines societal resilience and stability. Based on a literature review [3], the following knowledge gaps were identified:

- (1) There is a general lack of empirical evidence on vulnerable youth (i) in and from an alternative/informal care settings and (ii) in vulnerable families at risk of losing parental care, being actually socially in-/excluded or marginalized
- (2) Lack of in-depth understanding of how, why and by whom social in- and exclusion of vulnerable youth takes place, and to what extent
- (3) Lack of knowledge on how vulnerable youth are faring later on in life after leaving care – in terms of their independence, human wellbeing, employment, family, and social acceptance.
- (4). How do (2) and (3) differ across (1.i) and (1.ii) and according to gender, ethnicity and religion.

## 1.3 Approach & methodology

The UN Guidelines for the Alternative Care of Children (2010) follow a Human Rights-based approach [4], which remains key to the mission goal of SOS Children's Villages. At the same time, a

more comprehensive approach to human wellbeing, sustainability and voice and empowerment is currently advocated under Inclusive Development [5; 6]. This research integrates the two approaches by taking a relational approach [7; 9].

The six country case studies have taken a bottom-up and participatory approach and used mixed methods for quantitative and qualitative data collection and analysis. The prime units of analysis were vulnerable youth themselves. In total, more than 280 youth participated; their voices, experiences and inter-relationships stand at the core of this research. In addition, their caretakers, teachers, health workers, employers and other social peers were also part of the research. Country specific secondary sources, including scientific literature and policy reports also formed part of the contextual analysis.

#### **1.4 Report outline**

The remainder of the report is organised as follows. Chapter 2 presents the theoretical framework and conceptual model guiding this research. Chapter 3 explains the research methodology in detail and lists the respondents' key characteristics. Chapter 4 discusses the county context in which the research took place and the SOS programme within the country. Chapter 5 presents the research findings, following the conceptual scheme in Figure 1. Recommendations for uptake and use of the research findings by the SOS organization and a variety of stakeholders are provided in Chapter 6. The literature list is included at the back.

## 2. Theoretical Framework

### 2.1 Taking a relational approach

This research is framed within human rights [4] and inclusive development theory [5; 6] and takes a relational approach [9]. The research takes youth in interaction with their personal and structural environment as a key entry point [17; 24; 25; 28; 29; 36]. Although, this is a social economic research, it is partly inspired by psychological studies (on youth) [e.g. 9; 27; 30], which have emphasized how inter-personal relations can either foster or impede relational connectedness. We consider vulnerable youth in *dynamic* inter-connection to their care environment (people and structures); the nature of these interactions changes over time [9; 17]. To feel relationally connected to people and structures around oneself is an important determinant of human wellbeing [9; 11]. However, vulnerable youth transit in and out care relationships multiple times: upon entering care, moving through care, and leaving care [31; 32; 33].

### 2.2 Vulnerable youth & their multiple transitions

In this research, 'youth' is defined as a transition phase between childhood and adulthood [13; 14; 15; 34], also described as *waithood* [12]. "Waithood represents a period of suspension between childhood and adulthood, in which young people's access to adulthood is delayed or denied" [12, p. 1] While their chronological age may define them as adults, for many structural and societal reasons, they have not been able to attain the traditional social markers of adulthood: earning a living in a training or job, independence, establishing a family, providing for offspring and other relatives, and becoming taxpayers. [10; 12]

In this research, 'vulnerable youth' are defined as youth who have lost or are at risk of losing parental care. Vulnerable youth encounter barriers, disturbances and delays in forming their social identity, whilst making multiple transitions through care. When transiting out of care, they often lack financial, social and emotional guidance and fallback mechanisms. [13; 14, p. 4; 15, p. 3]. As a result, care leavers run more risk than their peers to *not* achieve in education and employment, and more quickly resort to street life, alcohol and drug abuse, crime, or being exploited [14, p. 16; 16].

### 2.3 Social exclusion & self-exclusion

Social exclusion is both a process and outcome leading to disempowerment. Beall and Piron (2005) define social exclusion as "... a process and a state that prevents individuals or groups from full participation in social, economic and political life and from asserting their rights. It derives from exclusionary relationships based on power." [17, p. 9].

Social exclusion creates social inequalities that are inter-generational and embedded in societal structures, institutions and policies [19]. Cultural oppression and marginalisation lead to further isolation, shame and humiliation – and, in turn, to self-exclusion [23; 35]. Those who are socially excluded share similar social, economic and political barriers and constraints, and lack security, justice and economic opportunities in life in general [16; 27]. This means that there are two sides to the same story; social exclusion may lead to self-exclusion and *vice versa* [9; 20]. Where social exclusion affects individuals in their daily life and behaviours, studies prefer to speak of discrimination [e.g. 21, p. 3]. There is a growing awareness that social exclusion of vulnerable youth is an emergent problem arising out of problematic relationship between broad-based societal change, social inequality [22, p.21; 23, p. 7] and ideology [24]. The myth of meritocracy leads to self-

blame and self-exclusion [9; 25, p. 93; 26] of young people who are in an important identity building phase of their life and on their way to independence. Early experiences in life of social exclusion affect later ones, making social acceptance more and more difficult [27].

## 2.4 Other key concepts & conceptual scheme

**Drivers of Social Exclusion** - Social, cultural, political and economic factors that cause and sustain the process of social exclusion and self-exclusion.

**Connectedness** - Being and feeling connected to others in a social-relational environment [9].

**Relational images** - Individual expectations of how one will be treated (self-images), based on previous treatment, and images of others as to how they will act and who is to blame for one's exclusion [9].

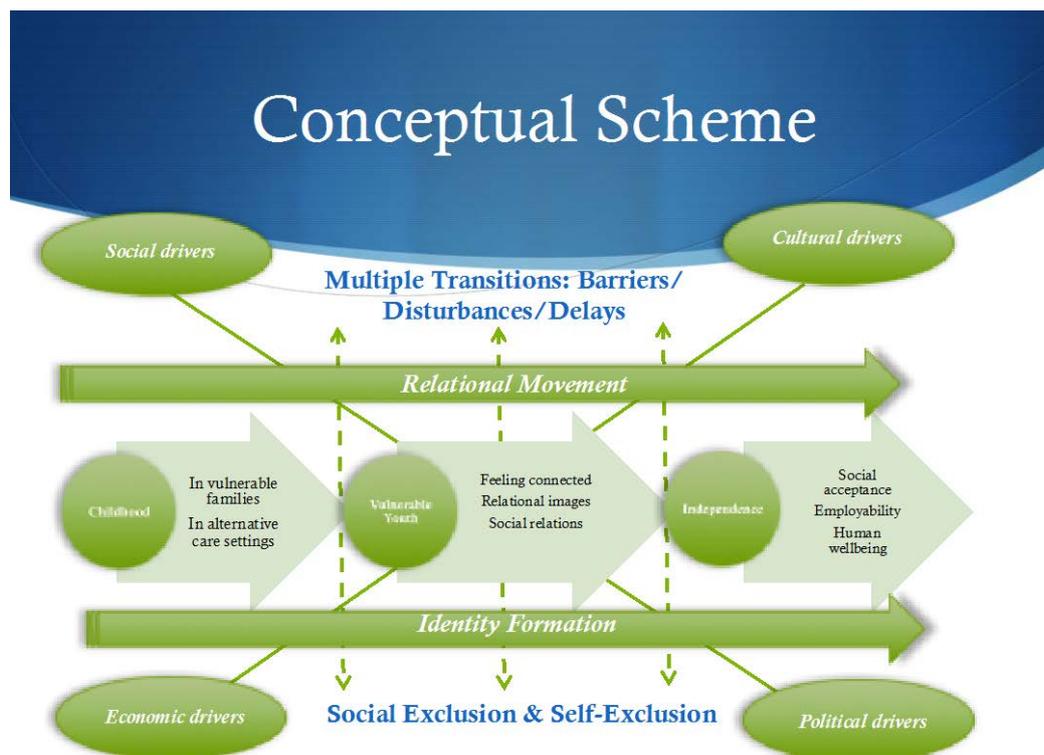
**Relational movement** - Relational movement is the process of moving through connections, disconnections and back into new connections; these can be positive or negative [9].

**Employability** - A set of achievements – skills, understandings and personal attributes – that make graduates more likely to gain employment and be successful in their chosen occupations, which benefits themselves, the workforce, community and economy [15, p. 3; 18].

**Social Acceptance** - The acceptance of a person (or group) into a group or society as a whole.

**Human Wellbeing** - Feeling satisfied with what one can have, be and achieve in life.

Figure 1 - Conceptual Scheme



## 3. Research Methodology & Study Populations

### 3.1 Introduction

This research uses a mixed methods approach to explore the social exclusion of vulnerable youth. This section will outline the research questions, the methodologies used and describe the study populations.

### 3.2 Research Questions

To guide the research, the following research question and sub-questions were used:

**How are vulnerable youth (youth in and from alternative care and families at risk of losing care) affected by social exclusion in terms of their human wellbeing, employability and social acceptance?**

*SQ1. In what ways are vulnerable youth socially excluded, by whom and to what extent?*

*SQ2. What are the drivers of social exclusion of vulnerable youth?*

*SQ3. How does social exclusion lead to self-exclusion and vice-versa?*

*SQ4. How do childhood experiences of exclusion effect relational movements and connectedness after care?*

*SQ5. How are vulnerable youth prepared for living independently?*

*SQ6. How do the above answers differ between different subgroups of youth?*

### 3.3 Research Methodology

In order to develop an understanding of the social, cultural, political and economic drivers of social exclusion, in-depth interviews were conducted with a total of 16 stakeholders, including caretakers, teachers, employers, government workers and health workers, supplemented by insights from secondary literature. 50 youth in total participated in Indonesia; a structured survey was conducted with 44 youth; with a sub-selection of 10 youth, life histories and social-relational mapping exercises were conducted to identify barriers, constraints and delays in their relational movement and social identity formation towards independence. 4 focus group discussions were organized with young men and women separately to explore gender specific drivers of social in- and exclusion.

### 3.4 Description of Study Populations

The primary group of respondents in this study were vulnerable youth. These young people came from SOS Family Based Care (FBC) and Family Strengthening Programmes (FSP) and from two other Islamic care organisations:

**Table 1 - Number of youth respondents (N=47)**

	SOS FBC	SOS FSP	Islamic care organisations
Number of young people	12	12	26

48% of those interviewed were female and 52% were male. All youth interviewed in the Islamic care organisations and SOS FSP identified themselves as Muslim. 33.3% of youth from SOS FBC identified as Muslim, with 66.6% identifying as Christian.

33.3% of SOS FSP youth were supported by personal training and 91.7% were personally supported financially. One (8.3%) young person's parents were supported financially and one's parents received livelihood training.

The stakeholder participants consisted of 5 SOS mothers, 4 members of SOS staff, 2 teachers, 2 local government workers (from the offices responsible for employment and social welfare), 1 employer and 1 health worker.

## 4. Country Context & SOS Programme

### 4.1 Introduction

In Indonesia, the research was conducted Lembang and Bandung, in West Java. This specific location was chosen by the SOS Children's Villages Indonesia team. This section of the report will briefly outline the country and local context of the research. More detailed information can be found in the Fieldwork Guide for Indonesia [37].

### 4.2 Country context & youth policies

Indonesia is a low middle income country with the largest economy in Southeast Asia and the fourth biggest population in the world, which is made up of over 300 ethnic groups [38]. Almost one-third of Indonesia's population is under the age of 18 [38]. It is very important to note that Indonesia is an extremely diverse country, with great disparities in human development between regions [39]. As such, this research cannot be generalised outside of the research context.

Indonesia has a number of policy and legal frameworks for youth in care, which focus on deinstitutionalisation and a move to family based alternative care. This includes the 2003 Child Protection Law which states that separating children from their family should be a last resort and the 2011 National Standards of Care for Child Welfare Institutions which promotes family support systems, family based alternative care and specifies institutional care standards [40; 43]. In 2012 the Government reallocated funds to support children in families and reduced funding to care institutions and in 2014 the Family Based Care Alliance was set up by Muhammadiyah and NGOs to advocate for family-based care [41]. Despite this, in 2014, the Better Care Network again demonstrated that poor families felt obliged to give up their children, as well as highlighted that family placements were low in favour of institutionalisation. It was deemed that there was a lack of compliance to standards, with no compliance monitoring and limited requirements to receive a licence to run care institutions [42].

Table 2 - Youth policies and legislation in Indonesia

Policy type	Source	Policy details
Definition of youth	Youth Law of Indonesia	Youth are aged 16-30 years old
Voting age		17
Criminal responsibility	Juvenile Court Act	Minimum age for criminal responsibility is 8
Majority age	Criminal code	15
National Youth Policy		There is no national youth policy in Indonesia
Minimum age for work	Manpower Act; Ministerial Decree	The minimum age for work is 15 and the minimum age for hazardous work is 18, complying with international standards
Child labour	International conventions; Manpower Act; Law on Child Protection; Penal Code	Indonesia has ratified all international conventions concerning child labour and has its own laws protecting children from hazardous work, forced labour, trafficking and exploitation
Education	Law on Child Protection; Act on the National Education System	Indonesia has free public education and a compulsory education age of 15

Source: [52; 53]

### 4.3 SOS programme

SOS Children's villages work in eight locations in Indonesia, running the Family Based Care programme and the Family Strengthening Programme. The FBC programme has a number of stages; children first live in family-type set ups, with an 'SOS mother' and 'SOS siblings'. There are up to 10 children and young people living in these family homes, which in Indonesia are divided by religion (ensuring that the caregiver, the SOS mother, is from the same religion as the children and young people she is caring for). When there are biological siblings entering care, they are kept together as much as possible. The next phase is the SOS youth house, where young people move from the family houses to communal living, monitored by a designated member of staff, with a youth house for young men and a youth house for young women. Finally, when young people leave the youth house they usually continue to be financially supported for some time, gradually becoming completely independent. FSP supports families at risk of breaking down, providing for example, financial support, engagement in livelihood activities, and training.

SOS Lembang supports approximately 140 children through FBC in the village and over 1,600 children across 13 communities with FSP [43]. They also have two youth houses; one for young men and one for young women, situated in Bandung. Bandung is the third largest city in Indonesia with primary work sectors included tourism, textiles, food production, financial services, retail and health care [44].

In interviews, SOS staff highlight that *"SOS strongly prevent the separation of children/young people from their parents"* [11 with SOS staff] and, based on the needs of the child, determine whether they should enter into SOS care short term (for emergency situations), mid-term (for children who still have relatives who could care for them after assessments) or long-term (where children do not have parents or relatives to care for them) or enter into FSP (where the parents are not fully able to care for the child, for example due to disability or divorce). Children who are referred to the organisation for other reasons, such as finances, or have special needs are referred to other organisations.

### 4.4 Youth issues

Through secondary literature, some issues identified initially for youth in Indonesia include high youth unemployment, with one in five youth not in education or employment; low levels of public spending on education and limited youth policy; high levels of physical and sexual violence; substance abuse and child labour [45;46;39].

## 5. Data Analysis

### 5.1 Introduction

Before fully delving into an analysis of the data on the in- and exclusion of youth, it is first important to explore what youth themselves consider to be meant by the terms exclusion and inclusion. When young people were asked this question, the majority focused on how this felt for the **individual**; with exclusion resulting in negative feelings and inclusion resulting in positive feelings. For a deeper exploration, we prompted youth to explain how they think **society** treats someone who is in- or excluded. In answer to this question, youth, especially those in the FSP programme and from the two care organisations not run by SOS, tended to highlight the personal “flaws” that would lead to an individual being excluded:

*“Because the person is arrogant and rude”* [S10078 with female youth from FSP]

*“Maybe the person made a mistake in her family, in school or in the society so the people do not trust her anymore because she made herself look bad”* [S10066 with female youth from care organisation 1]

This seemingly puts the onus of responsibility of exclusion onto the individual, rather than attributing exclusion to wider societal factors (an issue that will also be considered in more detail below).

Young people from SOS FBC, and a handful from other organisations, however paid recognition to the **social determinants of exclusion**, identifying exclusion to be a result of societal discrimination:

*“They look from someone’s economic status”* [S10081 with male youth from care organisation 2]

*“The person is disabled or has a mental disorder”* [S10065 with male from SOS youth house]

*“Especially if the person has different religion”* [S10084 with female SOS care leaver]

When defining social exclusion, young people, especially those in SOS who highlighted these discriminatory practices, also drew a connection between a person being excluded from society, and the emotional **impacts** this had on an individual, resulting in them withdrawing from society. In other words, young people themselves highlighted the relationship between social-exclusion and self-exclusion in their definitions:

*“Afraid to mingle with other people. The person will be an introvert person.”* [S10085 with male SOS care leaver]

*“Depression. Low self-esteem. Lonely”* [S10084 with female from SOS youth house]

### 5.2 Social drivers of exclusion

Young people in surveys were not very vocal about experiencing exclusion. Indeed, it was discussed that young people found it difficult to answer such direct questions, as it was not a regular part of the Indonesian culture to speak so openly.

Peduli [47] highlights that in Indonesia children who do not have a “conventional family life” may become marginalised and socially excluded due to stereotyping and stigmatisation. Generally, youth in this research did not feel they were excluded as a result of being from care.

Only 11.4% of youth said they felt excluded as a result of being from care. This number was slightly higher, at 16.7% amongst SOS youth.

Nevertheless, a number of young people, as well as SOS staff and SOS mothers highlighted that youth from a care background do face a certain degree of stereotyping whereby teachers in particular, but also peers treat young people differently as a result of being a “young person from care”. Indeed a small number of young people expressed that they felt excluded by their peers in school for this very reason. This is explored more in section 5.8.3.

In focus group discussions, youth were asked to work in a group to identify the 5 most common forms of discrimination that young people in their community experience. 3 out of 4 groups highlighted that young people were discriminated against based on their economic condition, and the same number of groups discussed that people are excluded because of their attitude, if they are considered selfish or moody. 3 groups also highlighted that a bad social environment leads to exclusion; this may be negative friendships; doing “bad” things to fit into friendship groups such as smoking; not playing (or not being able to play) with friends; coming from a family considered “bad”; or being a victim of abuse. Young women (and, interestingly not young men) highlighted that young people are discriminated against based on their appearance; if they are not considered to be beautiful or attractive. Young men (and not young women) highlighted having a disability to be one of the main reasons for exclusion, perhaps because one of the young men in the youth house is disabled and so they are more aware of the discrimination faced by people with disabilities (also highlighted by Peduli [47]). A youth health worker also highlighted that domestic abuse and gender based violence was high in the area and left young people at risk of exclusion. They further highlighted homosexuals, prostitutes and street children as the most at-risk groups when it came to exclusion.

**Youth do not feel excluded as a result of being from care. The main social drivers of exclusion in the community derive from discrimination based on economic condition and social background.**

### 5.3 Cultural drivers of exclusion

Indonesia is a hugely diverse country, with many religious groups (although with a very large majority being Muslim) and ethnicities. Indeed, different states have different religious laws, which, according to SOS staff affect the way that different SOS villages across the country are run. SOS Lembang, however, is described by staff as “mini-Indonesia”, where different religions live harmoniously together. In fact, the majority of children and young people in SOS Lembang are Christian; a member of staff explained that this was because people outside perceived it to be a Christian organisation because of its European name. As already mentioned, SOS houses are divided by religion from day one, according to SOS staff, this has always been the case, but in 2001, the National Child Protection law also stated that the caregiver and the child should have the same religion.

According to Silver [48], Indonesia has a tradition of recognising its multicultural heritage, which means that the Muslim majority are tolerant of minority ethnic groups. Nevertheless, Peduli [47] highlights that some religious minorities do experience stigmatisation either because they are viewed as a threat, or because their traditional beliefs are viewed as “backwards”.

Of the different questions asked regarding exclusion, young people most frequently noted that their ethnicity and religion had affected their experiences of exclusion. 29.5% of young people said that their ethnicity had led to their exclusion, and 22.7% said that religion had. Table 3 breaks these figures down by care type:

**Table 3 - Youth who believe ethnicity and religion affected their feelings of exclusion by care type (N=44)**

	SOS FBC (n=12) (%)	SOS FSP (n=12) (%)	Care organisations (n=20) (%)
Ethnicity	58.3	33.3	10
Religion	50	16.7	10

This depicts that SOS FBC youth experience greater exclusion based on their ethnicity and religion than youth in other care settings, and may be telling as much fewer young people in SOS FBC identify themselves as Sundanese and Muslim; the largest ethnic and religious groups in the region, as depicted in Table 4.

**Table 4 - Youth who identify as Muslim and Sundanese (N=44)**

	SOS FBC (n=12) (%)	SOS FSP (n=12) (%)	Care organisations (n=20) (%)
Sundanese	33.3	83.3	90
Muslim	33.3	100	100

A couple of young people expanded on this in the surveys with one discussing how they were excluded from their friendship group because they were from a different religious group as their friends and two stating that society may exclude individuals who do not come from the same religious group as the majority in the society.

At the same time, involvement in religious activities is an important way in which the young people interviewed engage with the society around them, through involvement in church youth groups, and community based Islamic celebrations, for example. Young people demonstrated the importance of religion in their lives and depicted the freedom youth have to practice their own religion in care.

**Religious activities are an important means of young people in care engaging in society, however some youth highlight that their ethnicity and religion lead to their feelings of social exclusion.**

## 5.4 Economic drivers of exclusion

This analysis has shown economic drivers of exclusion to be especially important for young people from care. This is not least because there continues to be a major difference between the rich minority and the poor majority in Indonesia [49]. Youth highlight frequently that young people are excluded because of their economic condition in and of itself, but also because being (considered as) poor, means that people are unable to buy the latest fashions and gadgets. They also highlight that being a young person from care has connotations in society of lacking money, and therefore young people in care face discrimination and exclusion based on these associations.

Nationally in Indonesia, 25% of youth are not in employment, education or training (NEET), a figure that rises to one third for women and girls [50]. For youth interviewed, this figure was much lower at 9.1%, with 84.1% in education or employment related training, reflecting the view discussed in section 5.7, that a major benefit of being part of these three care organisations is the ability to continue with one's education. When youth were asked in surveys whether there was enough meaningful employment in Bandung, 88.6% of youth indicated there was, and indeed Bandung has a booming tourism industry that has the options of employing many youth. However this figure was somewhat contradicted by other information; youth in focus group discussions all stated that young people are not able to earn enough money to live on their own, in surveys youth discussed workplace competition as a barrier to them achieving their goals and many youth were working informally.

The difficulty in finding employment for youth seems to be recognised by stakeholders, however approaches to dealing with this is more questionable. Throughout the interview with the office responsible for employment, the participant constantly reiterated and encouraged the fact that

36.4% of youth stated that a lack of money was the biggest barrier to reaching their employment goals.

young people should engage in “*informal job opportunities*” and to be “*active in starting a new business and be an entrepreneur*”. When asked about opportunities that are available to youth in the area, the focus again was on entrepreneurship. This approach puts the onus of responsibility onto youth, and removes the responsibility of the government to provide jobs to young people. This focus on entrepreneurship is also to some extent reflected in interviews with staff and youth. SOS staff highlight that they are starting entrepreneurship programmes from an early age to equip youth with the necessary skills (although, it is important to note, also provide youth with many more educational and training opportunities) and young people state the solution to not being able to find a job is opening up a business. The approach, however, seems to overlook the necessity of capital for creating a business- indeed, 36.4% of youth state that their biggest barrier to reaching their goals is not having this initial financial investment – as well as the fact that young people from care do not have a fall-back position in case their business does not succeed.

The position risks young people facing further economic insecurity and waithood. If there are not sufficient jobs available for young people, and they are not able to open up a business or survive on its income, they may be further excluded from society. Young people in life histories discuss that they are currently not earning enough money to live off:

*“Logically, that amount of money is not enough but I tried to manage it” [LH10100 with female care organisation 1 care leaver]*

*“To be honest, the money I gain is not enough to provide my daily needs” [LH10085 with male SOS care leaver]*

Youth also discuss through vignettes that difficulties in obtaining a job can result in young people “giving up” – self-exclusion from the job market. What is more, the lack of money that young people have is preventing them from engaging in certain parts of society, such as in continuing their education, and prevents them from spending time with their family and friends, as discussed in section 5.8.2.

**A key economic driver of exclusion is based on the fact that young people from care find it difficult to provide for themselves from their income. Authorities reacting to a lack of decent employment by encouraging youth to become entrepreneurs risk further excluding youth, who do not have capital or a fall-back position.**

### 5.5 Political drivers of exclusion

In a review of social inclusion policy in Indonesia, Sujatmiko [49] discusses the political division between the poor minority and the rich majority in Indonesia, which is a result of historical policies of division and marginalisation (such as by the Dutch, and by Indonesian political parties). Such inequalities are not recognised in the constitution, political parties or in policy; where the poor and marginalised remain underrepresented. This is also the case with regards to vulnerable youth, where, despite legal frameworks existing, these are implemented poorly and inconsistently and there is a lack of co-ordination between agencies [47].

This was apparent in surveys with youth, where a number visibly laughed at questions on the impact local and national politics had on their lives. Indeed, when asked who contributed to youth’s feelings of acceptance or exclusion, 53.3% stated that local politics had no impact and 77.3% said national politics had no impact. Furthermore, 36.1% and 38.6% of young people stated they felt unaccepted or excluded from local politics and national politics respectively. For some, this was because they could not be involved as a result of their age, other young people were more critical:

*“Youth critical thoughts are often being ignored” [I10054 with male youth from FSP]*

*“Politics is rude. The rich are getting rich and the poor are getting poor” [I10091 with female from SOS youth house]*

The interview at the office responsible for social welfare further demonstrates the lack of political attention given to children and youth in care. The interview highlights the lack of responsibility the government takes for children and young people in care, with the respondent stating that all such responsibilities lie with care institutions. This is despite the fact that 79.4% of care organisations in the area are not registered with the government, and thus presumably are also not regulated. Indeed, it was highlighted in discussions with stakeholders that it is possible for anyone in Indonesia to open a care home, with no checks or regulations. Furthermore the interview at the government office highlighted that no figures are kept of the number of young people in care (despite the

Ministry of Social Affairs purportedly requiring district authorities to monitor child care institutions [40]) and no government support is offered to those leaving care (other than that offered by care organisations themselves). This highlights a significant gap between the policies highlighted in section 4.2 and the realities of what is practiced. It thus begs the question as to how much citizenship youth in and from care really have; as their rights are not being protected by their government and they have no leverage on political agendas.

**The main political driver behind the exclusion of vulnerable youth is that they are given virtually no political attention or protection, and thus lack citizenship and voice and feel disconnected from national and local politics.**

## 5.6 Multiple transitions

A major finding to come out of this research project is the fact that young people from care experience not only shorter transitions on leaving care, as existing literature suggests, but multiple transitions throughout their pre-adult lives. This includes transitioning into care, transitions within care and transition out of care. These multiple transitions have a major impact on young people's lives, affecting their wellbeing and also their identity formation. This section explores the multiple transitions that young people experience, section 5.7 explores the educational experiences of young people, section 5.8 discusses the effect the transitions have on the relational movements and connectedness of youth and section 5.9 discusses the effects these transitions have on identity formation. The section focuses primarily on young people who are in care, and not young people who are still living with their families as part of FSP.

### 5.6.1 Transition into care

#### *SOS Youth*

As discussed in section 4.3, SOS staff stress that they try to prevent the separation of children and young people from their parents as much as possible, and so assess the needs of youth to determine whether youth should enter care on a short-term, mid-term or long-term basis. All youth interviewed as part of this research had been in care for 11 – 23 years, except only one who had been in care for a shorter period of 3 years.

According to SOS mothers, children are often in a bad way when they first enter into SOS care:

*“They were malnourished, suffered from a disease, not physically healthy, and had thin and dry hair, dry skin. We accept them no matter they were sick or healthy.”* [12 with SOS mothers]

For those who are “unhealthy” the first six months are spent caring for the children. Thereafter time is spent helping children adapt and fit in. After a year, mothers say the children are settled and healthy.

A number of youth who were separated from their families discussed the process of being taken into care in the life histories, highlighting that they were never really sure why they were taken into care and expected that they would only be there temporarily, before it eventually dawned on them that they would stay. One youth discussed being placed in multiple care placements before finally settling

in Lembang, still unsure of why they were in care. They did, however, express positivity about being a part of SOS:

*“In [my hometown], children around my age already worked as porters or motorcycle drivers. They did not finish their school. How lucky I am to be taken into SOS, live in a family and finish my school with the course I am interested in.”* [LH10072 with female SOS care leaver]

Indeed a number of youth express this positive attitude towards their time in care, in comparison with what their life would have been had they stayed at home (an issue discussed more throughout), and interestingly youth from SOS expressed the fact that they are lucky to be in this particular organisation, stating that other care organisations are not as beneficial to youth. Nevertheless, despite this positivity, the process of being taken into care seemingly has a serious effect on the identity formation process of youth (see section 5.9).

### **Non-SOS organisations**

In the two organisations outside of SOS, young people still had parents who were capable of taking care of them. According to life histories, for these youth, the transition into care was made especially traumatic as young people, and seemingly also their parents, were made to believe they were joining an Islamic boarding school and not a care institution. On discovering it was a care institution, young people and their parents were shocked:

*“We took a long drive to get to [the care organisation] As soon as we arrived I looked at the school signboard and read “A Care Institution”. I was shocked and asking myself ‘Why a care institution?’ Because from the movies I watched on TV, a care institution is for abandoned children. I felt devastated and abandoned by my parents... My mother was also shocked...that I will be living in a care institution”* [LH10105 with female care leaver from care organisation 1]

Although the organisation presents itself as a means of providing children and young people with better education and opportunities, this practice in fact directly contravenes the Indonesian 2003 Child Protection Law, which states that the separation of children from their family should be a last resort. The secrecy surrounding this practice (with children and families believing they were going to a boarding school as opposed to a care organisations) also draws parallels with the use of orphanages as businesses and money making schemes (see for example [51]).

Despite the initial shock, young people stayed (usually with persuasion or pressure from parents and in some instance staff at the organisations) as they were offered a good and free education. However, the transition was a difficult one, even for those who saw it as positive in the end:

*“I used to hate them [my parents] and disappointed for sending me here. But now, I am grateful for what they did to me. I can go to university now”* [LH10105 with female care leaver from care organisation 1]

This transition was made more unsettling as a number of youth stated they had their phones removed, could rarely call their families (at least without secretly borrowing a friends phone) and were only allowed to visit their families once or twice a year. This transition therefore resulted in youth experiencing disconnection and exclusion from their families (this is explored more in section 5.8).

### 5.6.2 Transition within care

As part of the SOS programme, young people transition from their SOS houses to the SOS youth house. Young men make the transition earlier than young women, at around the age of 16, because *“Our children are not biological sisters and brothers so to prevent something happen in the house”* [12 with SOS mothers].

When in the youth house, the schedules of youth change and they take on increasing responsibility for themselves, including shopping, cooking and cleaning as preparations for living independently (see section 5.6.4). SOS mothers describe this to be a difficult period for both the mothers, who are losing their child, and the youth who are losing their family. Indeed youth express initial difficulty with this transition, both in terms of moving away from their SOS families and adjusting to their new responsibilities:

*“I could not express my feelings living far from [SOS mother]. The situation was different. I found it difficult to adjust with the new environment”.* [LH10055 with male SOS care leaver]

However, as the youth are aware of the process, to some degree they also resign themselves to the transition:

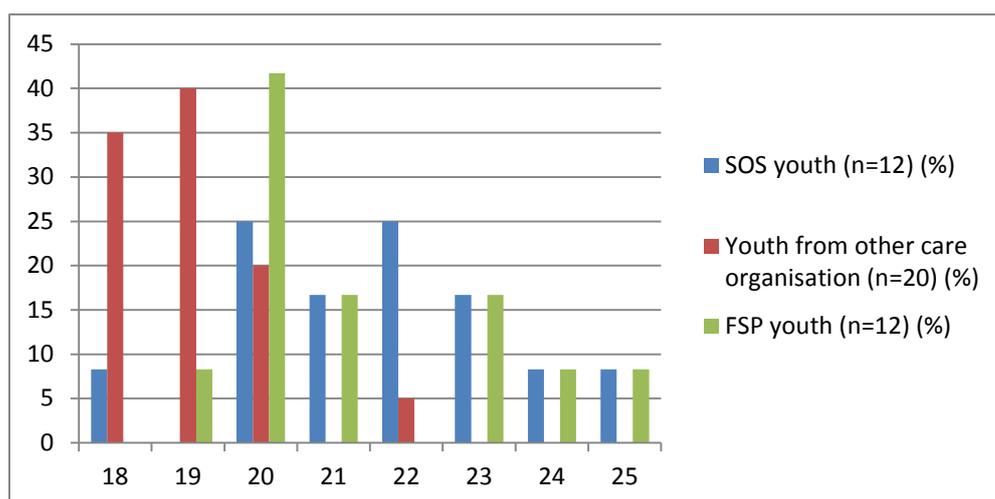
*“I was ready to move because I had to”* [LH10068 with female SOS care leaver]

### 5.6.3 Transition to independence

The transition to independence is the most explored (although still highly under-researched) transition that youth from care face. This is with good reason, as it is in this transition that young people lose their support and fall-back positions and have to live independently, indeed considerably more independently than youth who live with their biological family.

Figure 2 below interestingly depicts how young people from the different care categories expect to, or did, make the transition to independence. Strikingly, the majority of young people from organisations other than SOS expect or do make this transition at the age of 18 or 19 (75%) compared with only one SOS FBC youth and one FSP youth making the transition so early. These young people therefore experience the transition to independence at a relatively young age. The spread amongst SOS youth is much greater, with the majority of youth leaving between the age of 20 and 23. This is likely to be a result of the extended support SOS offer youth as they continue with their education (see section 5.7) meaning that youth do not have to become fully independent until after they have graduated. The majority (41.7%) of FSP youth expect that they will become independent (i.e. move out of their family homes) at the age of 20.

Figure 2 - Age young people left or expect to leave care (N=44)



Young people tend to view the process of leaving care with a sense of resignation:

*“Ready or not I must be ready because it is the time for me to live independently”* [LH 10084 with female SOS care leaver]

*“We have to be independent and I realize that”* [LH10055 with male SOS care leaver]

For those who express an active readiness to leave care, many put this down to a sense of duty or need to live independently and provide for others. This is especially true for FSP youth, who often either do not want to burden their parents, or want to be able to contribute financially to their families:

*“I want to work to make my parents happy and to send my [siblings] to school with the money I earn”* [S1002 with male youth from FSP]

*“Because I am ashamed if I stay here longer. I should have live by myself, find a job and help my SOS family and SOS”* [S10090 with female from SOS youth house]

Young people experience some positive aspects of leaving care; through life histories care leavers discussed the benefits of having less regimented daily lives, and a small number discussed having more time to spend with their friends. In the surveys, there is a wide spread in answers as to whether aspects of youth lives stayed the same or got better or worse after leaving care, however 5 out of 7 highlighted that their living conditions improved.

For youth who experience the transition as a negative, the negative aspects can largely be attributed to notions of connectedness and waithood: Young people, especially from non-SOS organisations, highlight a loss of contact with friends and a new sense of loneliness in not having their friends around them. SOS youth especially discuss their sadness in moving away from their SOS families and the loneliness that this provokes. Youth also fear the financial difficulties that independence will bring, as well as experiencing these financial difficulties first hand.

*“I do not have friends to talk to. In [care organisation] I have my roommates to talk to every day”* [LH10106 with male care leaver from care organisation 2]

*“In Bandung, I went straight looking for a room to rent. I felt so lonely. I did everything by myself. It is difficult to express the feelings in words”* [LH10084 with female SOS care leaver]

*“I`m afraid with my financial condition as I don`t have a permanent job”* [LH10058 with male SOS care leaver].

*“I just started working, live in a new place, my salary is not enough to support me at this time.”* [LH10068 with female SOS care leaver]

Young people have both positive and negative responses to leaving care. Transitions are negative when youth lose their connections and enter a phase of waithood, where they are unable to provide for themselves.

#### ***5.6.4 Preparation for transition to independence***

In SOS, the youth house is highlighted as the major stepping stone to independence; whereas before SOS mothers did the majority of things for the young people, in the youth house young people must take responsibility for their own shopping, cooking washing and cleaning. When young people leave the youth house and, for example, go onto university, young people continue to be financially supported by SOS, however independence is encouraged by gradual cuts to their monthly budget so that they have to start working part time and be more accountable for their outgoings. SOS staff also highlighted that both FBC and FSP youth are prepared for independence through various trainings, especially entrepreneurship training which is now being started from a young age. SOS staff highlight that this has an especially noticeable effect on FSP youth:

*“The impact is huge especially in their psychological aspect in which they are confident, they know they can compete with other people with the skills they have and the training also broaden their knowledge.”* [I1 with SOS staff]

In the other care organisations, young people throughout their stay work in groups to cook and clean and view the whole process as a form of preparation for independent living.

How far-reaching these preparations are in practice, however, is less clear. When asked whether youth felt prepared for living independently 91% said they felt very or somewhat prepared, yet when this notion of preparation was broken down, the results become less certain. This is depicted in Table 5 which highlights whether youth feel prepared or unprepared for various aspects of their independence.

**Table 5 - How prepared youth feel for aspects of independence (N=44)**

	Prepared (%)	Unprepared (%)
Finding accommodation	52.3	47.7
Looking after yourself (e.g. shopping, cooking)	90.9	9.1
Managing personal finances	72.7	27.3
Continuing education	52.3	47.7
Obtaining employment related training	43.2	56.8
Obtaining employment	54.5	43.2
Personal health	88.6	11.4
Engaging in politics	65.9	34.1

From this table, it can be seen that youth are very well prepared in terms of looking after themselves, their personal health and, to a slightly lesser degree managing their personal finances. This is in line with the preparations for independence that youth receive through the youth house programme and other care organisations. However only about half of youth feel prepared to find their own accommodation, continue their education, find employment related training and obtain employment. Table 6 breaks these four elements down by care type:

**Table 6 - How prepared youth feel for aspects of independence by care type (N=44)**

	SOS FBC (n=12) (%)		SOS FSP (n=12) (%)		Other care organisations (n=20) (%)	
	Prepared	Unprepared	Prepared	Unprepared	Prepared	Unprepared
Finding accommodation	50	50	25	75	70	30
Continuing education	83.3	16.7	58.3	41.7	30	70
Obtaining employment related training	75	25	66.7	33.3	35	60
Obtaining employment	66.7	33.3	33.3	66.7	35	65

This highlights that compared to the other care types, SOS youth from the youth house are relatively well prepared, other than when it comes to finding accommodation. Except for when it comes to obtaining employment related training (which is offered as part of the SOS programme), FSP youth are relatively unprepared in all elements, especially in finding accommodation and employment. Youth from other organisations are also relatively unprepared, other than in finding accommodation. These findings demonstrate the need for improvement in these elements of

programmes in order to prepare young people for independence and help them to avoid waitness and the need to engage in alternative livelihoods.

Table 7 depicts when youth expect to be told that they will leave care and when they think they should be told. The majority of youth both expect to be told and would like to be told more than a year in advance, suggesting that their needs are being met here. Nevertheless, 21.9% of youth do not know when they will be told, highlighting that they may not be engaged in important decisions that affect their lives.

**Table 7 - Average time youth being & think should being told that they are leaving care (N=36)**

	Is being told shorter than 1 year (%)	Is being told longer than a year (%)	Think should being told shorter than a year (%)	Would like being told longer than a year (%)
<b>Average</b>	12.5	65.6	12.5	93.8

### 5.7 Education

Despite these difficult transitions (the effects of which will be explored in more detail in sections 5.8 and 5.9) young people in the youth houses and care organisations consistently highlight one positive aspect of being in/from care; that is access to better education, and higher education.

SOS focuses on a young person’s education throughout their lives, with SOS Mothers stating that they are careful in helping young people map out their futures, including in academia, based on their academic experiences and talents. SOS staff focused on the different paths available to youth depending on their academic performance and future aspirations. Youth with a good academic performance will go onto senior high school, and then if they succeed here can go onto University. In University SOS continue to support youth financially, however also actively encourage them towards independence by gradually reducing their monthly allowance so that youth begin to take up part-time work. If a young person does not graduate when they should, they face economic sanctions, such as having to pay for their own transportation or pay for their fees. SOS try to be as (financially) supportive as possible of the futures young people chose for themselves; where young people incur additional costs whilst studying, they request young people make a proposal of the funds they need and usually give 50% of these funds.

Young people who are not able or who do not want to go down this academic route are encouraged to go to vocational school to study for their future careers, for example in clothing or hospitality. SOS has partnership with one vocational school in central Java and a number of young people discussed attending such a school.

It is important to note that in SOS, these opportunities are only afforded to youth in FBC/youth houses, and not to young people in FSP; only one of whom has got a scholarship to go to University. FSP youth, instead, are offered more employment-related training, and the family receives financial support for their child’s education at a younger age.

Young people in the care organisation where only young women were interviewed discussed how they received a good Islamic education through the school, and then many went on to study at

college or University thereafter. Young people were offered places in colleges, often where they could live with those who made donations to the organisation. They did not pay fees and were either on a loan scheme or were offered sponsored education. The downside young people highlighted was that they were limited in the programmes they could study, with organisation staff encouraging certain studies or funded spaces only being available on certain courses.

Almost all young people discussed how fortunate they were to be able to study in this way; as such an education was often not generally available to young people. Being able to focus on their education meant these young people from care had more opportunities available to them in their futures. Receiving such an education can also be considered important for inclusion, as not going to school was highlighted in focus group discussions as cause for discrimination.

*“I received formal education and religious education in [the care organisation]. I would not be studying in university like I am now if I still lived in the village” [LH10110 with male care leaver from care organisation 2]*

Despite the educational opportunities that being from care affords to young people, interviews with teachers highlight that a young person’s background (whether living with their family or in a care organisation) can affect the cognitive abilities of youth. Young people from care, they argue, experience more personal issues, relating, for example, to the abandonment from their parents, and that it is difficult to motivate these young people and build up their self-confidence. Teachers believe that in order to ensure good educational attainment for these youth, the school and the care organisation need to help the young people together.

These issues, however, do not only affect youth in care; teachers suggest that for all young people, their socio-economic condition and their parents educational levels effects a young person’s educational attainment and attitude towards education. Young people who live with their parents also face challenges, as they often lack attention and communication from their working parents. Teachers highlighted, therefore, that there was a difference between youth from SOS who lived harmoniously like a family and thus were more disciplined and organised, than youth from other care institutions.

Although significantly less common, some young people themselves also highlighted negative aspects regarding not their access to, but their participation in education. One young person, for example, highlighted that having to attend sponsorship events or events organised by donators *“ruined our school activities”* [LH10113 with female care leaver from organisation 1] as such events were held on school days and attendance was obligatory. For this young person, the effect on their grades was noticeable. A number of youth also discussed the effect that feelings of exclusion had on their participation in school life. One young person stated they did not focus on their studies and rarely went to school as they were *“afraid of being alone”* with both peers and teachers excluding them [S10077 with female from care organisation 1].

Access to good and continued education is considered to be a major benefit of being in care.

## 5.8 Relational movement

As explored in section 2.1, all individuals are going through relational movements throughout their lives, moving from phases of connection and disconnection. However, this research has found that as a result of the multiple transitions (see section 5.6) that young people from care experience, the movements in and out of connection and disconnection are accentuated and intensified.

### 5.8.1 Connectedness in care

As seen above, the youth interviewed in non-SOS care organisations had family who were able and willing to take care of them. These youth also had their phones removed and were only allowed to visit their families once or twice a year. These youth therefore experienced disconnection from their families whilst they were in care and felt excluded from their family lives. Young people found the rule that created their disconnection both difficult to understand and unfair and struggled with this forced period of disconnection:

*“The reason we are not allowed to often go home is that so we can focus on our study. But how can we bear the feelings of missing our parents? The rule is not fair for us but still that is the rule.”* [LH 10113 with female care leaver from care organisation 1]

*“When I missed them, when I did not have money, when I had problems, I did not have my parents around me to talk to”* [LH10100 with female care leaver from care organisation 1]

Furthermore, the experience of disconnection had a lasting effect on youth’s connectivity and relations with their parents, and on their own self-perceptions, where they do not view themselves as like other young people. This perhaps demonstrates why claims are made internationally and nationally that the separation of children from their parents/families should be a last resort:

*“I love my parents. I am thankful for them sending me here. I can go to school, I can live independent at young age. But deep down inside my heart, I wanted to live and grow up with my parents like any other children who lived with their parents.”* [LH10114 with male care leaver from care organisation 2]

Exploring the connectedness of SOS youth during their time in care is more complex, in part due to the complexity of their relationships with their SOS and biological families. Many youth saw their SOS mothers and siblings straightforwardly as their families and so to some degree were in a period of connection during their time in care. However at the same time, many youth felt disconnected from their “normal” (biological) family life, questioning why they were in care and experiencing feelings of rejection (this is explored more in section 5.9). When transitioning to the youth house, these feelings of rejection were usually replaced with a feeling of acceptance of their position as youth in care (albeit with the effect on youth’s identity formation).

In the youth house young people appear to be very disconnected from the broader community. In the focus group discussions both males and females highlighted that they did not know any young people in the area, and so were not able to answer questions on how youth were doing generally. Males highlighted that this was because they live in an office area and so there are not many other young people around. Females highlighted that there were other young people in the area, but that they never communicate with them. Instead, young people maintained the family relationship they had primarily with their SOS mother and some, to a lesser extent, with their SOS siblings. However

these connections were constrained, as young people were physically disconnected from these family relations and many youth did not have the time or the finances to make the journey from Bandung to Lembang to visit their SOS mothers. Youth in SOS thus experience simultaneous periods of connectedness and disconnectedness in different phases of their lives.

The reunification process also highlights another important relational movement that young people experience. In this research, we did not speak to young people for whom the reunification process had been successful and were back living with their biological families. Instead, for the youth we spoke to the reunification process either was not possible (as SOS could not find their biological families) or was not successful. In the latter instances, the reunification process highlights a period of connection with youth's biological family, and then a return to disconnection in this aspect of their lives. Sometimes this disconnection is purposeful on the part of the youth (see section 5.10).

Purposeful separation and disconnection of youth from their families had lasting effects on young peoples' relationships. Youth are generally disconnected from the broader community.

### *5.8.2 Connectedness after care*

Connectedness after care is also a complex issue, as youth experience both connection and disconnection. It is first important to highlight that the social-relational mapping exercises demonstrate that youth had a strikingly small number of connections. These connections primarily consist of caregivers (SOS staff, SOS mothers, care organisation staff, parents), SOS siblings or friends from the care organisation and sometimes a small handful of other friends. This in itself demonstrates that youth from care face exclusion, or at least disconnection, and have very limited access to networks outside of their care organisation. This is further emphasised by youth who have left SOS highlighting that they are not in contact with other young people in the area where they live.

With regard to friendships, one young person highlighted that leaving care meant they were able to spend more time with their friends. This individual had to travel a long distance from the care organisation every day to get to school, and thus, during care, could not socialise with school friends outside of school hours. Generally, however, on leaving care youth experience disconnection from their friendship groups. This is because they were no longer in close proximity to their friends from the care organisation, and thus often lost contact (especially in the cases of non-SOS organisations). It is also because youth have to work to earn money to sustain themselves, often at the same time as studying, which means youth lose the time to socialise.

For similar reasons, some young people from SOS also struggled to stay connected to their SOS mothers and families, as they had neither the time nor money to travel back and forth between the SOS village. However most youth in all organisations stay in touch, at least via messaging, and return to the organisations for special occasions. SOS youth in particular discuss being in frequent contact with their SOS mothers and so maintain their connections on leaving care.

Table 8 depicts who young people would turn to if they needed help (for example financial or emotional) after they had left care:

**Table 8 - Who would youth turn to if they needed help after care (N=44)**

	SOS FBC (n=12) (%)	SOS FSP (n=12) (%)	Care organisations (n=20) (%)
Care staff	66.7	0	40
Biological family	50	91.7	90
(Former) teachers	5	0	2.3
Friends	58.3	83.3	90
Employers	0	8.3	10
Other: SOS Sibling	33.3	-	-

Unsurprisingly, youth from FSP and from the other care organisations are very likely to turn to their biological family. Interestingly they are also more likely to turn to their friends than young people from SOS FBC, who again display that a large number of their connections come from within the care organisation itself.

Importantly, especially for SOS youth, the maintenance of connections after care with caregivers, SOS siblings and friends from the youth house seems to be key way of obtaining employment, with friends setting up businesses together, or youth obtaining more formal employment through former SOS siblings/friends. The importance of connectedness for employment was also highlighted in the focus group discussion vignettes, where youth stated that information about job vacancies was found on social media and through friends, family and neighbours; advice on employment would be obtained from SOS mothers/staff, siblings and friends and it was suggested that a young person from SOS would employ another SOS youth over somebody else, due to a sense of shared backgrounds.

The below quote sums up well the way youth seem to feel about their lives after care; a mixture of happiness and gratitude for the connections and opportunities they have, but a sadness for the connections they are missing:

*“Living my life right now is full of mixed feelings. I am happy because I am still alive and have many people who care about me. I am sad every time I am thinking why I have to live like this but then I tell myself I must be thankful for what I am right now. Not all of the kids out there are lucky like I am.”* [LH10055 with male care leaver from SOS]

### **5.8.3 Relational images**

Relational images are a key part of the relational approach. Relational images can be images in the form of expectations about how you will be treated, based on past experiences (for example a person who was abandoned by their parents believing they could never be loved), or images others hold of you. In Indonesia, the latter seemed particularly important. SOS mothers highlighted that teachers automatically assume children from SOS are “naughty”. SOS staff agree, highlighting “unpleasant labelling” by other parents from the school due to SOS youth being from care:

*“If there is a mistake even it is just a small mistake, they immediately blame SOS children/young people”* [11 with SOS staff]

SOS staff also highlight the effect this can have later on in youths lives, as the label as a “youth from care” for a young woman can mean that her partner’s parents will not accept her and thus the man will break off the relationship.

Young people discussed these relational images to a certain degree. Youth in FSP highlighted that they are also labelled as a young person from care because they frequently visit the SOS village. Those who label them as such believe it means that FSP youth have no money and do not want to socialise with other youth (this latter point is interesting in itself, highlighting that society believes youth in care do not want to socialise; the response to which presumably being excluding them from social activities). Some young people from care also highlighted that in school both their friends and their teachers made assumptions about them being naughty and untrustworthy, and thus youth were excluded from group work and peer activities.

What is noticeable with regard to relational movements is that there seem to be few attempts to encourage youth to socialise outside of their care environments. This has serious implications for connectedness after care and integration into youth’s (new) communities. Activities encouraging community integration should thus be encouraged. This could both help to overcome negative relational images and improve the inclusion and integration of youth both during their time in care and after care.

A lack of focus on encouraging youth to socialise outside of their care environment affects the connectedness and societal integration of youth after care.

## 5.9 Identity formation

This research has found that the multiple transitions and relational movements young people experience, also have an impact on their identity formation. SOS mothers describe how being a child or young person from care brings up problems for some youth as they begin to question their identity: “*who am I, why am I here?*” This is especially true for young people who find out that SOS are not able to find their parents, and thus they can have no contact with them. In these cases, children and young people get into a state of depression and find it difficult to focus on their studies and stop communicating with their SOS mothers. SOS staff highlight that the issues of not being with their family become particularly important around puberty, and it is here that young people’s identity starts to be shaped by this disconnection from their biological family:

*“They eagerly want to know about their parents and it triggers rebellion. They feel they are rejected by their parents and it hurts them so much. So they show it through various behaviours; some young people become introvert and some express their anger in an aggressive way. The fact they are living here caused a huge anger inside them and when they found out they reasons they are here and cannot accept it, they become extremely sad especially for those who have good academic performance. Usually their village mothers will comfort them by saying, ‘I’m your mother’ but it still not easy for the young people to accept it.” [I2 with SOS mothers]*

Youth discuss this effect to a lesser degree. One young person mentioned her shock at finding her biological parents were never married, leading her to question her own identity. Another discussed how, on realising she was a youth from care she lost her confidence:

*“Knowing the truth about myself, at first I had low self-confidence. I started to compare myself and my life with others who are lucky than me and have high social status than me. It took sometimes for me to realise and to understand what happened to me and then finally accept my condition.”* [LH10068 with female SOS care leaver]

Many youth also describe themselves as “introvert” and discuss their lack of friends and social activities, which was also depicted in the social relational mapping exercises; and could perhaps be a result both of the issues surrounding youth’s conception of their identity and their lack of connection with the broader community.

### **5.10 Social exclusion & self-exclusion**

The relationship between social exclusion and self-exclusion has proven to be particularly important in Indonesia. Indeed, as already mentioned, young people (especially from SOS) made this connection between social exclusion and self-exclusion in their definitions of what it means for a person to be excluded. Furthermore, we have seen in the section 5.9 above that when young people start to question their identity, they can become introverted and withdraw from SOS families and school life. A high number of youth from SOS also describe themselves as introvert, discuss how they do not have many friends and do not socialise much and how they are not trusting of other people. In the focus group discussion with young women, it was further discussed how SOS youth do not socialise in their neighbourhood and do not communicate with other people their age; all depictions of youth excluding themselves from society.

Young people also spoke about how feelings of exclusion (both experienced personally in life histories and more abstractly in focus group discussion vignettes) resulted in them or other young people withdrawing from (certain parts of) society. One young person, for example, discussed how she felt she was excluded by her peers because she was from SOS. This resulted in her closing herself off from friends:

*“[It] affected my relationship in which I only have few friends and I do not know much about my society.”* [LH10068 with female SOS care leaver].

In the vignettes, young people discussed how the inability to find a job (exclusion from the job market) can result in a youth excluding themselves from society; with the individual experiencing low self-confidence, desperation, questioning themselves and ultimately “giving up”. Young people also discussed how when an individual is excluded through bullying, they become afraid of speaking up, depressed, and ultimately withdraw themselves from society. This again can be linked to relational images; young people who have experienced exclusion or bullying expect this is how their future relationships will play out and so avoid forming these relationships (self-exclusion) in order to protect themselves from further hurt.

It is important to note that the process of self-exclusion is not always passive, and a result of prior exclusion. Some young people in the process of family reunification also actively self-exclude themselves from relationships and connections with their families, if they perceive these

relationships and connections to be negative. This demonstrates self-exclusion to also be a form of agentic behaviour.

*“Since I found out the truth about myself, one thought crossed my mind; end the family relationship” [LH10084 with female SOS care leaver].*

*“One of the SOS rules is telling the child about their biological parents once the child entering junior high school. So... I went to my hometown to visit my biological family. For the first time, I met my [family]. They lived together... That was the first and the last time I saw my family... I do not have any intention to know about my past. It happened in the past so I just let it go” [LH10055 with male SOS care leaver]*

## 5.11 Outcomes:

### 5.11.1 Human wellbeing:

#### *Social-relational wellbeing*

Young people from care experience multiple transitions throughout their lives. This leads to young people experiencing more, and more intense relational movements. When these relational movements are negative, such as losing family connections, young people begin to question their identity. This can result in young people becoming angry about their identity, or excluding themselves from caregivers, peers and society. Transitions out of care can also result in disconnection, where young people can struggle to balance working hours and leisure activities (including seeing caregivers and friends) and waitness (see below). Social-relational mapping exercises also show that young people have a strikingly small number of connections, which are mainly centred around their care organisations. Beyond engagement with religious-based activities, young people seem to engage very little in society, especially with other young people their age.

#### *Material wellbeing*

Youth, especially those who have left care, generally did not feel they were earning enough to sustain themselves, and thus can be seen as being in a position of waitness.

*“Nowadays it is difficult to earn enough money. If we get a job usually the wage is not enough to support us” [S10077 with female in care organisation 1]*

This resulted in young people worrying about the transition to independence, and in some instances led to youth being unable to maintain connections with friends or former carers as they were not financially able to make the journeys to visit them. However young people did not seem to view this financial instability as a result of being from care, and rather view their time in care as beneficial as it enabled them to receive a good education, as explored below.

#### *Subjective wellbeing*

With a few exceptions, young people did not feel that being in/from care led to their exclusion, and to the contrary often discuss feeling thankful and proud for their time in care, as it enabled them to grow up in a nurturing environment, receive a good education and gave them more opportunities than they otherwise would have had:

*“I am lucky to live in the village. I feel like God showed me the way to fix my life. I thought I came from a broken family but then He gave me a family in SOS and I can feel a mother’s love” [LH10084 with female SOS care leaver]*

*“I received formal education and religious education in [care organisation]. I would not be studying in university like I am now if I still lived in the village.” [LH10110 with male care leaver from care organisation 2]*

*“I’m richer than the other kids around my age. I gained good education, I live in a nurturing environment, I live in a caring family, I have a kind Mama. I get so many lessons to boost my talents... I am so lucky and maybe the kids out there are not as lucky as I am. But as a child I had dream to have a mother and a father but seeing how I live in SOS I finally can I accept myself.” [LH10068 with female SOS care leaver]*

In terms of wellbeing, there is a difference in experiences between FSP youth and young people who are not living with their families; FSP youth do not experience disruptive transitions away from their families and are likely to stay at home for longer. As such, issues of identity may not be such a problem for FSP youth. On the other hand, although FSP youth do receive trainings, particularly for entrepreneurship, FSP youth do not have the same access to higher education as young people from care. According to SOS staff, only one FSP youth so far has got a scholarship for University.

### 5.11.2 Employability

Importantly, young people from care do not consider that their care background affects their chances of them gaining employment; primarily because their employers are not fully aware of their background, nor are they interested in it. Further research is needed to explore the effect that a limited number of connections has on young people in terms of gaining employment, however this research suggests that for young people from SOS youth houses, the contacts that they do have through the organisation with SOS staff and peers are important to youth accessing jobs.

Outside of SOS FBC youth, the majority of young people feel unprepared for finding employment or employment related training, as depicted in Table 9.

**Table 9 - How prepared young people feel to obtain employment (related training), by care type (N=44)**

	SOS FBC (n=12) (%)		SOS FSP (n=12) (%)		Care organisations (n=20) (%)	
	Prepared	Unprepared	Prepared	Unprepared	Prepared	Unprepared
Obtaining employment related training	75	25	66.7	33.3	35	60
Obtaining employment	66.7	33.3	33.3	66.7	35	65

Regarding youth employment more generally, some young people highlight that there are many jobs in employment and entrepreneurship in Bandung and that it is easy enough for youth to get these

jobs, however such jobs do not necessarily match with the range of ambitions that young people have. Other youth suggest that there are not enough job opportunities available and thus too much competition in finding work. Those who do manage to get jobs are people with inside contacts. This is reflected in SOS youth using their contacts in order to obtain a job, but also suggests that due to young people’s very limited networks, they may struggle to have access to a broader range of employment opportunities. SOS staff also highlight difficulties in obtaining work, especially for those who have not gone to university:

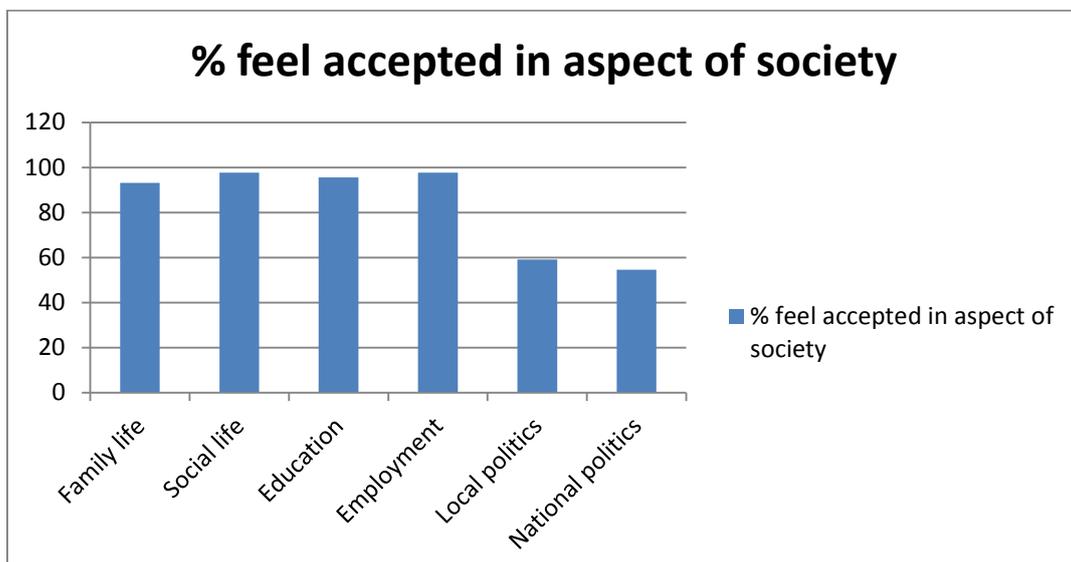
*“Nowadays it is difficult to find a job for high school and vocational school graduates. There are lots of job vacancies for them but the competitions are high in the job market and not all companies can hire them.” [I1 with SOS staff]*

At the time of interviewing, many youth were working in informal jobs as a way of earning a small income whilst they were studying, or worked in hotels and restaurants in the tourism industry. Young people consider the main barriers that they face in terms of having a future of their choosing to be firstly their mind-set, with young people needing to be more motivated, less lazy and study harder. This opinion is interesting as it echoes some of the stakeholder comments that the issue with some young people is that they do not work hard enough, while in fact the youth participants of this study dedicate considerable amounts of their time to education and employment. Such highly generalised comments could risk perpetuating the ‘myth of meritocracy’; encouraging young people to blame themselves for their inability to find work, not recognising the wider societal factors at play (i.e. that there are not enough jobs). The second biggest barrier youth discuss is finances; this can be seen as a result of the focus on young people becoming entrepreneurs that is pushed especially hard by the government representative, but is also encouraged by SOS. The result of this is that young people need capital in order to reach their employment goals: something that most youth do not have access to.

### 5.11.3 Social acceptance

As Figure 3 demonstrates, young people surveyed generally feel accepted in most areas of their life, apart from local and national politics

Figure 3 - Youth who feel accepted in aspects of their lives (N=44)



When this was examined more qualitatively, a minority of young people discussed experiencing discrimination/exclusion based on being from care, however most highlight that their friends and society are accepting of their background, or indeed pay no attention to it. How engaged young people really are with society, however, is a different question. Some young people appear to be very active with religious groups and activities and this appears to be their main form of socialising beyond their care settings. However, youth from the youth houses in both the male and female focus groups described socialising very little with the community around them (to the point where it was difficult for them to answer questions on young people in the area generally). Young females who had left care highlighted that, despite there being other young people around them, they rarely socialised with them. Indeed, young people who have left care frequently return to the SOS village; a positive in terms of connections with their caregivers, but suggesting they engage less with their new communities. As mentioned, the number of connections youth have as derived from the social-relational mapping is also unusually small, and largely based on their care environments.

There are then both positive and negative sides to this story; on the positive side young people do not feel that they are treated any differently by society than other youth and largely feel accepted. This is with the exception of local and national politics, where youth feel that their views are ignored, or simply feel completely unengaged. On the other hand, young people seem unintegrated in the broader community.

## 6. Main Findings & Recommendations

### 6.1 Answering the main research question

In answer to the main research question; how are vulnerable youth affected by social exclusion, in terms of their human wellbeing, employability and social acceptance, young people in general in the care settings in Indonesia, do not feel that being from care automatically results in them experiencing exclusion, with the exception of some youth who discuss being subjected to negative relational images and discriminated against. Indeed youth express a good degree of positivity about their time in care, largely due to the access it afforded them to continue on to higher education.

Young people in general claim to feel socially accepted, however deeper research suggests they have very little engagement with the society beyond their care organisations, even when they have left care, with youth discussing how they rarely socialise with, and know very little about, other young people in their community. This is perhaps because many young people refer to themselves as “introvert”. Interviews with SOS mothers and staff suggest that this is a result of the multiple transitions that young people experience in care, and in turn the increased intensity of relational movements, which can lead young people to question their identity and withdraw from those around them. A lack of connections becomes especially problematic when young people transition into independence. Here, young people enjoy having less regimented daily lives, but struggle with experiencing loneliness and disconnection from their friends and former care givers.

For young people from SOS FBC, the connections that they have are important in terms of finding employment, however as youth discuss that many jobs in the area are found through connections with others, which suggests that the small number of connections young people from care have may limit their access to the wider employment market. Indeed knowledge on how to access employment and employment related training is something that young people require more of. Young people generally feel prepared for leaving care in terms of the basics (cooking and shopping, for example), however only around half feel prepared to find employment, continue their education and find their own accommodation. This, alongside the fact that care leavers generally do not earn enough to support themselves makes the transition to independence further problematic and can leave young people in a period of ‘waithood’.

One element of society that youth feel less accepted in is politics, and, despite the fact that there are policies addressing vulnerable youth in Indonesia, this research shows that there is a substantial gap between policy and practice. The local government seemingly absolves itself of responsibility of vulnerable youth; placing this in the hands of NGOs and private companies without registering or monitoring their activities. This is also true in terms of youth employment, where the local government encourages young people to engage in entrepreneurship and informal work, not recognising the greater instability this will cause for youth, especially vulnerable youth who lack a fall-back position, and the fact that young people do not have the capital needed for initial investment.

## 6.2 Reflections & study limitations

There are a number of reflections and limitations that should be considered regarding this research:

- Indonesia is a huge and highly diverse country, and as such the research cannot be considered representative of the country as a whole. Some SOS staff highlighted that Lembang was chosen as a midway point in terms of the economic and social issues faced in Indonesia, however others highlight that the area is, relatively speaking, quite successful.
- It was difficult to contact young people who have left care, as many have moved away and changed phone numbers. Many of those interviewed were in good communication with the care organisation's staff or their peers and thus may not be representative of all youth who have left care.
- Despite trying to ensure independence from SOS Indonesia, in reality SOS Indonesia became quite heavily involved in the research process, including, for example, arranging interviews on behalf of the in-country researcher. This means that respondents could have considered the research to be a part of, and not independent from, SOS and thus may have resulted in some respondent bias.
- It was highlighted by the in-country researcher that young people found some of the questions difficult to answer. Not necessarily because they did not understand the question, but because they were not used to being asked such direct questions.
- There was a reluctance to discuss more negative issues, for example teachers repeatedly said that they did not want to discuss the negative issues young people face or the issues of "broken families".

## 6.3 Recommendations for care organisations programming and practice in Indonesia

- Better provisions should be in place for supporting and preparing youth in their transition to independence; particularly in providing emotional support and practical support in educating youth on how to find accommodation, further education and employment/employment related training.
- Youth should be positively encouraged with regards to finding employment, and also made aware of the realities of the job market to avoid youth conceiving of themselves as lazy or as failing.
- Activities should be developed to help with community integration; both when youth are in care, to improve community cohesion and reduce negative relational images, and for when youth have left care, to help them integrate and have connections in society.
- Youth should be assisted where possible, and at least encouraged to maintain their social contacts to ensure they have positive connections when they leave care.
- Young people should be more actively engaged in decisions over their lives and their futures.
- Organisations should (continue to) engage in advocacy for the implementation of youth rights and for the government to take responsibility for vulnerable youth.
- Organisations should make youth aware of their rights and how they can claim them.
- Organisations must adhere to protective national and international laws, and only separate children from their family as a last resort.

#### **6.4 National level policy and advocacy on vulnerable youth in and from care**

- Indonesia has a number of policies protecting youth in place. The substantial gaps between policy and practice must be addressed to protect vulnerable children and young people.
- (Local) governments must take responsibility for vulnerable children and youth, to ensure their safety, protection and rights as citizens:
  - All care organisations must be registered and monitored.
  - Records should be kept locally and shared nationally on children and youth entering and leaving care.
  - Support mechanisms should be built for young people transitioning to independence.
- (Local) government must take responsibility for youth (un)employment. Encouraging youth to engage in informal jobs or entrepreneurship is likely to lead to increased instability and exclusion for youth.
- (Local) governments must work to improve the accessibility of quality education, so that all children and young people have access to education and families do not feel obliged to leave their children in care.
- Care organisations, NGOs and ILOs should (continue to) be active in advocating for the implementation of child and youth rights, government responsibility for vulnerable youth and monitoring the protection of vulnerable youth. This should also include making young people aware of their rights and ways of accessing them.

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