



Key Messages Booklet

October 2021



**SOS CHILDREN'S
VILLAGES**



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Introduction

This booklet is intended as a communications aid for all partners and colleagues of the SOS Children's Villages federation.

It provides an at-a-glance overview of who we are as an organization, presenting the key messages that unify our approach despite the cultural and contextual differences that define the environments where we work.

Why we are here

As a child, you need someone who truly sees you – who stands by you no matter what. Someone who holds you close when you are small and believes in you when you are ready to grow into your own and step into the world.

But today, 1 in 10 children and young people are separated from their families, abandoned, neglected or forced to live in an abusive environment, growing up without the support they need to prepare themselves for their future. The effects often last a lifetime, creating a harmful cycle that repeats from one generation to the next.

Together, we are here to break this cycle and to prevent it from happening in the first place.

Where they have lost their voice, we help them find it again. Where they have lost the ability to trust and connect with others, we show them that they belong. And where they lack confidence, we build up their courage and skills to thrive in the future.

Who we are

We are the world's largest organization focused on ensuring that children and young people without parental care or at risk of losing it grow up with the care, relationships and support they need to become their strongest selves.



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Who we are here for

Children and young people without parental care or at risk of losing it.

Today, 1 in 10 children and young people are separated from their families, abandoned, neglected or forced to live in an abusive environment, growing up without the support they need to prepare themselves for their future. At a global scale, 1 billion children and young people experience neglect, physical, sexual or emotional violence every year.¹ Furthermore, the number of children in need is on the rise due to the impact of poverty,² geo-political conflicts and natural disasters.³ We are there for these individuals no matter where they find themselves in their journey; starting with young children who need care and protection all the way to young adults who need support while making the transition to self-reliance.

Sources

- 1) World Health Organization, Fact Sheet, Violence Against Children (June 2020), [who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/violence-against-children](https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/violence-against-children).
- 2) World Bank Group-UNICEF (October 2020), Global Estimate of Children in Monetary Poverty: An Update.
- 3) UNICEF, Child Displacement (September 2021), data.unicef.org/topic/child-migration-and-displacement/displacement.

What we do

We believe that truly bonding with a child has the power to change the world.

At SOS Children's Villages, we do whatever it takes to ensure that each child and young person grows up with the bonds and healthy relationships they need to become their strongest selves and thrive in the future. To that end, our locally led operations in more than 130 countries and territories work to strengthen families experiencing hardship so they can stay together. When staying with their family is not in a child or young person's best interest, we provide them with quality care and support adapted to their unique needs, experiences and culture.

We believe that truly bonding with a child, as a parent, sibling, caregiver or mentor, has the power to change their world. Our work centres around the strength of human connection and focuses on showing children and young people that they belong no matter who they are. A positive and supportive childhood empowers children to develop the life skills, resilience and

support networks they need to set personal goals and move confidently into self-reliant adulthood.

We also speak up for and defend each child's rights, advocating for policy and practice changes that improve child and family welfare systems on global, regional and national levels. Our goal is to ensure that one day, all children grow up in a supportive and empowering environment. Therefore, in everything we do, we work to ensure that children and young people have agency over decisions affecting their lives.

Our 70 years of experience shows that when children in our target group are able to thrive in spite of the traumas they may have endured, they are more likely to contribute positively to their communities and, if they have children, to be good parents themselves. In this way, the work made possible by our many donors and partners not only impacts hundreds of thousands of children and young people today, it also helps to ensure a brighter future for generations to come.

Our approach

At the heart of our approach sits a keen understanding that each child and young person is unique – they have unique needs and experiences, and they possess an individual potential for impacting the world. We believe it is essential for every child to have a say in the care and support they receive which is why, in everything we do, we work to ensure that each child and young person's voice is heard. To this end, our broad range of programmes and services are designed to adapt to different individuals, cultures and contexts.

Our experience shows us that children, young people and their families thrive best when they are part of a strong community. As such, our programmes are almost exclusively led by local community members, and whenever possible, they are also designed to integrate with and strengthen their surrounding communities.

We believe that our vision of breaking the cycle of child neglect, abuse and abandonment can only be achieved through collaboration. To that end, we regularly partner with corporations, governments, institutions and individuals in all corners of the globe – sometimes for fundraising, other times for joint projects – but always with a strong mutual commitment to making a difference for children and young people in our target group.



Our priority

We are here for children and young people no matter their background, experience, culture, heritage, religion, sexual orientation, political alignment, gender, disability or origin.

They are our priority and we do whatever it takes to ensure that they grow up empowered with trust and a feeling of belonging.

Though our organization is expressly non-governmental, non-political and non-denominational, our work is adapted to local contexts and customs, as it must be in order for us to reach those who need our support.

Children's rights

Children's rights are universal and inalienable. We work to realize these rights, focusing specifically on children's rights in the context of supporting families facing difficulties, on preventing child-family separation, and on children's rights in alternative care. Our work is directly guided by the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Guidelines for the Alternative Care of Children, and the 2019 UN Resolution on the Rights of the Child focusing on children without parental care.

We support children and young people in raising their own voices, speaking out alongside them to protect their rights in debates, frameworks and policies on the global, regional and national level.



Keeping siblings together

When families are separated, children and young people frequently lose connection to their brothers and sisters, a particularly difficult and often traumatizing experience that can have life-long implications on those affected. After all, siblings, especially those close in age, have the longest lasting bonds within a family; sharing many life experiences, both positive and negative.

At SOS Children's Villages, we work to ensure that siblings are able to grow up together whenever it is possible and in their mutual best interest. We recognize that siblings often play important, emotionally anchoring roles in each other's lives, not only impacting each other's well-being, sense of belonging and self-esteem, but also acting as pillars in each other's support networks.



Our values

Courage

We take action

We have challenged traditional methods of care and continue to pioneer innovative child-care approaches. We help children who have no one else to turn to. With a sensitive yet confident approach, we are determined to question, learn and take action for children around the world.

Commitment

We keep our promises

We are dedicated to helping generations of children have a better life. We do this by nurturing lasting relationships with our donors, our staff and the communities in which we are rooted. We believe that by making a long-term commitment we have a meaningful and sustainable impact.

Trust

We believe in each other

We believe in each other's abilities and potential. We support and respect one another, and build an environment where we can approach our responsibilities with confidence. In an atmosphere of trust, we are inspired to share our experiences and learn from each other.

Accountability

We are reliable partners

Our greatest responsibility is guaranteeing the well-being of children by ensuring high standards of care. In doing this we are committed to using all funds and resources wisely, with respect and accountability.



Our heritage

In the post-World War II era when Europe was rebuilding both its physical and social infrastructure, Hermann Gmeiner, Maria Hofer, Josef Jestl, Ludwig Kögel, Herbert Pfanner, and Hedwig Weingartner recognized a problem: thousands of children had lost their families and the infrastructure of the time presented them with the prospect of an institutional childhood in large-scale orphanages.

Together, these six individuals decided to make a difference and in 1949, founded the Societas Socialis - SOS - in Innsbruck, Austria. Under their guidance, the organization and its many volunteers pioneered an innovative new model of alternative care that focused on providing children with reliable, family-like relationships that created security and a real place of belonging.

Their initiative was highly successful and the organization grew quickly, becoming the Global Federation of SOS Children's Villages International in 1963. Over the past 70-plus years, we have supported close to 4 million children and young people through a wide and ever-evolving range of programmes that are adapted to contextual and cultural needs.

Today, our locally led operations in more than 130 countries and territories work to strengthen families experiencing hardship so they can stay together. When staying with their family is not in a child or young person's best interest, we provide them with quality care and support adapted to their unique needs, experiences and culture.

By the numbers

Sources: SOS Children's Villages International Annual Reports,
SOS Children's Villages 70 Years of Impact, and
YouthCan! Facts and Figures

Who we reached

Annual average (2017-2020)

- 1,165,900 people in 2,730 programmes

Cumulative (1949-2019)

- Over 13 million people through direct and indirect impact

Family strengthening programmes

Annual average (2017-2020)

- Available in 112 countries
- Supported 330,000 children and young people in 87,000 families
- A total of 436,000 people, including parents

Cumulative (1949-2019)

- A total of 3,700,000 children and young people supported

Alternative care programmes

Annual average (2017-2020)

- A total of 73,100 children in alternative care
- 45,200 children in family-like care
- 4,800 children in foster care
- 1,650 children in small group homes
- 21,500 young people in 650 youth care programmes
- and 2,539 children reintegrated with their families

Cumulative (1949-2019)

- 255,000 children supported through family-like care

YouthCan!

2020 figures

- Available in 37 countries with 1,500 volunteers from 6 global partners and 232 national partners to support 6,500 young people

Cumulative

- More than 14,000 participants since 2017

Other programmes

Annual average (2017-2020)

- 295,500 children, young people and adults supported with health services
- 209,800 children, young people and adults helped through emergency response programmes
- 165,500 children reached through education programmes
- 16,700 young people and adults supported through employment and entrepreneurship training

Our staff

Annual average (2017-2020)

- 40,000 employees* including 9,100 direct caregivers in 136 countries and territories across 6 continents around the world

* The figure represents average full-time equivalents

Impact

Source: SOS Children's Villages 70 Years of Impact

Breaking the cycle through care

90%

The care that former participants have received carries into the next generation: 90% give good care to their own children, breaking the cycle of separation & abandonment

Securing basic needs

90%

90% of former participants generally have adequate accommodation, food security and health – covering their most basic needs

Enabling self-reliance

60%

60% of former participants have received education and skills, are succeeding in the job market and earn a decent living

Building a foundation for a happy life

80%

80% of former participants are leading happy lives – experiencing social and emotional well-being, and being safe from discrimination and other harm

Social return on investment

for every

€1

invested into SOS Children's Villages' programmes

€5

returned to society in benefits



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For more information, please refer to the following documents:

- SOS Children's Villages Brand Foundation
- SOS Children's Villages Brand Regulation
- SOS Children's Villages Messaging User Guide
- SOS Children's Villages Care Promise



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If you have any questions regarding the content of this booklet, please write to:
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Thank you!



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