

SOS CARE PROMISE IMPLEMENTATION REPORT 2020



SOS CHILDREN'S
VILLAGES
INTERNATIONAL

A loving home for every child



Preface

Children have the right to grow up in a family. However, 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 of this often last a lifetime, creating a harmful cycle that repeats from one generation to the next. The devastating impact of the COVID-19 crisis on millions of children, young people and vulnerable families is likely to make matters worse in the coming years.

At SOS Children’s Villages we have made a promise: the promise to do everything in our power to ensure that every child and young person grows up with the bonds they need to become their strongest selves – be it in their family of origin or, if this is not possible, in an alternative care setting providing a family environment and high quality care.

In over 130 countries, SOS Children’s Villages provide a locally relevant response to break the cycle of child neglect, abuse and abandonment. The SOS Care Promise has now been guiding us as our central programme policy for over two years. It enables us to live up to the right to quality care as outlined in our guiding external frameworks: the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Guidelines for the Alternative Care of Children, and the recently adopted 2019 UN Resolution on the Rights of the Child, focusing on children without parental care. The nine care commitments of the SOS Care Promise challenge us to constantly improve our work for children, young people and families. The central message of the SOS Care Promise is unambiguous and serves as a constant reminder to all of us: in everything we do, the best interests of children and young people must be our primary concern.

Over the past two years, SOS Children’s Villages member associations across the globe have achieved tremendous progress in implementing the SOS Care Promise. We can proudly state that we have become better at what we do – despite often operating in situations where the political, socio-economic and environmental conditions are highly



Gitta Trauernicht

challenging. Today, more programmes offer a range of prevention and alternative care options. More children can thrive under the care of their family of origin thanks to our family strengthening approach and our support for reintegration. More young people in alternative care are equipped with the employability and life skills needed to succeed in their futures. More care professionals have benefitted from training and development opportunities allowing them to do their job even better than before.

The present implementation report sheds light on these and other accomplishments and also highlights areas where more efforts are needed. The quest for quality care is never complete but is an ongoing journey. The next step in this journey is a particularly challenging one with the manifold consequences of the COVID-19 crisis being felt in every single programme. In such unprecedented times, it is all the more important that we remain committed to the promise we have made. Children, young people and families need quality services more than ever. Together we can overcome this challenge. Together let’s keep our SOS Care Promise!

Gitta Trauernicht
Vice-President



Michael Pörtl

Michael Pörtl
COO

Table of contents

PREFACE	2
TABLE OF CONTENTS	3
INTRODUCTION	4
COMMITMENT 1: We focus on children without adequate parental care	6
COMMITMENT 2: We position the SOS Children’s Village as a programme for child care and protection	8
COMMITMENT 3: We promote family strengthening and strong gatekeeping, and ensure the best care option for every child	10
COMMITMENT 4: We create a safe environment for children in all our programmes	12
COMMITMENT 5: We promote and continuously strengthen the care profession	14
COMMITMENT 6: We enhance the integration of SOS families and vulnerable families in community life	16
COMMITMENT 7: We provide individual support to achieve goals, improve gender equality and increase impact	18
COMMITMENT 8: We promote education, participation and steps to independent life	20
COMMITMENT 9: We partner for supporting services and advocate for quality care	22
LIVING THE SOS CARE PROMISE during the COVID-19 crisis	24
SUMMARY AND OUTLOOK	26

IMPRINT
Responsible for content
SOS Children’s Villages International
Programme and Strategy
Hermann-Gmeiner-Straße 51
6020 Innsbruck
Austria
<https://www.sos-childrensvillages.org/>

Graphic design: Manuela Ruiz
Cover image: Alejandra Kaiser | Guatemala
Date of publication: June 2020

© 2020 SOS Children’s Villages International
All rights reserved

Introduction

The SOS Care Promise¹ is SOS Children's Villages' global programme policy outlining both what we do and how we do it. In its essence, the SOS Care Promise is a commitment to quality care for every child and young person in our programmes. Developed in a federation-wide participatory process, the policy reconfirms our principles and values, and specifies the minimum quality expectations we strive to meet wherever we work.

Since its approval by the International Senate in April 2018, the federation has focused extensively on bringing the SOS Care Promise to life and making it a reality everywhere. Programme quality has received considerable attention from management. The SOS Care Team, which consists of federation and regional leaders, meets regularly to reflect on programme quality and take action to improve it. The SOS Care Promise is also regularly discussed in national directors' meetings as well as in national management team meetings, with a strong focus on adapting the implementation to meet local challenges and realities.

To support SOS Care Promise implementation, a range of tools has been made available globally:

- An SOS Care Promise **e-learning** course² available in English, French and Spanish introduces SOS employees to the key content. By February 2019, the course had been successfully completed by 5,000 SOS employees across the globe.
- The SOS Care Promise **self-assessment** tool³ encourages local programme teams to reflect on the quality of their work and to systematically identify steps for continuous improvement.
- A set of **SOS Care Promise indicators**⁴ linked to minimum quality requirements outlined in the policy enables programme quality to be monitored in real time at a local, national, regional and global level.

¹ See [SOS Care Promise in 6 languages](#)

² See SOS Care Promise e-learning course: [English](#), [French](#), [Spanish](#)

³ See [SOS Care Promise self-assessment tool in 5 languages](#)

⁴ See [SOS Care Promise indicator report](#)

This SOS Care Promise implementation report provides a status update on where our federation stands in terms of implementing our nine care commitments as of May 2020. For each commitment, it presents the major implementation steps, the key results achieved as well as remaining challenges that need increased attention in the future. Examples from practice from across the federation illustrate how specific member associations have successfully put a commitment into action.

At the time of writing this report, the consequences of the COVID-19 crisis were hitting hard on the children, young people and families in our programmes. SOS member associations across the globe were in the middle of finding local responses to the challenging situation. Major programme issues and local initiatives addressing these issues are presented in the chapter "Living the SOS Care Promise during the COVID-19 crisis".

Throughout the report, data from various sources, mostly from our programme database, is presented. Small inaccuracies in the data are inevitable as our federation is constantly improving systems and data quality with the aim to create a strong evidence-base for decision-making at all levels.



COMMITMENT 1

We focus on children without adequate parental care

Through our first commitment we ensure that we concentrate our work on children and young people without or at risk of losing parental care, who are living in vulnerable circumstances. According to our estimates⁵, over 220 million children worldwide belong to this group. Our aim is to reach as many of these children as we can to enable them to grow up in a caring family environment.

In 2017, our federation carried out a programme review of over 1,700 services across all regions. One objective was to analyse the relevance of our interventions. The findings showed that one in four services could increase their impact by focusing on the right target group in a more systematic way⁶. Often the needs and the external environment have evolved over time and the services were no longer as closely focused on our target group as they used to be.

Based on this outcome, over 200 programme services have already taken action and more will follow⁷. The region of Western and Central Africa (WCAF), for instance, has carried out a target group review in all 18 member associations (MAs). To ensure that programmes are relevant to our target group, actions were taken to align the programmatic focus with our target group and to handover or close those that are not relevant.

During the programme review, we also assessed our education and healthcare facilities. More than 200 units (out of approx. 600) were recommended to be phased out (90 kindergartens, 79 schools and 47 medical units). A large majority of them were recommended to be handed over to trustworthy partners that ensure access for our target group and are able to maintain a high

quality service delivery. Since 2017, almost 70 education and health units were phased out and for more than 50 additional units the transition is currently in progress⁸.

In 2019, our target group received unprecedented attention on the global level: Children without parental care are the central theme of the United Nations (UN) General Assembly resolution on the Rights of the Child. With all UN member states having officially committed to the importance of quality child care and protection, this has the potential to create huge momentum in favour of our target group. SOS Children's Villages was one of the drivers for the resolution and will continue to work hard to bring the content of the resolution into national and local policies, laws and practices.

1,700
programme services reviewed
across the federation

200
programme services have
already taken action to improve
target group focus



ETHIOPIA: VISIBLE IMPACT DUE TO STRONG FOCUS ON OUR TARGET GROUP

The area surrounding the SOS Children's Village in Jimma is characterised by high child vulnerability, with an average of two or three abandoned children reported to the authorities every day. Children lose the care of their parents for a number of reasons, the main ones being parental death due to various diseases and birth complications, poverty, unwanted pregnancy, high frequency of divorce, etc.

The programme identified their local target group through a needs assessment. The first step in this assessment was to identify the areas where child vulnerability was highest. This was done based on existing information and data provided by the local authorities. In a second step, the programme team

worked closely with an external evaluator to gain more information on the care situation of children and young people in the most vulnerable areas of Jimma. Based on the results, the team decided on possible interventions responding to the needs of the target group.

There may be cases within the target group, which SOS cannot address due to a lack of financial resources or expertise. In such situations, the programme informs the responsible authorities who then refer the child to other service providers who are best placed to offer a tailored response. SOS Children's Village Jimma may support these service providers through capacity-building, if the resources and expertise allow.

⁵ *Child at Risk. The target group of SOS Children's Villages*, SOS Children's Villages International, 2016.

⁶ *Tracking of implementation of programme review recommendations*, Programme Planning Team, International Office, data as of February 2020.

⁷ *Ibid*

⁸ *Ibid*



LATVIA: LEVERAGING CARE EXPERTISE TO STRENGTHEN THE FOSTER CARE SYSTEM

Since 1997, SOS Children's Villages Latvia has been offering SOS family care. When the de-institutionalisation process started in the country and foster care gained momentum, SOS Children's Villages Latvia decided to leverage the expertise in SOS family care and engage in developing the foster care system in the country. In this way, SOS Children's Villages helped to extend the range of alternative care options offered, which enabled a better response to the individual situations of children and young people in need of alternative care.

The team started promoting the PRIDE programme – a standardised, structured framework for recruiting, selecting and preparing foster parents and adoptive parents. Its purpose is to strengthen the quality of foster care and adoption services. SOS Children's Villages Latvia presented the

programme to the government and other non-governmental organisations (NGOs) operating in the field of childcare. Amongst other things, the team organised exchange visits to Finland and the Czech Republic to show successful foster care systems based on PRIDE.

Thanks to the cooperation with the state and NGOs, new laws were introduced which led to considerable changes in the alternative care system. In total, 16 specialised foster care agencies operated by NGOs have entered the sector. They provide support for foster families, guardians and adoptive parents, ranging from recruitment and training to ongoing support while the child is living in a foster family. In 2018, SOS Latvia opened five new agencies, offering services to 401 foster and adoptive parents and guardians, and 561 children.

COMMITMENT 2

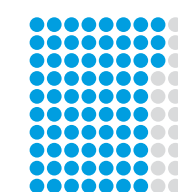
We position the SOS Children's Village as a programme for child care and protection

Our programme is always tailored to the local situation of our target group and is an integral part of the overall child care system of a community. Our local teams design the programmes in such a way that they can best respond to the needs of children, young people and families.

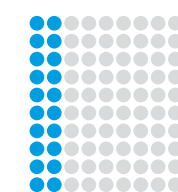
With the adoption of the SOS Care Promise and in line with our Strategy 2030, we have continued to shift from a facility-based perspective to a service-based perspective that enables more flexibility to respond to a variety of needs. Numerous member associations have started diversifying the services they offer. Today, our efforts to prevent child-family-separation are an important part of the SOS Children's Village – in 73% of our programmes, family strengthening is an integral part of what we do. 20% of programmes already offer three or more alternative care options⁹.

The most common options are SOS family care, kinship care, foster care and small group homes. Short-term care services to provide a temporary response for families in a crisis situation are also being offered in an increasing number of MAs. In Latin America and Europe, member associations have responded to the rising number of refugees by also offering services for unaccompanied and separated children and young people.

This growing flexibility in our programme design enables us to accommodate the specific care needs of more children and young people. Through our 5 strategic priorities 2021-2024, SOS Children's Villages has renewed its commitment to increasing the focus on contextualising our programmes to the local realities of our target group.



73%
of programmes offer **family strengthening services**



20%
of programmes offer **3 or more alternative care options**

⁹ SOS Children's Villages Programme Database (101 member associations included, EUNA region excluded), data as of March 2020.

COMMITMENT 3

We promote family strengthening and strong gatekeeping, and ensure the best care option for every child

Every child in our programmes shall grow up in the care setting that is most suitable for them. To ensure this, a well-functioning gatekeeping system is essential. Governments are responsible for making sure that such a system is in place. However, as SOS Children's Villages we also have an important role to play with specific responsibilities depending on the legal context and the capacities of public authorities.

With the SOS Care Promise, the federation has taken a big step towards strengthening gatekeeping. In 2019, a global policy support document¹⁰ was published that serves as the basis for the development of national gatekeeping guidelines. More recently, and e-learning course has been launched enabling employees to develop a better understanding of this crucial topic¹¹. All regions have held workshops to train member associations in gatekeeping. Despite the COVID-19 crisis, MAs are on track to develop their nationally-contextualised guidelines, which includes carrying out an analysis of the national gatekeeping process and outlining SOS Children's Villages role in this process. A noteworthy development has taken place in Kenya, where SOS Children's Villages has been cooperating closely with the government of Kenya to develop nationwide gatekeeping thereby improving the gatekeeping system of the whole country. Linked to gatekeeping, we are also living our commitment to strengthen families and maintain strong links between children in alternative care and their families of origin.

According to the latest figures, 81% of children in alternative care who are in contact with their family of origin have a (mostly) positive relationship with their family of origin¹². Our experience across regions shows that progress in preventive policies and services is necessary, but not always enough to serve all children who have lost or are at risk of losing parental care. It is therefore crucial that child care systems offer a range of care options and that well-functioning gatekeeping systems ensure the most suitable care option for every child.

New family strengthening (FS) services have been started in Asia, Latin America as well as Africa – always involving the local community. On the downside, several regions report that public funds to expand their work in FS are low compared to alternative care. This hinders them from investing more in preventing child-family separation. The latest UN Resolution on the Rights of the Child re-emphasises the necessity of effective family-support systems, which will hopefully spur public investment in this area.

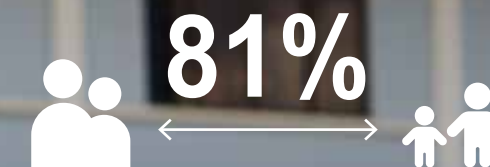


All SOS member associations are developing their national gatekeeping guidelines

¹⁰ See [gatekeeping policy support document in 5 languages](#)

¹¹ See [gatekeeping e-learning course](#)

¹² SOS Children's Villages Programme Database (101 member associations included, EUNA region excluded), data available for approximately 15,000 children, data as of March 2020.



of children in alternative care have a **good relationship with their family of origin**



CAMBODIA: EMPOWERING FAMILIES TO OVERCOME CHALLENGES


Throughout Cambodia, many families are suffering from chronic poverty, low-quality health care, malnourishment and other rights violations. These factors often put children at a significant risk of child-family separation. SOS Cambodia's family strengthening services support families to build their parenting skills and overcome challenges.

The specific activities are always adapted to the actual needs in a community. Trainings on topics such as child rights, preventing gender-based violence and effective household management as well as income-generating activities boost parents' confidence and skills. SOS also encourages and

supports families to form self-help groups where they can jointly find solutions to common problems. To increase awareness of child rights, SOS employees organise workshops for children and young people from vulnerable families. Over 1,200 participants have attended the trainings to date.

Intensive collaboration with the government and other service providers is a crucial success factor in family strengthening. In this way, SOS Children's Villages can tailor the services to the families most in need and coordinate activities effectively with partner organisations.



85% 
of **children** have received
a **child protection training**

8,500
employees have completed
the introductory child safeguarding
e-learning course

SIERRA LEONE: LEARNING FROM THE PAST THROUGH THE INDEPENDENT CHILD SAFEGUARDING REVIEW (ICSR)

SOS Children's Villages makes every effort to protect the children in our programmes from harm. However, sometimes we did not succeed and some children and young people experienced abuse or rights violations. As a federation, SOS Children's Villages has the responsibility to look into these failures of the past and learn from them.

The child safeguarding case in Sierra Leone was one of the more serious cases in SOS's history. Internal actions such as providing support and counselling to the victims, cooperating with law enforcement, taking disciplinary action against the perpetrators and providing trainings to staff and programme participants were put in place. Nevertheless, many questions remained unanswered. For this reason, the case was selected as the first country in the Independent Child Safeguarding Review.

The key learnings of this review are that SOS Children's Villages must:

- match programmatic interventions, support and oversight with the risk profile of a member association
- improve overall programme quality to reduce the risk of child safeguarding incidents including ongoing training for care professionals
- enforce child safeguarding responsibilities across the federation
- offer opportunities for recovery and reconciliation

The success of the ICSR will only be determined once the remaining country case reviews have been carried out and the lessons learned are used to improve programme quality and accountability across the federation.

COMMITMENT 4

We create a safe environment for children in all our programmes

In commitment 4 we promise to ensure that all children in our programmes are safe at all times. SOS Children's Villages has made important progress to minimise and manage child safeguarding incidents in the last decade, and has further reinforced efforts since the approval of the SOS Care Promise. The new Online Whistleblowing Channel provides an additional way for programme participants, staff and members of the public to share concerns in a non-bureaucratic and safe way. The Incident Reporting Platform facilitates information sharing between national associations (NAs), the General Secretariat (GSC) and promoting and supporting associations (PSAs), providing up-to-date information on the status of child safeguarding incidents.

Prevention is a crucial part of our safeguarding work. 85% of children and young people in alternative care have undergone a child protection training raising their awareness and training them on how to react if abuse occurs¹³. The child safeguarding e-learning courses increase understanding and improve staff ability to apply reporting and responding procedures. So far, over 8,500 employees from 119 member associations have completed the introductory course. Specific trainings provided to SOS caregivers are described in commitment 5.

In 2018 and 2019, the development sector was shaken by allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse, and the failures of management and boards of international non-governmental organisations (INGOs) to respond adequately. Reports suggested that organisations were acting in contravention of their commitments, insufficiently enforcing accountability and promoting an organisational culture that prevents people from speaking out.

These developments led many INGOs, including SOS Children's Villages, to become more transparent and disclose their global child safeguarding incident data¹⁴, a move that was well received by our partners and peers. Through the new sexual misconduct regulation, SOS Children's Villages aims to ensure that programme participants, staff, volunteers and partners are free from sexual harassment, exploitation and abuse arising from the misconduct of staff or any other person acting on behalf of the organisation. It also confirms SOS Children's Villages' commitment to respond in a professional, objective and timely manner to all forms of sexual misconduct.

According to the latest child safeguarding survey, there is an 83% global compliance rate with the minimum child safeguarding requirements¹⁵. There are particular gaps in planning child safeguarding activities, which includes, for instance, conducting local mapping, reflecting on the lessons learned from reported child safeguarding incidents and taking into account inputs from children and young people. We must combine all our efforts to close this gap and ensure that all SOS Children's Villages member associations comply fully.



¹³ SOS Children's Villages Programme Database (101 member associations included, EUNA region excluded), data as of March 2020.

¹⁴ See [Annual Child Safeguarding Report 2018/2019](#)
¹⁵ Annual Child Safeguarding Survey 2019

COMMITMENT 5

We promote and continuously strengthen the care profession

Empowering care professionals is one of the crucial responsibilities of our organisation. In 2019, the SOS Parent Profession User Guide¹⁶ was developed. This guide supports member associations in their work with SOS parents and SOS aunts/family assistants. Based on this, a detailed “Learning & Development Framework for SOS parents” is being developed in 2020, focusing on providing learning and development opportunities for SOS parents in order to meet the requirements, competences, and career steps of the modernised job profile.

Enabling SOS parents to combine their professional and private lives is a key commitment of SOS Children’s Villages. As of 2019, 29 member associations in ASIA, WCAF, Eastern and Southern Africa (ESAF), Latin America (LAAM) and Central and Eastern Europe (EUCB) completed their assessments of biological children of SOS parents and put support measures in place. In 76 cases, SOS mothers and their biological children were reunified and now live together in an SOS family¹⁷. In other cases, programmes provide specific support measures such as inviting biological children during weekends and holidays.

The regional care networks continued to be great platforms of exchange and capacity building in the regions of LAAM, EUCB, WCAF and Middle East and Northern Africa (MENA). They offered training-of-trainers in concepts such as “Protective Behaviours” and “Positive Discipline”. To date, over 2,000 care professionals and over 6,500 children and young people have participated in “Protective Behaviours” trainings, and around 30 MAs have organised trainings in “Positive Discipline”¹⁸.

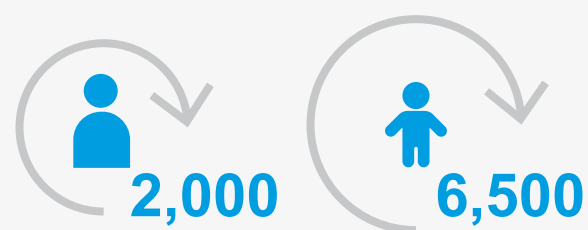
¹⁶ See [SOS Parent Profession User Guide in 5 languages](#)

¹⁷ Internal project monitoring, child care and safeguarding team, data as of February 2020.

¹⁸ Ibid.

A new guideline defining fair and transparent compensation and benefits for SOS parents is also under development. Until it is finalised, the priority is to focus on those SOS parents with a current retirement income which is below the local cost of living.

Despite these various efforts, a great deal remains to be done in the area of strengthening care professionals. Several regions report that challenges remain in recruiting SOS parents as well as in ensuring adequate working conditions, which are a prerequisite for building stable and reliable relationships between caregiver and programme participants. Furthermore, the closure of training centres in some regions have reduced the training capacity making it difficult for MAs to provide trainings in the desired quantity and quality.



Over 2,000 care professionals and over 6,500 children and young people participated in “Protective Behaviours” trainings

30 member associations have held trainings on positive discipline



FRANCE: TRAINING OF CARE PROFESSIONALS AS A STRATEGIC PRIORITY

SOS Children’s Villages France follows a systematic training approach for care professionals. The main objectives are to continuously build the skills of SOS parents, offer development opportunities and increase retention. The approach consists of the following stages:

- **1st YEAR:** Ongoing mentorship, including on-the-job training
- **2nd YEAR:** Four weeks of training on the foundations of child care spread over the year
- **3rd YEAR:** Training sessions on selected topics, depending on the needs of the care professionals.

The trainings are guided by four core values, which care professionals translate into action when working with children and young people:

- Promoting and respecting child rights
- Bonding and developing emotional ties
- Providing long-term support
- Treating others well

The outcomes of this programme are highly positive: 90% of participants have indicated that the training programme helped them develop their skills. During the first year, the SOS mother and family assistant turnover rate dropped from 33% to 20%.

The following factors were crucial for project implementation:

- The management’s willingness to position the training programme as a strategic priority
- Development of a competence-based management culture through tools such as professional talks or competence reviews
- Operational trainings based on individuals’ daily experiences



PERU: SOS FAMILIES AS ACTIVE PARTICIPANTS IN COMMUNITY LIFE

In 2006, SOS Children's Villages Peru decided to build independent family houses in a community in Ayacucho. The main aim was to provide children with equal development opportunities and allow them to settle better into their community. This integration model has received a lot of recognition from government authorities.

From the beginning, SOS parents and family assistants living in independent family houses actively participated in improving their environment. They established contact with mothers in the community

and joined neighbourhood associations, which allowed them to take part in community decisions. Some SOS mothers have even started to take the lead in community activities.

SOS Children's Villages also actively involved the community in events they organised and, in turn, SOS parents joined events organised by the community. As a result, children have developed social skills and a sense of belonging to their community. More young people have been able to receive higher education, gain scholarships and find employment.

COMMITMENT 6

We enhance the integration of SOS families and vulnerable families in community life

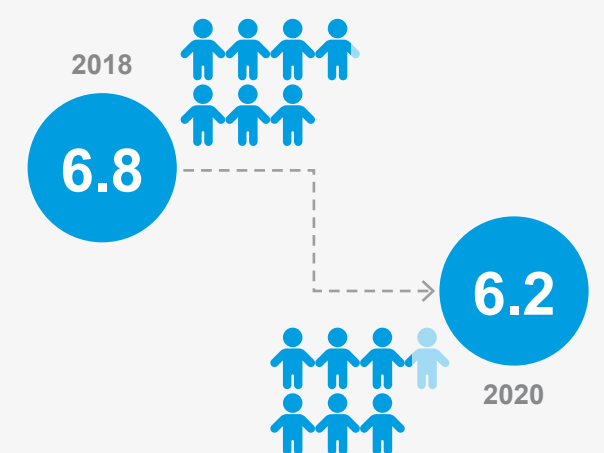
For children and young people, growing up as members of a community is crucial for their development. Commitment 6 is about taking steps to improve the social integration of SOS families.

A local action tool¹⁹ has been developed to enable programmes to find locally contextualised ways to promote social integration. The tool encourages a joint reflection process for programme locations by enabling young people, SOS parents and programme management to critically analyse local obstacles to integration and to agree on a range of measures to improve it.

All regions have carried out measures to foster social integration and to fight institutional features where these still exist. For instance, increasing numbers of MAs are transforming their youth care approach by moving away from youth facilities and caring for young people in SOS families, small group homes or in semi-independent living arrangements. While this is likely to facilitate social integration, some regions experience an increased risk of peer violence if young people stay in SOS families longer. Training care professionals to handle this risk effectively is crucial.

In SOS family care, we see a global trend towards a lower average number of children per family. Currently, there are approximately 5,100 SOS families registered in our programme database with an average number of 6.2 children per family in 2020 compared to 6.8 in 2018²⁰. Despite this positive general development, significant variations between countries remain. However, the overall trend can be seen as one important element making our work with SOS families even more family-like, something which will also facilitate the social integration of children growing up in this care setting.

More and more member associations are organising the set-up of SOS Children's Villages in such a way that the physical location of SOS families facilitates social integration. To date, 10% of all SOS family houses are located in the community. A number of member associations in EUCB, ESAF and WCAF have carried out evaluations of the outcomes of physical integration on children. The results are promising and indicate that children and young people are confident when interacting with the community²¹ and participate more actively in community activities. However, it is also apparent that physical integration on its own is not a magic bullet and does not automatically lead to social integration. Important aspects such as strengthening the autonomy of SOS families, facilitating mutual support between SOS parents, and ensuring access to quality education and health care need greater attention, regardless of the physical setting.



The average number of children in SOS families decreased to 6.2 in 2020 compared to 6.8 in 2018

¹⁹ See [local action tool social integration in 3 languages](#).

²⁰ SOS Children's Villages Programme Database (101 member associations included, EUNA region excluded), data from January 2018 and January 2020.

²¹ SOS Children's Villages Programme Database (101 member associations included, EUNA region excluded), data as of April 2020.

COMMITMENT 7

We provide individual support to achieve goals, improve gender equality and increase impact

We empower children, young people and families through tailored support that builds on their unique capacities and strengths, which ultimately enables them to lead an independent life. In 2019, 61% of young people were self-reliant when they left our alternative care services and 35% of families are self-reliant when leaving FS²². These figures are not high enough and we know that we need to do better.

The reasons for low self-reliance rates vary between countries with unfavourable economic realities and the absence of effective social protection systems often being major impediments. However, focusing more strongly on the results we achieve through our work is one important internal lever to ensure that more children, young people and families can become self-reliant. More

than 1,000 SOS staff completed trainings on results-based management (RBM) and began applying it in almost 200 programmes across 45 member associations²³. Ongoing training and regular follow-ups are needed to ensure that we reach the expected RBM competence in these member associations as well as in the remaining ones in the years to come. If applied rigorously, RBM enables programmes to design a needs-driven response and helps local leaders to continuously adapt and improve their work based on the local context.

High-quality data is a prerequisite for effective RBM. Today, we know more about the development of programme participants than ever before thanks to transparent registration and tracking in our Programme Database (PDB). It is currently being updated to enable

faster data collection, better data visualisation and insights into progress over time. The PDB is also an effective tool for guiding care professionals in their work. The easy-to-use system enables them to spend more time with children and families and less time on documentation and reports. In addition, our social impact assessment approach helps us track and improve our long-term impact after our services have ended. To date, assessments have been carried out across 15 countries in all regions, with more to follow. While the findings are primarily used to improve programmes on the ground, they are also consolidated globally to inform strategy, policy, and further research. These efforts culminated in the release of the global “70 Years of Impact” report in 2019²⁴.

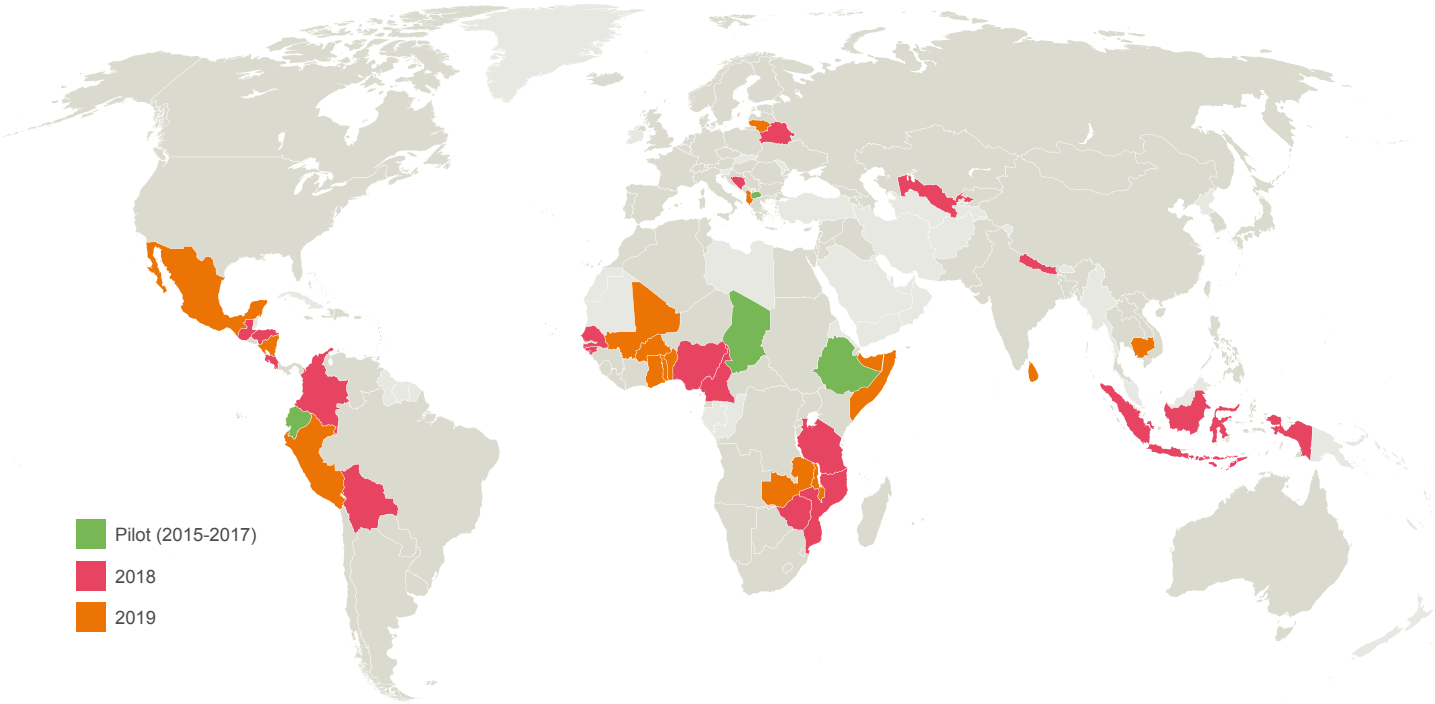
Commitment 7 of the SOS Care Promise includes a strong call to improve gender equality. 30 member associations have already conducted gender audits and are taking strategic action to increase gender equality based on the results.

Major achievements to highlight are increases in the capacity for gender mainstreaming, an awareness of gender issues and the political will to prioritise the topic.



Over 1,000 SOS employees completed trainings on results-based management

²⁴ See “70 Years of impact. Improving the lives of children without adequate parental care”, SOS Children’s Villages International, 2019: [English](#), [French](#), [Spanish](#)



As of December 2019, RBM has been rolled out to 45 member associations

²² SOS Children’s Villages Programme Database (101 member associations included, EUNA region excluded), data as of April 2020.

²³ Internal results-based-management implementation status file, Monitoring and Evaluation team, International Office, data as of 18 April 2020.

UZBEKISTAN: PUTTING RESULTS IN FOCUS

SOS Children’s Villages Uzbekistan has been committed to ongoing monitoring and evaluation for quite some time. In 2018, the association decided to start implementing the SOS results-based management approach to improve their work in a continuous and systematic way and ensure sustainable funding for their interventions. This step was also a response to requests from international and national donors to provide evidence of the impact they have on children and families.

By applying RBM, SOS Uzbekistan is increasingly able to track and share the effectiveness of their activities. This allows the organisation to invest scarce resources in a way that leads to better outcomes. For instance, an external evaluation indicated that offering job trainings to young people

did not lead to a decline in youth unemployment in the Uzbek context. Consequently, SOS focused more strongly on mentorship and internship opportunities, which turned out to be a more promising approach. The increased results-orientation also enables SOS Uzbekistan to meet donor requirements more easily and hence to generate more funds from diverse sources.

Implementing RBM is not an easy undertaking. It requires a genuine commitment from top management, sufficient financial and human resources, and an openness to change from all actors involved. The intensive cooperation between SOS Uzbekistan, SOS Luxemburg and the General Secretariat was an equally important element for the successful transitioning to RBM.



COSTA RICA: JOINTLY ADDRESSING THE YOUTH UNEMPLOYMENT CHALLENGE

The YouthCan! Costa Rica programme works with both global and local corporate partners in order to help vulnerable young people develop their personal skills and employability. The programme uses a „learning by doing“ approach that allows for experiential learning in which the participants receive knowledge at the correct time in their own personal journey.

This model consists of three training modules:

- **GROW:** SOS Costa Rica works with corporate partners such as Deutsch Post DHL in order to train participants in soft skills, such as working in teams, managing conflict and identifying one's strengths and weaknesses. This enables them to build the interpersonal skills needed in order to become employable

- **KNOW:** SOS works with corporate partners from across the economy to offer participants specific training and relevant work experience which is relevant to the career direction they wish to take
- **BELIEVE:** Young people who have completed the two previous modules are trained in specific activities such as applying for or interviewing for jobs. SOS Costa Rica also focuses on making job placements faster and more effective through training and mentoring activities

By ensuring an individualised approach, based on where young people are in their employability journey, SOS ensures they are fully prepared to enter the job market and step into independent life.

COMMITMENT 8

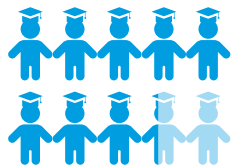
We promote education, participation and steps to independent life

Currently, 57% of participants in alternative care are between the ages of 14 and 26²⁵. Commitment 8 is a pledge to intensify our efforts to ensure that all young people in our programmes are prepared for independent life. A global Youth Development User Guide²⁶ has been published to improve our support for young people. Member associations are now working intensively on their national youth concepts, so that they are better placed to accompany young people on their journey to independence.

One way to do this is by ensuring that all children and young people in our programmes have access to quality education. This requires strategic action, however, it does not necessarily mean running schools by ourselves. Several MAs have succeeded in building partnerships with governments and other organisations (see commitment 1) in an attempt to improve access to quality education while simultaneously saving costs. Looking at the outcomes, school performance is already at a high level in SOS Children's Villages, with over 83% of children and young people making at least satisfactory progress in education in 2020 – a slight increase compared to 2018²⁷.

In the area of building employability skills for young people, the flagship initiative “YouthCan!” was launched in 2017. In close partnership with global corporates, the programme provides mentoring, internships and employability skills training for young people from our target group. At the end of 2019, YouthCan! was operational in 31 countries across the globe reaching almost 5,700 young people. The results show signs of promise: young people in SOS programmes in YouthCan! countries are 10% more likely to have at

least intermediary employability skills²⁸. Young people have also actively shaped our global strategy. The SOS Children's Villages International Youth Coalition made a strong call to mainstream participation including the training of adults as well as to embrace youth-led initiatives. Both aspects will feature prominently in our 5 priorities 2021-2024. Contribution to this commitment has also been made through the “Prepare for Leaving Care” training, which provides care professionals access to comprehensive training materials that focus on better supporting young people in preparing to leave care, transitioning out of care and in after care. To date, the training that is co-delivered by young people with care experience has reached over 1,000 care professionals in Austria, Bulgaria, Croatia, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Italy, Romania, and Spain. In recognition of the participation of young people as co-trainers, the initiative won the European Social Services Award in the category “innovation” in December 2019.

83% 
of children and young people
make at least **satisfactory**
progress in education

²⁵ SOS Children's Villages Programme Database (101 member associations included, EUNA region excluded), data as of April 2020.

²⁶ See [Youth Development User Guide in 5 languages](#).

²⁷ SOS Children's Villages Programme Database (101 member associations included, EUNA region excluded), data as of April 2020.

²⁸ [YouthCan! Facts and Figures Report 2019](#)

COMMITMENT 9

We partner for supporting services and advocate for quality care

To ensure all children can fully enjoy their rights, we commit to forming partnerships across sectors and to calling on governments and communities to support quality child care. SOS Children's Villages member organisations cooperate intensively with governments across the federation. At the beginning of 2020, 84% of member associations were actively engaged in a dialogue with their governments to improve national child care and protection systems. Over 90% are members of a local or national child care coalition or network advocating and lobbying for quality care²⁹. It is through these partnerships that member associations spread their competence and experience in child care to other key stakeholders in and beyond the child care sector.


Similarly, on a regional level, efforts are being undertaken to improve policy and practice for children and young people in our target group. For instance, the ESAF region is developing a regional framework for child care and protection in coordination with key stakeholders, such as governments, civil society organisations and UN agencies. This proactive engagement enables SOS Children's Villages to strengthen its position in national debates on care reform.

Noteworthy achievements within the framework of this commitment were also made in the area of legal recognition of our work with SOS families. The ASIA region has succeeded in getting family-like care officially recognised by the governments of Nepal and India, with a number of MAs across the globe progressing in a similar direction. Yet, as of early 2020, family-like care is only an officially recognised option in two thirds of the countries, where we work. This highlights the need for more efforts to ensure that children and young people can benefit from this care option if it is in their best interests³⁰.

²⁹ Results of internal "Child care reform and de-institutionalisation survey", January 2020 (99 member associations included).

³⁰ Ibid.

84% 
of member associations
are engaged in a dialogue
with their governments

90% 
of member associations
are part of local or national
child care coalitions



MOROCCO: INCREASING IMPACT WITH LOCAL PARTNERS

The district of Mediouna has the highest incidence of child vulnerability in Casablanca. With its family strengthening activities, SOS Children's Villages Morocco supports 44 single mothers and 101 children by empowering and training women so they can take better care of their children.

A key success factor is the involvement of a specialised partner from the community in each activity. With the support of companies and government authorities as well as hospitals, clinics and pharmacies, SOS Morocco provides medical care for mothers and their children.

In the field of education, SOS Morocco works to prevent school drop-out and to improve school performance of children and teenagers. In addition,

SOS partners with a foundation to implement a digital tutorial programme. Extracurricular activities are organised in collaboration with local partners to develop children's life skills and the mother-child relationship. These range from workshops on gardening or painting to trainings on health topics like diabetes.

These partnerships enable SOS Morocco to focus on their core competence: working with mothers and empowering them so they can provide quality care and protection to their children. The focus on partnerships also increases the quality and sustainability of interventions and is an effective means of mobilising funds for the target group thanks to the financial contributions made by our partners.

Living the SOS Care Promise during the COVID-19 crisis

At the time of writing the first draft of this report, the spread of a novel coronavirus slowly started to gain attention in the news. A few months later, the COVID-19 crisis has significantly affected the whole world with the longer-term social and economic consequences still difficult to predict.

The crisis is putting children and families under pressure, as well as the child protection systems designed to reach the most vulnerable with relevant support. As countries have implemented lockdowns, most children have been unable to go to school and many parents and young people have found themselves unable to work, sometimes even losing their jobs. Face-to-face social services have often ceased to function, including gatekeeping processes to ensure that children are offered suitable alternative care when required. Problems within families, including

domestic violence and substance abuse, have become less visible and yet may be escalating due to the crisis. This is increasing the vulnerability of children who are living without adequate parental care, and increasing the likelihood of even more children falling into our target group.

At the same time, across our federation, the crisis is stretching the capacity of member associations to provide continued quality of care and support to the children and families that we are already working with. Nevertheless, member associations – supported by the General Secretariat – are responding to the crisis, finding ways to adapt their existing services to the new and evolving situation. In doing so, they strive to keep the SOS Care Promise for all children, young people and families we are working with.

KEY PROGRAMMATIC ISSUES DURING COVID-19 CRISIS

As member associations across the federation respond to the crisis they face the following key issues, which relate to a number of care commitments:

- Responding to the challenges faced by young people, including supporting those young people who are living alone, managing challenging behaviour and dealing with the increasing need for after-care support and accommodation support, etc.
- Monitoring and supporting in family strengthening interventions at times where lockdowns and social distancing requirements make face-to-face support almost impossible
- Supporting care professionals who face increased workload and additional pressure
- Identifying and addressing the psychosocial and mental health needs of children, young people and caregivers
- Continuing education remotely, especially where families lack access to internet connectivity
- Maintaining child safeguarding standards through effective monitoring across prevention and alternative care
- Ensuring strong gatekeeping, including support for reintegration and for placement into suitable alternative care when required, during the crisis situation
- Ensuring access to preventive health care services as well as an effective response in case of infection

SOS member associations are implementing a wide variety of initiatives to address these and other challenges faced as a result of the pandemic, including:

- Extensive awareness raising and sensitisation on COVID-19 transmission (ASIA) as well as on the increased risks of domestic violence during lockdown (LAAM)
- Preventive health and sanitation measures (ASIA, EUCB)
- Implementing psychosocial and mental health support using digital tools (Italy)
- Expanding the use of mobile technology to communicate about a wider range of issues such as health, socioemotional topics and parenting (Sri Lanka)
- Online counselling and support services (Russia, Ukraine)
- Setting up support networks for young people (Palestine)
- Distributing food packages to targeted families and communities in family strengthening (ESAF)
- Increasing family strengthening using remote methods, and effectively connecting to government efforts (Romania)

As we go forward, a clearer picture of current and emerging issues as well as associated programme responses will emerge. It is crucial to enable and facilitate peer-to-peer exchange across the federation, putting a strong focus on programme developments, promising practices and emerging learnings on prioritised topics. Programme guidance, information and learnings are being shared and continuously updated via the COVID-19 programme support workspace³¹.

³¹ See [COVID-19 programme support workspace](#).





Summary and outlook

During the first two years of SOS Care Promise implementation, SOS Children's Villages has made noteworthy progress in bringing programme quality to a higher level across the federation. As highlighted throughout this implementation report, programmes have achieved improvements in the work with children, young people and families across several areas.

Perhaps most prominently, with our increased focus on gatekeeping, we have been working intensively to live up to our pledge that all children and young people in our programmes are supported in the most suitable care setting. Strongly linked to this, our programme work is on a continuous path to become more diverse, enabling children to benefit from a range of locally relevant services in both family strengthening and alternative care.

We have also increased our results focus, with more and more member associations starting to embrace a results-based management approach. This important development includes a mindset change, which ultimately shifts our focus from activities to the results we achieve for children and young people. Obviously, this cannot happen overnight and requires ongoing capacity-building to develop the necessary skills as well as the continuous commitment of all people involved.

SOS Children's Villages member associations have also succeeded in establishing successful partnerships with governments and other partners. Joining forces with key stakeholders is an important step to ensure that our programmes are strongly rooted in the community and contribute to the overall improvement of the local child care and protection system. Partnerships also enable us to team up with the private sector, which has proven to be a promising approach when building employability skills of young people. Due to the detrimental economic impacts of the COVID-19 crisis, fighting youth unemployment will remain a major global challenge in the years to come and partnering in this area will become even more important.

While the progress we are making in implementing our SOS Care Promise is encouraging, a number of gaps remain and require increased attention in the future. For instance, implementing all recommendations arising from the programme review holds huge potential to increase the relevance, efficiency and impact of our programme work.

Furthermore, strengthening care professionals must remain one of our global top priorities. The COVID-19 crisis and associated lockdowns have put the spotlight on care professionals and their extraordinary accomplishments in highly stressful times. Improving their working conditions, including fair remuneration and mental health support, is absolutely essential. As the share of young people in our programmes is on the rise, it is vital that we focus on professionalising our youth care approach and on equipping care professionals with the skills needed to respond to age-specific care needs. In the area of child safeguarding, we have to continue our ongoing focus on ensuring that all member associations fully meet our prevention, reporting and responding mechanisms.

Addressing these challenges requires the sincere commitment and a locally contextualised approach from all SOS Children's Villages member associations. Upholding the SOS Care Promise remains a major objective for our organisation in the years ahead – even more so in a post-COVID-19 world characterised by an increasingly difficult environment for children, young people and vulnerable families.



**SOS CHILDREN'S
VILLAGES**
INTERNATIONAL

A loving home for every child

