



STORY 3

Children and young people's participation in recruitment for the Ombuds Office

June 2024

Introduction

The Ombuds Office for SOS Children's Villages is pioneering new approaches to meaningful child participation by involving children and young people in international recruitment.

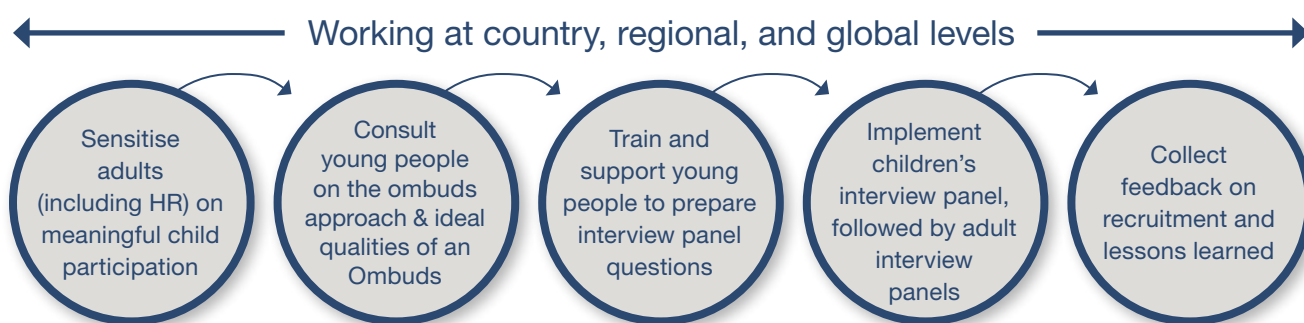
To date, young people have interviewed and shortlisted National, Regional, and Global Ombuds. Their participation has been key to finding and hiring the right people, and to building children and young people's trust in the Ombuds Office. Their involvement also demonstrates that the Ombuds Office is committed to children and young people's participation in decisions that concern them as right holders and actors.

This story shares lessons learned from engaging children and young people in Ombuds recruitment processes. It includes reflections and insights on:

- how children and young people's views have shaped the Ombuds job description.
- best practices for supporting children's participation in recruitment processes.
- the successes, benefits, and challenges of children and young people's meaningful participation in recruitment processes.

Figure 1 provides an overview of the key steps the Ombuds Office takes to involve children and young people in Ombuds recruitment.

FIGURE 1. Overview of key stages in children and young people's participation in the recruitment process



●● “WHAT I LIKED WAS THAT IT IS WE OURSELVES WHO DESCRIBED WHO, WHAT, AND HOW THE IDEAL CANDIDATE SHOULD BE.”

——●● (Youth representative, Benin)

Children and young people's view of an 'ideal' Ombuds

●● “[WE ARE LOOKING FOR] A PERSON WHO CAN LISTEN, GUIDE, AND SUPPORT CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE, DEFENDING THEIR RIGHTS AND RECEIVING THEIR CONCERNS WHEN THEY CONSIDER THAT THESE HAVE NOT BEEN HEARD OR TREATED PROPERLY.”

——●● (Child/youth panel member, Uruguay)

The Ombuds project team held initial consultations with 315 children and young people aged 10–24 years in the Ombuds pilot countries (Benin, Sierra Leone, and Uruguay) and with members of the International Youth Coalition (IYC) (see [Story 1](#)). Participants included children and young people living in SOS Children's Villages alternative care services and those who were part of Family Strengthening Programmes.

An important aspect of the consultations was a Body Map activity in which participants were asked to identify the qualities of an ideal child-/youth-friendly Ombuds (see Box 1).

The qualities of a child- and youth-friendly Ombuds that children and young people mentioned most frequently included:

- **Open-hearted, honest, kind, respects and understands children.** The Ombuds should be a person who believes in children and their capacities and who understands and respects children regardless of their background.
- **Intelligent and educated with knowledge of children's rights and safeguarding.** The Ombuds should be intelligent and should have a good education, ideally with training in a relevant subject such as law, social work, and child or youth issues.
- **An attentive listener with good observational skills and strong communication skills.** The Ombuds needs to be ready to listen attentively to children, to listen to their concerns and complaints without bias or judgement. In addition, they need good observational skills to notice what children are experiencing and to identify children's fears and worries, even when children are unable to express such fears verbally. Strong communication skills were also emphasised for negotiating outcomes based on children's priorities and interests.
- **Responsible and courageous to defend children and their rights, to offer support, and to advocate for and with children.** The Ombuds must be ready to work hard to defend children's rights and best interests. They must be responsible and courageous. They must be ready to support children, to advocate for and with children and young people, and to put children's interests as a primary consideration. The Ombuds should share information with children and young people to enable them to make informed choices.
- **A problem solver, adviser, and influential mediator to resolve children and young people's concerns promptly and effectively.** The Ombuds needs strong problem-solving and negotiation skills. They need to think about children, be ready to solve their concerns, and give advice.

The Ombuds must be a skilful mediator to resolve children and young people's concerns promptly and effectively. They need to be persuasive and influential to help prioritise children's interests, especially when communicating with senior managers and other staff.

- **Committed to respecting confidentiality and acting independently and impartially without bias.** The Ombuds must respect confidentiality and a child's right to privacy. They should not disclose information with those who do not need to know the details. Youth also emphasised that the Ombuds needs to be able to act objectively and impartially.
- **Motivated to visit and spend time with children and young people to build trust.** The Ombuds needs to be motivated to

regularly visit children and young people—to be present—to build their trust. A readiness to spend time with children and young people doing things they enjoy, such as playing games, could help build children's trust and confidence in them.

- **Calm, peaceful, patient, humble, flexible, and non-violent.** To resolve a variety of concerns raised by children and young people, the Ombuds needs to be calm, patient, humble, flexible, and resilient.
- **Able to speak national and local languages.** The Ombuds should be able to speak the national and local languages to enhance effective communication with children and young people.

BOX 1. Example of a body map designed by children sharing qualities of an ideal Ombuds (Benin)



Body Mapping of an ideal child- and youth-friendly Ombuds

In gender-separate groups, children and young people mapped the qualities of a child- and youth-friendly Ombuds

who would be accessible and responsive to their concerns and complaints within SOS Children's Villages programmes. Body parts provided prompting questions, such as:

- **Head:** What kind of knowledge does an Ombuds need to assist and help children and young people resolve their concerns or complaints?
- **Ears:** What sort of ears should they have to listen to children and young people?
- **Eyes:** What sort of eyes should they have to observe and see how children and young people are being treated?
- **Mouth:** What sort of mouth should they have to communicate nicely?
- **Heart:** What qualities and attitudes should an Ombuds have?
- **Shoulders:** What sort of responsibilities should an Ombuds have?
- **Hands:** What practical skills does the Ombuds need to resolve children and young people's concerns or complaints in a timely and effective way?
- **Feet:** Where should the Ombuds be able to go to resolve children and young people's concerns or complaints?

Children and young people emphasised the importance of recruiting a person who had the right values and commitment; who could effectively build trust and communicate with children and young people; and who would stand up with and for them to defend their rights. An IYC member explained:

●● “THIS [OMBUDS] ROLE IS VERY SENSITIVE. YOU CAN’T TAKE APPLES AND MAKE THEM ORANGES. YOU NEED TO TEST THE CHARACTER... DO THEY REALLY VALUE CHILDREN AND THEIR RIGHTS? ARE THEY REALLY GOING TO SPEAK UP FOR CHILDREN? WE REALLY NEED TO MAKE SURE WE ARE TAKING THE RIGHT PERSON. DOES THIS PERSON SUIT THE OMBUDS ROLE? IT IS ALL ABOUT CHARACTER, IT IS HUMAN CENTRED.... IF THE PERSON DOES NOT HAVE CERTAIN VALUES, IF THEY DO NOT VALUE CHILDREN IN THEIR CARE, IT WILL NOT WORK.”

The consultation findings significantly shaped the job description for the Ombuds, especially the National Ombuds’. The Ombuds Office shortlists Ombuds candidates who reflect these essential qualities.

Supporting children’s participation in recruitment

Sincere efforts were made at the national, regional, and global levels to facilitate meaningful and accountable participation of children and young people in the recruitment process. This involved:

- giving children and young people the option to participate in the recruitment training.
- helping children and young people decide who would be on the interview panel.
- supporting children and young people to participate in the interview process.
- soliciting feedback on the recruitment process.
- ensuring child safeguarding policies and protocols were implemented throughout the process.

These efforts, described next, take time and care to implement well.

●● “I APPRECIATE THE WHOLE PROCESS, THE REAL INVOLVEMENT OF THE CHILDREN, BECAUSE WE WERE DIRECTLY IN CONTACT WITH THE CANDIDATES. IT WAS THE BEST THING TO DO AS WE FEEL RESPONSIBLE AND FREE ABOUT OUR CHOICE.”

———●● (Child/youth panel member, Benin)

Training adults and children and young people

The Ombuds Office developed guidance and training materials to equip SOS Children’s Villages and Ombuds Office staff to support the meaningful participation of children and young people in the recruitment of Ombuds at national, regional, and global levels. The materials build upon existing guidance and good practices on effective ways to engage children and young people in recruitment from other agencies.¹ The guidance outlines:

- the benefits of children and young people’s participation in the recruitment process.

¹ See, for example, Participation Works (2008). [Taking Part in Making Decisions Training for 8 to 12-year-olds: Involving Children and Young People in Recruitment and Selection](#).

- key opportunities for children and young people's participation in recruitment.
- brief “good practice” case examples.
- links to training materials.

Training adults, and collaborative planning by adults, children and young people, ensures that children and young people have [space, voice, audience, and influence](#) throughout the recruitment process.

In each location, SOS Children's Villages Youth Participation Advisers introduce, train, and mentor staff from national and regional Ombuds Advisory Groups to apply the guidance and training materials. Following this staff training, national Ombuds Advisory Groups train children and young people in their respective countries. The training is provided to children and young people aged 10–24 years who participated in consultations on the Ombuds approach and who were interested in being part of the recruitment process. Children and youth from existing SOS Children's Villages child participation groups (e.g., Youth Councils) are encouraged to join so they can take their experience back to their respective groups.

Generally, from six to twenty children and young people are involved in the recruitment training. During the training, children and young people develop their own set of interview questions and test them in a mock interview. They decide who would welcome the candidate, how they can put the candidate at ease, and who will ask each question.

Following the mock interview, they refine their questions and identify ways to improve their interview skills.

“I LEARNED THAT TEAMWORK IS BETTER. THE CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE PANEL WHO INTERVIEWED WORKED AS A TEAM AND THAT IS WHY WE WERE SUCCESSFUL IN GETTING GOOD CANDIDATES. I RECOMMEND THAT MORE CHILDREN SHOULD BE INCLUDED IN INTERVIEW PROCESSES IN THE OMBUDS OFFICE AND IN SOS CHILDREN'S VILLAGES IN THE FUTURE.”

(Child panel member)

BOX 2. Example of interview questions developed by children and young people

- Why do you want to work in SOS Children's Villages as an Ombuds for children?
- What are your most cherished principles, and how do they align with the role of an Ombuds?
- Why are you confident that you are the best person for the job as an Ombuds?
- Can you give me a reason why I should trust you if I am a child telling you confidential information?
- A girl reports sexual violence, but there are cultural aspects around what she can share.
- How would the Ombuds solve the problem without causing harm to the child?
- How can you help all children in SOS Children's Villages know how to contact the National Ombuds in their country?
- Do you have any questions for us?

Recruiting ombuds

●● “FROM THE EXPERIENCE OF URUGUAY, I RECOMMEND WORKING WITH NOT TOO LARGE A GROUP [FOR YOUNG PEOPLE’S PARTICIPATION IN RECRUITMENT]. I WORKED WITH A GROUP OF 6 ADOLESCENTS AND YOUNG PEOPLE, REPRESENTATIVES OF 3 PROGRAMMES OF SOS CHILDREN’S VILLAGES URUGUAY. WE MANAGED TO DEVELOP A PARTICIPATORY PROCESS THAT EMPOWERS ADOLESCENTS AND YOUNG PEOPLE, ALLOWING THEM TO HAVE A LEADING ROLE WITH PREPARATION AND REFLECTION ON THEIR PARTICIPATION IN THE SELECTION PROCESS OF THE OMBUDS.”

—————●● (Staff member, Uruguay)

While some recruitment activities can be implemented by larger groups of children and young people—such as developing interview questions—only a limited number of children and young people are nominated by peers to be part of the interview panel.

●● “WHAT I LIKED WAS THAT I WAS ABLE TO TAKE PART IN THIS RECRUITMENT PROCESS AT ALL LEVELS, FROM THE BEGINNING TO THE END. I ALSO APPRECIATED THAT THEY TOOK INTO ACCOUNT ALL OUR [CHILDREN’S] QUESTIONS. THE CANDIDATES ANSWERED OUR OWN QUESTIONS.”

—————●● (Female child panel member, Benin)

During the candidate interviews, one support adult is present with the child/youth panel members to enhance safeguarding, support logistics, and facilitate feedback from the panel members. When recruiting National Ombuds, the recruitment process is facilitated in person. When recruiting Regional or Global Ombuds, it is facilitated virtually.

Regional Ombuds recruitment involves children and young people from at least two countries in the region. For example, participants from Uganda and Ghana were involved in the interviews for the Regional Ombuds for East and Southern Africa. Similarly, children and young people from at least two regions were involved in the Global Ombuds’ recruitment.

In general, children and young people interview three to five candidates for each Ombuds position. After each interview, the panel members give the candidate a score for each question and note their reasons for the score. The panel also provides overarching feedback on each candidate. After all the interviews are complete, the panel shares their view on which candidates have sufficient qualities to proceed (or not) to the next round of interviews with the adult panel.

The panel's overarching feedback on each candidate is insightful, as the following examples demonstrate:

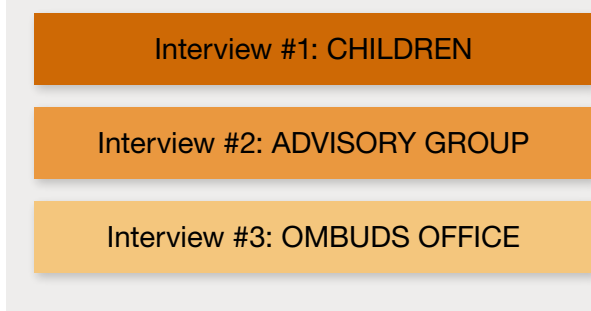
●● “SHE SHOULD GO INTO THE NEXT ROUND OF INTERVIEWS. SHE IS TRUSTWORTHY AND CONFIDENT. SHE SHOULD GO INTO THE NEXT ROUND OF INTERVIEWS BECAUSE SHE HAS LOVE FOR CHILDREN AND SHE IS IMPARTIAL. SHE IS EXPERIENCED AND SHE CAN EASILY RELATE AND COMMUNICATE WITH CHILDREN.”

●● “[THEY WERE] AN IMPATIENT PERSON WHO DID NOT TRANSMIT ANY POSITIVE ENERGY; DID NOT SHOW SELF-CONTROL AND WAS VERY NERVOUS DURING THE ANSWERS; MOST OF TIME AVOIDED THE QUESTIONS ASKED AND GAVE UNCOMPLETED ANSWERS; SHE USED STANDARD SENTENCES LIKE: “I LOVE SOS”, BUT HER BEHAVIOUR DID NOT MATCH WITH WHAT SHE SAID.”

After interviews by the child/youth and advisory group panels, the Ombuds Office interviews the top two to three candidates (Figure 2) and informs children and young people of the final decision.

After the interviews, children and young people provide feedback on their participation in the recruitment process. This contributes to lessons learned and ongoing efforts to improve practice.

FIGURE 2. Interview panel sequence



To acknowledge their contributions, children and young people who were part of the interview panels and/or recruitment training receive a certificate of appreciation (Figure 3).

FIGURE 3. Certificate of Appreciation



●● “I APPRECIATE THE CHANCE TO PARTICIPATE IN THE RECRUITMENT AS IT STRENGTHENS MY COURAGE. IT ALSO ALLOWS ME TO KNOW HOW A RECRUITMENT IS. I NOW KNOW HOW TO RECRUIT SOMEBODY AND HOW TO PREPARE MYSELF FOR A RECRUITMENT.”

——●● (Child panel member, Sierra Leone)

Reflections and insights

●● “DURING THE PREPARATION FOR THE OMBUDS RECRUITMENT PROCESS, I APPRECIATED THE ORIENTATION ON THE OMBUDS ROLE AND OPERATIONS, ALONG WITH COLLABORATIVE TEAMWORK AMONG REPRESENTATIVES THAT WAS SUCCESSFUL. I APPRECIATED THE USE OF INSIGHTFUL INTERVIEW TECHNIQUES.”

——●● (Youth panel member, Sierra Leone)

Successes and benefits

SOS Children’s Villages had prior experience supporting children and young people’s participation in programming and advocacy, but they had very limited experience supporting children’s participation in recruitment processes.

By providing guidance, training, facilitation and mentoring, the Ombuds Office has successfully piloted and scaled-up processes for meaningful participation of children and young people in the recruitment of National, Regional, and Global Ombuds. To date, child/youth panels have interviewed candidates for more than 17 positions spanning five regions.

Across diverse contexts, children and young people have demonstrated that they are interested and competent to organise and run effective interview panels. They consistently provide insightful feedback and systematic scoring that helps identify the most suitable candidate for the job.

Like other organisations that have supported meaningful participation of children and young people in recruitment processes, the Ombuds

Office has identified considerable benefits to the organisation, to children and young people, to staff, and to the candidates who apply.

Benefits to the organisation (Ombuds Office)

- Sends a clear message to children and young people and SOS Children’s Villages staff, management, governance, funders, and partner organisations that the Ombuds Office listens to and considers the views of children and young people in decision-making
- Improves the quality of the Ombuds’ service by selecting candidates whose personal qualities and skills are most suited to the needs of children and young people
- Signals to Ombuds that they are truly accountable to the children and young people they are hired to serve
- Demonstrates respect for children’s right to participate and influence decisions that concern them

Benefits to children and young people

●● “IT WAS US AS ADOLESCENTS WHO POSED THE QUESTIONS THAT WERE GOING TO BE ASKED IN THE INTERVIEWS, AND WE HAD SUPPORT TO DO SO. IT WAS CLEAR [TO ME] WHAT AN OMBUDS HAS TO DO, AS I HAVE EXPERIENCE LIVING IN SOS SINCE I WAS 2 YEARS OLD. IT WAS GOOD BECAUSE MY FEARS WENT AWAY AND I LEARNED AND I FELT LIKE THE BOSS OF MY OWN COMPANY... THE WHOLE PROCESS WAS GOOD.”

——●● (Child panel member, Uruguay)

- Feeling valued because their views, input, and decisions have influenced the job descriptions and recruitment of suitable candidates
- Improves communication and interpersonal skills, as well as interview skills, that are relevant to other aspects of their development and growth and future livelihood
- Gain certificates that recognise their involvement and contributions, which may help with their career development (e.g., resume)

Benefits to staff

“I WAS ALSO IMPRESSED. I LEARNED SO MUCH. I LEARNED THAT IT IS GOOD THAT CHILDREN PARTICIPATE IN [THE RECRUITMENT PROCESS] NO MATTER WHO THEY MIGHT HAVE CHOSEN. WE NEED TO INVOLVE CHILDREN IN RECRUITMENT PROCESSES.”

— (Staff member)

- Recognise children and young people's capacities to play a meaningful role in recruitment processes, which increases staff commitment to support such processes
- Gain new skills for working creatively with children and young people to prepare for recruitment processes and to run their own interview panels
- Build relationships and trust between children and young people and staff
- Gain greater insights into children and young people's views and priorities

Benefits to candidates

“I REALLY ENJOYED THE CONVERSATION WITH THE YOUTHS AND [I AM] STILL READING THE FEW NOTES I TOOK, IT IS MY “FEUILLE DE ROUTE” [ROADMAP] FOR THE FUTURE, AS THEY CLEARLY MENTIONED WHAT THEY ARE EXPECTING FROM ME, IN THE CASE I AM APPOINTED.... I WAS PLEASANTLY SURPRISED BY THEIR OPENNESS AND THEIR ABILITY TO CLEARLY EXPRESS THEIR LEGITIMATE ASPIRATIONS AND EXPECTATIONS. I WOULD LIKE TO CONGRATULATE THEIR SUPERVISORS AND ALL THOSE WHO HELPED TO INTEGRATE THEIR PARTICIPATION IN THIS PROCESS. AS FAR AS I AM CONCERNED, THIS CONVERSATION WITH THE YOUTHS HAS STRENGTHENED MY DETERMINATION TO JOIN THE OMBUDS OFFICE AND TO CONTRIBUTE, TOGETHER WITH YOUNG GIRLS AND BOYS AND THEIR GROUPS, AS WELL AS COLLEAGUES OF OMBUDS, GOVERNANCE STRUCTURES, AND MEMBERS ASSOCIATIONS, IN THE CREATION OF A SAFE AND PROTECTED ENVIRONMENT IN ALL SOS CHILDREN'S VILLAGES AREAS.”

— (Feedback from a candidate interviewed for the Global Ombuds position)

- Opportunities to communicate their values and demonstrate their ability to communicate and interact with children and young people
- Opportunities to interact with and gain the trust of the children and young people that they may be working with and/or providing services for
- Evidence of the Ombuds Office's commitment to place children and young people and their views at the centre

Challenges and lessons learned

“FOR ME EVERYTHING WENT WELL. HOWEVER, I FELT AT SOME MOMENT THAT THE PROCESS WAS TAKING TOO MUCH OF MY TIME. I EVEN HAD TO MISS SOME CLASSES AT SCHOOL.”

————— (Youth panel member)

Several challenges arose during the pilot process that contributed to valuable lessons learned and changes in practice.

Time constraints

Involving children and young people in recruitment requires substantial time investments by children, young people, and staff. The Ombuds Office must ensure everyone is well-prepared for the interviews and the process is safe, well-managed, and equitable. However, there are many constraints that make it challenging to find the time needed to conduct the process well and in a timely way. Children and young people have existing commitments to school, vocational training, work, and/or other after-school activities. This makes it difficult to identify times that children and young people are available for training sessions and a series of candidate interviews. Times that

children are available tend to be after school and on weekends, which are outside of staff working hours, thus requiring flexibility from staff.

“ONE REQUIREMENT OF INVOLVING CHILDREN WAS THAT WE HAD TO WORK ON OUR WEEKEND AS THE CHILDREN ARE NOT AVAILABLE IN THE WEEK.”

————— (Adult coordinator)

Scheduling becomes even more difficult when coordinating international panel members. For example, when planning the Global Ombuds interviews, there was a 4-hour time difference between the child/youth panels in Albania, Uganda, and Kyrgyzstan, and the candidates' time zones also had to be considered. The Ombuds Office identified strategies for managing time resources:

- Support effective collaboration between the Youth Participation focal points, the Child Safeguarding focal point, and the HR focal point to enhance children and young people's participation in the recruitment process.
- Build upon existing child participation processes and structures to collaborate with representatives from child/youth councils and groups.
- Try to schedule interviews during school breaks or on weekends.
- Ensure that recruitment activities end on schedule.
- Plan the recruitment timeline carefully, allowing for delays.
- Communicate the timeline to candidates, explaining that they will be interviewed by a child/youth panel, and keep them updated on any changes.

Flexibility is needed

The preference is for candidates to be interviewed by the child/youth panel before the adult panel so that children's preferences determine which candidates continue to the next round of interviews. However, flexibility is needed. For instance, if more than five candidates were shortlisted, or recruitment was unsuccessful and needed to be repeated, the Ombuds Advisory Group was encouraged to undertake the first round of interviews so the child/youth panel had fewer candidates to interview.

It is also preferable for interview planning sessions and interviews to be in person, but this was not possible for regional and global interview processes. Consequently, children and young people met online to prepare for the interview and conduct it with their peers in other countries. This requires extra effort, particularly where internet and electricity infrastructure are weak. The Ombuds Office learned that:

- A support staff person should be designated to manage ICT logistics.
- The most stable internet options should be identified and made available.
- The child/youth panel and support staff should meet online 15 minutes early to ensure the meeting links, cameras, audio, and internet are all working.

Despite efforts to support internet access for the regional and global recruitment processes, stable internet was problematic in some regions. Children and young people expressed their preference for in-person rather than virtual interviews with candidates.

“THE INTERNET CONNECTION WAS POOR, THE SIGNAL WAS BREAKING. SOME OF THE INTERVIEWEES WERE NOT TALKING CLEARLY. WE ONLY KNEW WHAT THEY WERE SAYING WHEN THEY TYPED THEIR ANSWERS IN CHAT.”

(Youth panel member)

Child Safeguarding

Attention to child safeguarding is essential to the safe and meaningful participation of children and young people in recruitment processes. The Ombuds Office and SOS Children's Villages Advisory Groups took practical steps to implement child safeguarding policies and principles during the recruitment process through:

- discussions and planning around risk identification and mitigation.
- collaborative planning with the Child Safeguarding focal point and the Youth Participation focal point.
- seeking informed assent/consent from children and young people to be part of the recruitment process and informed consent from caregivers for children under 18 years.
- having child/youth panel members only share their first name and not mention where they live during candidate interviews.
- encouraging child/youth panel members to connect to online interviews via an SOS Children's Villages email rather than through their personal email.
- ensuring that candidates are informed in advance that they will be interviewed by a child/youth panel and have them sign an agreement not to share any details about the young people or attempt to contact them after the interview.

Logistical support

Piloting children and young people's participation in recruitment in Benin, Sierra Leone, and Uruguay generated significant learning about the logistical support needed. For example, while we know that young people need refreshments during training and interviews, feedback from one country revealed that no one had planned for this. The Ombuds Office updated its guidance and planning to include an explicit focus on this practical detail.

The Ombuds Office also learned that providing each child/youth panel member with a printed version of their interview questions and score sheets would make the interview process and scoring go more smoothly.

Language and translation are a critical logistical consideration. In contexts where child/youth panel members speak the same language, it is relatively easy for them to develop their questions and run interviews. Where panel members are working in two languages (e.g., English/French), the provision of a professional translator supports effective collaboration (synchronous translation is ideal). However, it is quite challenging when communication is needed in three or more languages. For instance, when preparing for the recruitment of the Regional Ombuds in the Europe, Central Asia, and Middle East (EUCM) region, interpretation was needed in Russian, Arabic, and English. Two languages should be the maximum to minimise costs and facilitate smooth collaboration.

To enhance safe and meaningful participation, logistical support needs to include arranging and budgeting for:

- accessible, safe venues and/or transport for children and young people for in-person trainings and interviews.

- access to stable internet for virtual training and interviews so panel members can keep their video on and communicate more effectively with eye contact and facial expressions.
- water and refreshments during and following the trainings and interviews.
- printed interview questions and score sheets that included the specific questions that were developed by each group of child/youth panel members.
- translators, if child/youth panel members speak languages that are different from each other or the candidate.

Timely feedback

It is critical to provide children and young people with timely feedback on recruitment decisions. They should be notified before, or at the same time as, a public announcement is made – not after. As a matter of respect, they should be notified through direct communication and not via public sources.

It is also important to show appreciation for the time they invested in training and interviews, for example, with Certificates of Appreciation (Figure 3). This should be done immediately after the final interview. When young people give a significant amount of time, for example, by serving on more than one panel, other forms of compensation or recognition should be considered given the time invested.

The Ombuds Office requests feedback from all children and young people who participate in the recruitment interviews and/or trainings. This is facilitated by the Ombuds HR Coordinator and staff who supported the recruitment process. The newly appointed Ombuds should not facilitate this as young participants may not feel comfortable speaking openly about how successful they thought the outcome was (or wasn't).

Conclusion

Overall, children and young people's participation in the recruitment of Ombuds at the national, regional, and global levels has been extremely successful. Despite the challenges, all actors have expressed their interest and commitment to scaling-up such opportunities both within the Ombuds Office and more broadly within SOS Children's Villages.

For the Ombuds Office, children and young people's participation in recruitment is an exciting innovation that:

- recognises children's rights to express their views and be heard on decisions that affect them.
- demonstrates that it is listening to children and young people when they share their views on the type of person they need in the Ombuds role.
- ensures children and young people vet the candidates who will be in direct contact with them, listening and helping them resolve concerns.

- increases children and young people's skills and confidence.
- signals to Ombuds they are accountable to the children and young people who selected them and whom they serve.

This promising practice holds great potential to strengthen safe recruitment processes and child safeguarding by increasing child participation and accountability to children and young people.



Read the other stories in this series to learn more about child participation in the Ombuds Office for SOS Children's Villages.



STORY 1:
Children and young people's participation in the design and implementation of the Ombuds Office



STORY 2:
Learning from children and young people about barriers and enablers to sharing concerns

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