



Bidaya Kawiya: Supporting Careleavers to be Active Moroccan Citizens

UN Committee on the Rights of the Child Day of General Discussion: Children's Rights and Alternative Care

Fondation Amane pour la
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The Bidaya Kawiya Project

Bidaya Kawiya was about preparing young people to leave institutional settings by adopting the **pathways system** to provide individual assessments and resources for careleavers. We achieved this by practicing **relational social work** which focused on building empathetic relationships. Our social work was complemented with **life skills training** for living independently in order for careleavers to have the ability to integrate into society based on their personal goals and strengths. We also conducted **active citizenship** workshops for careleavers to learn about their rights and responsibilities as young Moroccans and be able to access the full potential of their citizenship. Lastly, we developed the **first Arabic language website**¹ for careleavers to ensure the lessons learned in our project were able to be shared with a wider audience.

Careleavers in Morocco

How Many Children in Institutions?

We estimate that approximately **one in every thirty children in Morocco are currently in institutional settings**. In the 12 years between 1999-2010, UNICEF² reported that the figures of children in institutional settings increased by 175 percent, almost 15 percent each year. In 2017, UNICEF reported that there were 242,801 children in institutional settings in Morocco. *Table 1. Children in Institutional Care in Morocco* illustrates the ways we were able to use these figures to estimate that there are currently 424,660 children in institutional settings in Morocco – 3.5% of the total population of children under the age of 18. In 2021, it is estimated that 10 percent of these young people (over 40,000) are between the ages of 16 to 21 and each year these young people are asked to leave Moroccan institutions and expected to live independently without any material, social, familial, or psychological support. Within the Bidaya Kawiya project, we focused on these young people in order to support them to prepare for independent life.

¹ www.bidayakawiya.ma

² UNICEF. (2014). *Situation Des Enfants Et Des Gemmes Au Maroc : Analyse Selon L'approche Equité*. UNICEF Maroc: Genova.

Table 1. Children in Institutional Care in Morocco

Year	Total number of children in institutions	Children entering institutions (15%)	Estimated Careleavers (10%)
2017	242,801	36,420	24,280
2018	279,221	41,883	27,922
2019	321,104	48,166	32,110
2020	369,270	55,390	36,927
2021	424,660	63,669	42,466

Why are Children Entering Institutions in Morocco?

Without any adequate social services for children and their families, there is a high risk of children experiencing abuse, neglect, abandonment, and subsequently institutionalisation. Firstly, the lack of employment opportunities for women and increasing rates of poverty, coupled with the growth of Morocco as a sex tourism destination and illegality of sex outside of marriage, has led to an increase in the rates of women entering sex work and having unplanned births.³ Secondly, this is compounded by the illegality of voluntary termination of pregnancy in Morocco and the social, cultural and institutional stigmatisation of children born outside wedlock.⁴ ⁵ Thirdly, a lack of social services for children and families means that family breakdown is common, especially when children are born outside wedlock or families feel that they can no longer provide care.⁶ The lack of social services and an integrated child protection system in Morocco has also resulted in the increase of abuse and neglect of children,⁷ child labour (latest reports estimate 247,000 are involved in work in 2017),⁸ street-connection,⁹ and child and/or forced marriage.¹⁰ Furthermore, when children are found unsupervised in the street they are tried under the penal code. A lack of a specific child protection code in the Moroccan legal system means that these children enter the juvenile justice system and are consequently

³ Kouyoumjian, S. P., Mumtaz, G. R., Hilmi, N., Zidouh, A., El Rhilani, H., Alami, K., & Abu-Raddad, L. J. (2013). The epidemiology of HIV Infection in Morocco: systematic review and data synthesis. *International journal of STD & AIDS*, 24(7), 507-516.

⁴ Bargach, J. (2002). *Orphans of Islam: family, abandonment, and secret adoption in Morocco*. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers.

⁵ Schlumpf, E. (2016). The legal status of children born out of wedlock in Morocco. *Electronic Journal of Islamic and Middle Eastern Law (EJIMEL)*, 4(22), 1-26.

⁶ Buchler, A., & Schneider Kayasseh, E. (2018). Fostering and Adoption in Islamic Law-Under Consideration of the Laws of Morocco, Egypt, and the United Arab Emirates. *Electronic Journal of Islamic and Middle Eastern Law (EJIMEL)*, 6, 31-56.

⁷ Essabar, L., Khalqallah, A., & Dakhama, B. S. (2015). Child sexual abuse: report of 311 cases with review of literature. *The Pan African medical journal*, 20, 47.

⁸ UNICEF. (2019). *Situation Des Enfant Au Maroc: Analyse Selon l'approche équit *. UNICEF Maroc: Genova.

⁹ Kaplan, V., &  uhadar, D. (2020). The levels of anger and aggression in street children with substance dependence. *Journal of child and adolescent psychiatric nursing*, 33(4), 239-247.

¹⁰ Sabbe, A., Oulami, H., Zekraoui, W., Hikmat, H., Temmerman, M., & Leye, E. (2013). Determinants of child and forced marriage in Morocco: stakeholder perspectives on health, policies and human rights. *BMC international health and human rights*, 13(1), 1-12.

institutionalised.^{11 12} At its core, it is a lack of state-sponsored safeguarding and alternative care legislation and programmes that contribute to the high rates of children and young people entering institutional settings.

Being a Careleaver in Morocco

The Bidaya Kawiya project and the careleavers it supported are best understood relative to the experience of young people in institutional settings in Morocco. These institutions settings consist of:

- Child Protection Centres (CPC) managed by the Ministry of Youth and Sport
- Residential centres managed by the government ministry, Entraide Nationale
- Residential centres managed by various Civil Society Organisations
- Dar Talib boarding houses managed by Entraide Nationale, Ministry of Education, and Civil Society Organisations.
- There are not any child prisons, though children in conflict with law are placed in a wing of their local adult prison, or they are sent to their local CPC mentioned above.

The variety of institutional settings in Morocco leads to a diversity of care experiences for careleavers relative to their pre-care experiences, care histories, aspirations, and abilities. What careleavers do share however is a significant risk to their physical, cognitive, and social development.¹³ Too many young people are likely to have experienced further movement and disruption during their time in institutional settings and some have been abused or ill-treated. For those in institutional settings longer term there is often a weakening of links with family, friends, and neighbourhood, resulting for some young people in identity confusion stemming from incomplete information, separation, and rejection.^{14 15} Significantly, careleavers are forced to navigate the transition from childhood to adulthood on their own, and within the Bidaya Kawiya project we aimed to think

¹¹ Bencomo, C. (2005). Inside the home, outside the law: Abuse of Child Domestic Workers in Morocco. *Human Rights Watch*, 17, 12.

¹² M'jid, N. (2005). The situation of unaccompanied minors in Morocco. *Regional conference on migration of unaccompanied minors: acting in the best interests of the child*. Malaga: Council of Europe.

¹³ Nelson, C.A., Zeanah, C.H., & Fox, N.A. (2007). The effects of early deprivation on brain-behavioral development: The Bucharest Early Intervention Project. In D. Romer, & E.F. Walker (Ed.), *Adolescent psychopathology and the developing brain: Integrating brain and prevention science* (pp. 197–215). Oxford: Oxford University Press.

¹⁴ Stohler, R., Storo, J., Vincent, D., Wade, J., Schröder, W., Zeller, M., & Dumaret, A. (2008). *Young people's transitions from care to adulthood: international research and practice*. London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers.

¹⁵ Saunders, N., & Fell, M. (2012). The challenges of supporting young people transitioning from care in rural Victoria. *Developing Practice: The Child, Youth and Family Work Journal*, (33), 112-117.

of an approach to working with careleavers which balanced providing support and ensuring the young person was still able to learn, make mistakes, and grow independently.

What is Pathways?

In Bidaya Kawiya we developed the Pathways assessment process to support careleavers prepare for independent life. We have drawn on multiple international studies to develop our pathways tools, including the Scottish Pathways Assessment Tools;¹⁶ the childrens rights framework developed in Moving Forward;¹⁷ ¹⁸ the Australian CREATE your future tools,¹⁹ and a collection of global best practices.²⁰ ²¹ ²² Pathways is about acknowledging the diversity of interlinked aspects of a careleavers life that are integral for the successful journey to independence. Pathways is a starting point in the process which allows for the other needs and particular issues that the young person and social worker may need to address to be focused on. The focus of Pathways is on gathering views of careleavers, identifying their needs, planning action in collaboration, and reviewing their progress cooperatively (*Figure 1. The cyclical process of pathways*). Rather than a single intervention or event, Pathways provided the framework to ensure that relevant areas were covered as part of the overall assessment and planning process. It included several assessment documents, a case management system, and an avenue for young people to take control and own their care plans.

¹⁶ Scottish Government (2004). Guidance on completing Pathways folder. Barnardo's Scotland and the Scottish Throughcare & Aftercare Forum. Retrieved from <https://www.webarchive.org.uk/wayback/archive/20150220010115/http://www.gov.scot/Publications/2004/05/19357/37092>

¹⁷ Cantwell, N.; Davidson, J.; Elsley, S.; Milligan, I.; Quinn, N. (2012). *Moving Forward: Implementing the 'Guidelines for the Alternative Care of Children'*. UK: Centre for Excellence for Looked After Children in Scotland. (Retrieved April 8, 2013) <http://www.alternativecareguidelines.org>

¹⁸ Quinn, N., Davidson, J., Milligan, I., Elsley, S., & Cantwell, N. (2017). Moving Forward: Towards a rights-based paradigm for young people transitioning out of care. *International Social Work*, 60(1), 140-155.

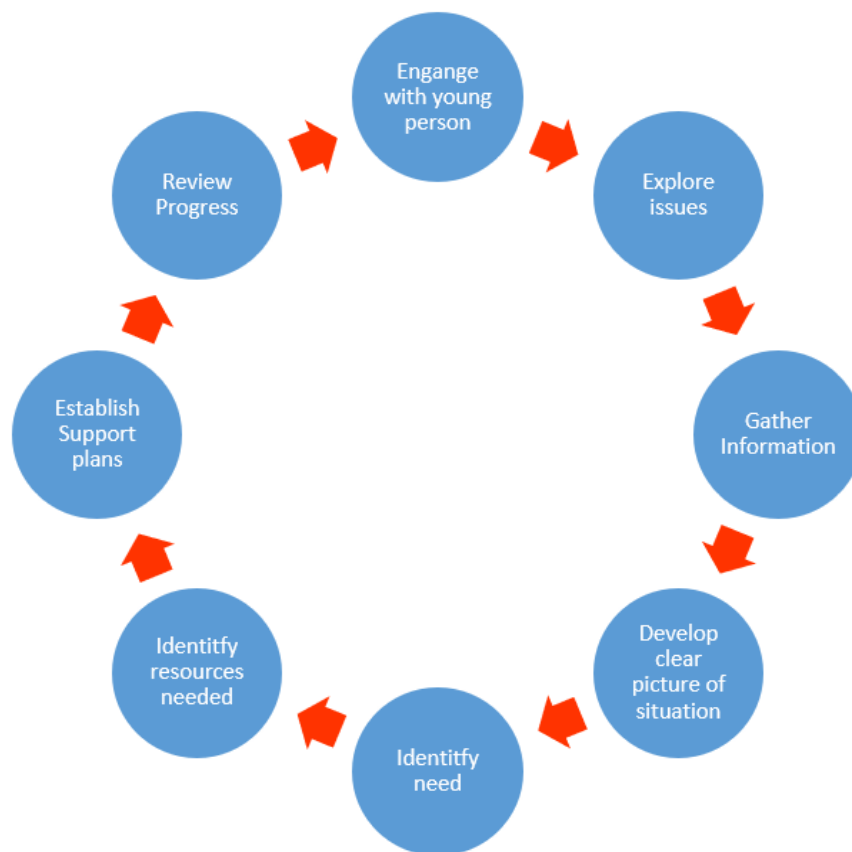
¹⁹ Australian Government. (2010). CREATE: What's the Answer? Young peoples solutions for improving transitioning to independence from out of home care. Canberra: Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs.

²⁰ Atkinson, C., & Hyde, R. (2019). "Care leavers' views about transition: a literature review". *Journal of children's services*, 14(1), 42-58.

²¹ Stein, M. (2019). Supporting young people from care to adulthood: International practice. *Child & Family Social Work*, 24, 400-405.

²² Mendes, P., & Snow, P. (2016). *Young People transitioning from Out-of-home Care: International Research, Policy and practice*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.

Figure 1. The cyclical process of pathways²³



Life Skills Training

We provided life skills training to careleavers throughout the project in order to complement the individual self-assessment process of Pathways. Many studies have pointed to the way young people require opportunities for practical experience in being independent before leaving care (e.g. making their own medical appointments, washing clothes, time management calendars).²⁴ We found the life skill workshops to be a vital complementary aspect to the Pathways process in the Bidaya Kawiya project, and even more so that the Pathway sections completed independently with careleavers served as a guide to the social workers in implementing the necessary life skills activities.

²³ Adapted from Scottish Government (2004); p. 7.

²⁴ Ibrahim, R.W. (2016). Care Leavers Looking Back on Residential Care Experiences in Jordan. In T. Islam, & L. Fulcher (Ed.), *Residential Child and Youth Care in a Developing World: Middle East and Asia Perspectives* (pp. 125-140). Cape Town: CYC-Net Press.

A Holistic Approach

The holistic approach adopted in Bidaya Kawiya ensured our life skills workshops complemented our Pathways. In our end of project evaluation, we conducted questionnaires with all young people in the project who affirmed the benefits of the holistic approach we adopted. Questions were asked of careleavers comprehensions or confidence in the below life skills when beginning and completing the pathways process (Table 2). We used simple questionnaires that utilised scales of 1-5 to determine the effectiveness of life skills workshops. Table 2 provides the average score of careleavers answers to questions about their confidence and comprehension of life skills before Pathways and skills workshops and the score at the end.

Table 2. Impact of Pathways and Skills Workshops

Survey Questions	Pre	Post
I reflect on my living conditions and know how to live independently	1.5	4.1
I know how to manage my time	1.6	5
I can cook for myself	2.3	4.9
I can wash my clothes	2.7	5
I can support myself and friends with basic first aid	1.8	5
I understand the importance of budgeting	1.5	5
I know how to write a CV	1.5	4.8
I know how to find a job	1.7	5

The Pathways and life skills workshops lead to a clear improvement in the confidence and comprehensions of life skills to prepare for independent life. Importantly, it was found that both interventions complemented each other. The results from the questionnaire were showed a clear correlation between those young people who did not complete a section of the pathways and only participated in the corresponding workshop, and their confidence/competence in that skill at the conclusion of the project. Alternatively, there was also a similar correlation when careleavers did not participate in the workshops and only completed the Pathways. Together, the questionnaire results illustrate the ways young people in institutional settings require both a clear assessment and reflective tool like the Pathways as well as an opportunity to apply and develop their

skills and experiences in a practical setting, such as life skills workshops. *Table 2. Impact of Pathways and Skills Workshops* clearly demonstrates the positive impact the coalescence of such adopting a holistic approach on the development of the practical and social and cognitive skills required for careleavers to live independently.

Being Active Citizens

At its core, Bidaya Kawiya is about providing young people the opportunity to fulfil the complete potential of their citizenship and access their basic citizen rights. Citizenship is a contested term, and in Bidaya Kawiya we decided to support young people to become active citizens of their communities by supporting them to form their interpretation of what it means for them to be an active Moroccan citizen. It was decided by careleavers that being an active Moroccan citizens required they promote and influence the discourse about careleavers as well as the qualities of active citizenship. Therefore, we decided to support careleavers to create and disseminate a collection of videos about being active Moroccan citizens. The following messages were designed by the youth and their videos can be found on the Bidaya Kawiya Website.²⁵

Table 3. Careleavers Active Citizenship Videos

Title	Message
Supporting People with Disabilities	It is our responsibility to provide people with disabilities opportunities within the community
Supporting Women Prisoners	Minimising the stigma of women in conflict with the law
Childrens Access to Rights	Children should be aware of and be able to access fundamental human rights such as identity, education, health.
Public goods	Respecting public goods within our communities and preserving public spaces

Dissemination

A Website for Careleavers

The successes in the work of Bidaya Kawiya risked being constrained to only those in our project without proper mechanisms of dissemination. In order to ensure our work was accessible and could endure after the

²⁵ <https://bidayakawiya.ma/ar/الاندماج-في-المجتمع-و-تكون-مواطن-نشط>

project's completion we created the Bidaya Kawiya website.²⁶ The website is a digital space where we have provided care leavers in Morocco the opportunity to freely access information on ways of preparing to leave care and have the ability to fulfil the full potential of their citizenship. Significantly, it is **the only website in the Arabic-Speaking world providing information for careleavers and those that work with careleavers and consists of the following areas of focus;**

Table 4. Contents of Website

Main Page	Subtopics
Preparing to Leave Care	Planning for the Future; Obtaining Official Registration; Being Active Citizen; Keeping a Record of Important People
Living Skills	Time Management; Cleaning, Cooking, and Shopping; Managing Relationships
Learning & Education	Computer Skills; Enrolling in School
Work	Finding and Preparing for a Job; Writing a CV
A Place to Live	Renting an Apartment; Living in a Shared House
Money	Budgeting; Opening a Bank Account
Health	Making an Appointment with the Doctor; Drugs and Alcohol; Healthy Habits such as Maintaining a Healthy Diet, Exercise, and Personal Hygiene; Sexual Health; Support for Careleavers with Disabilities
Contacts	We provided contacts to services and professionals for careleavers throughout the 12 regions of Morocco.

The website also contains a **dedicated section for professionals working with careleavers** to access pathways assessment tools, a comprehensive guide to completing pathways, and training in working with young people in institutional settings.

Raising Awareness

Bidaya Kawiya developed and disseminated a collection of awareness raising videos. Videos informed the general public and professionals on the situation of careleavers in Morocco and aimed to attract young people to the website. Videos were diffused over a three-month period through Facebook, YouTube, and other digital media platforms. We currently have almost 300,000 views across three videos which consist of:

²⁶ <https://bidyakawiya.ma>

Video 1 – “We have all been there, now imagine doing it alone”²⁷

Target	General Community
Issue	Careleavers are stigmatised in the community and their stories/needs are ignored
Reason	They are unprepared to leave care and fall into a cycle of poverty and social isolation
Purpose	Educate the general community about the reality of leaving care and the challenges faced
Message	Careleavers are a valuable part of the community and as Moroccans we can empathize with their experiences of “becoming an adult”

Video 2 – Having a Plan and Pathway²⁸

Target	Careleavers and vulnerable youth
Issue	Careleavers leave care without a plan and end up in poverty and social isolation
Reason	Careleavers do not have the resources to prepare for leaving care
Purpose	Highlight to careleavers the importance of having a plan
Message	Our website will help you gain those resources and create your own plan

Video 3 – Supporting Careleavers²⁹

Target	(Non)government service providers working with careleavers
Issue	Actors either are unaware of or choose not to work with careleavers
Reason	They do not have the resources or knowledge of ways of working with careleavers
Purpose	Draw actors to access the resources on our website
Message	Working with careleavers is important and we have resources to support you on our website

²⁷ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9nHLrEa2wTA>

²⁸ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pmQfZ3DIPHQ>

²⁹ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mL2PzgetQ8E>

Recommendations

The recommendations from our experiences in Bidaya Kawiya were formed through a participatory process. In order to form the recommendations of this report we have drawn on surveys with careleavers in the project, a focus group with frontline staff, interviews with partners of the project, and our project activities. Triangulating the information gathered from these multitude of sources ensured we were able to reflect on the strengths and weaknesses of our project as well as be confident in the efficacy and importance of the recommendations we provide. The recommendations in Table 5 are framed under corresponding articles of the CRC (1989)³⁰ and are hoped to spark further conversation during the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child Day of General Discussion regarding Children’s Rights and Alternative Care.

³⁰ Convention on the rights of the child (1989) Treaty no. 27531. United Nations Treaty Series, 1577, pp. 3-178. Available at: <https://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/crc.aspx> (Accessed June 3 2021).

Table 5. Recommendations of the Bidaya Kawiya Project

Article	Recommendation
<p>7 – A child’s right to be cared for by a parent 9 – The separation of children from parents</p>	<p>The establishment of an integrated child protection system in Morocco which brings together the different government bodies to provide social care and protection to ensure all Moroccan children have the opportunity to remain with their birth families if possible, be active citizens, and fulfil the full potential of their citizenship.</p>
<p>20 – It is the state’s responsibility to provide alternative care</p>	<p>The establishment of proven alternative care avenues, such as foster care, must be introduced as a key preventative measure to reduce the rates of institutionalisation in Morocco. There is no legislation for foster care as an alternative care option and in our first government backed foster care program we have been forced to rely on informal relationships developed with judges in our region who are able to interpret the 2004 Family Code, the Kafala Act of 2002 (15.01) and several articles of the Code of Criminal Procedure (471, 481, 510 and 512) to allow children to be placed with a foster family.</p>
<p>25 – Children in care must have their circumstances periodically reviewed</p>	<p>Pathways must be a requirement for all institutional settings to begin with children in their care from the ages 14, including the life skills activities, practice of relational social work, and the complete pathways assessment.</p> <p>Legislation must be introduced which professionalises the social workforce who work with careleavers which outlines social workers rights and responsibilities as well as standards of practice for the social work profession.</p>
<p>37 – No child should be deprived of their liberty</p>	<p>Young people leaving care must be provided subsidised housing, healthcare, and legal care as well as a dedicated trained social work professional.</p> <p>Young people must be given access to birth registration, and it be a requirement of all institutional settings to obtain birth registration for those in their care within the first three months of them entering their care.</p> <p>The state must fund and promote community-based activities for young people who have left institutional settings to counter social isolation and stigmatisation.</p> <p>The state must provide subsidised skills-based training for young people in institutional settings.</p> <p>The state must provide subsidised educational tutoring for young people in institutional settings.</p>