

ACCOUNTABLE NOW INTERIM REPORT 2018



SOS CHILDREN'S
VILLAGES
INTERNATIONAL



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1 OUR ONGOING COMMITMENT TO ACCOUNTABILITY

1.1 Statement from the Chief Executive Officer

SOS Children's Villages is pleased to submit this interim report to Accountable Now. We have recently undergone changes in the Management Team, so I write this introduction as Interim Chief Executive Officer, supported by Chief Operating Officer Michael Poeltl, who took up that role in October 2019.

Our engagement with Accountable Now and the reporting process is extremely useful to us, aiding our broader efforts to continually improve our ways of working and the application of our organisational values of Accountability, Commitment, Courage, and Trust. We hope that our reports are also useful to our stakeholders in helping them understand our aspirations, challenges, and impact.

Since our last report to Accountable Now, we have convened additional major international gatherings of the federation, including the "Come Together 2 - Journey for Change" meeting which took place in Vienna in July 2019, which was attended by almost 300 colleagues from 127 countries. The meeting was valuable not just for exchanging knowledge and learnings, but for harnessing the energy and inspiration in member associations and the General Secretariat.

As we prepare for our next General Assembly (June 2020), we are making progress on large projects designed to create the foundation for the federation we want to be. This includes:

- Our "Federation 2030 – Accountable and Together" project, which includes workstreams on Governance and Management and Financial Management, will promote better cooperation between member associations and the General Secretariat.
- An update of our [Strategy 2030](#), taking into consideration key achievements and challenges in implementing its seven strategic initiatives and honing in on 5 strategic priorities that will guide our work through 2024: (1) promoting locally relevant programmes, (2) scaling up partnerships for children and young people, (3) growing and diversifying income, (4) empowering our people and (5) digitalising SOS Children's Villages.
- Updating our brand for the digital age, including a global consultation process, to bring greater clarity and stronger cohesion to our positioning
- An initiative to strengthen Leadership Development, especially at the member association level, and to foster a strong culture in support of our values of Accountability, Commitment, Courage, and Trust

Crucial steps have been taken in the past year to progress the implementation of our [Care Promise](#), including the production of a "gatekeeping" policy support document, which supports member associations in working with governments to ensure that alternative care for children is both necessary and suitable, according to the individual child's best interests.

Care Promise implementation also includes a commitment to ensuring our programmes create a safe environment for children. We have recently published on our website our second [Child Safeguarding Annual Report](#), demonstrating our commitment to transparency and continued learning from child safeguarding incidents. Further, the International Senate has approved a statement on the Prevention and Protection against Sexual Harassment, Exploitation and Abuse, reflecting our responsibilities to maintain a safe workplace and promote safeguarding in the communities where we operate. Working with [Keeping Children Safe](#), we continue to make progress in our Independent Child Safeguarding Review, set up in 2016 to help the organisation learn from historical child safeguarding incidents, drawing on studies conducted in four countries.

We have also made considerable progress in the past year at further embedding our Results Based Management (RBM) approach throughout the federation, aided by deployment of a global pool of 48 certified RBM trainers.

In April 2019, the 70th anniversary of the founding of SOS Children's Villages in Austria provided us an opportunity this year to look holistically at the impact we have been able to create on behalf of children who have lost or are at risk of losing parental care, and this reflection is detailed in our report, [70 Years of Impact](#).

We recognise that we achieve greatest impact when we partner with other organisations sharing our values. For example, through our Joining Forces partnership comprising the six leading child-focused NGOs, we continue to achieve greater scale, efficiency and effectiveness for our work on [child rights](#) and ending violence against children.

Further information about our advocacy work is included in this interim report, as well as updates on matters as requested by the Accountable Now panel, including conflicts of interest and resource allocation.

I hope you find this interim report valuable, and I look forward to our continued dialogue.



Steffen Braasch
Interim Chief Executive Officer

2 IMPROVEMENT ANALYSIS

2.1 Conflicts of interest (4.6)

As in prior years, internal audit activities in 2018 and 2019 put adequate focus on potential conflict of interest situations, especially when auditing procurement transactions. Some incidents of conflict of interests at national level were detected. These issues were thoroughly investigated and adequately addressed in the internal audit reports.

Clear communication and direction has been given by the respective regional directors, especially to national management and board members. In addition, compliance trainings were held at selected national associations, which focused on creating awareness of anti-fraud and anti-corruption measures, as well as addressing conflict of interest situations and how to deal with them.

In future, the internal audit teams will continue to focus on identifying potential conflict of interest situations during internal audit assignments at national associations. Based on random checks, internal audit teams will perform basic background reviews of suppliers selected by national associations, to check whether any connections to staff, management or board members exist. Where necessary, internal audit teams will consult with the Integrity Legal and Compliance function to perform awareness training on compliance matters.

One particular area of focus is managing conflicts of interest in the sale of SOS Children's Villages property. Steps to identify and manage such situations has now been incorporated into our formal processes pertaining to the transfer of SOS Children's Villages property throughout the federation.

We have addressed conflicts of interest in a recent meeting of the Integrity and Compliance network meeting in Africa, where an international office team worked with the regional office to strengthen basic prevention mechanisms related to corruption.

The management of conflicts of interest will be further elaborated in the updated procurement guideline for SOS Children's Villages International to be implemented in 2020.

2.2 Mechanisms for stakeholder feedback and complaints on programmes and policies and in response to policy breaches (NGO2)

In our 2017 report, we provided an extensive description of our child safeguarding policies and reporting. In light of the seriousness of the topic, as well as evolving external expectations, we have continued to place significant emphasis on improving our safeguarding policies and practices, with a particular focus on transparency. In November 2019, we published our [2018-9 Child Safeguarding Annual Report](#) on our international website. This marked the second consecutive year that we did so externally.

The report demonstrates how the organisation has been applying its Child Protection Policy and rigorously managing child safeguarding risks. We are a learning organisation, and we actively seek understanding of child safeguarding risks in order to improve our existing practice and mitigate these risks. The report documents these learnings and steps towards improvement, which include:

- Quality care is the foundation of prevention of abuse. Accordingly, we will continue to focus on improving working conditions of care professionals, including strengthening support systems and building their capacity to provide quality care.

- We will strengthen our child safeguarding risk management approach and work towards ensuring that child safeguarding resources match the risk profile of the country and the region.
- We need to further strengthen reporting and responding procedures. This includes reinforcing to member associations the obligation to report suspected crimes to legal authorities and ensuring that our child safeguarding focal persons have the time resource for managing (including reporting) incidents.
- Managers and governance bodies must know and understand their role in child safeguarding. This will require continued efforts to train line managers and national boards on their specific roles and responsibilities.
- We will use learnings from the Independent Child Safeguarding Review (which was described in our 2017 report to Accountable Now) and other experience to update our child safeguarding policy – likely to be completed in 2021.

The Child Safeguarding Annual Report also documents numerous activities we have been undertaking to establish a culture in which individuals feel free to come forward to report concerns. Given the size of our organisation, the difficult circumstances in which we operate, and the intense proximity of our care for children, we encounter a high child safeguarding risk, so inevitably, breaches of our policies do occur. However, every case is one too many, and we strive for a zero-tolerance approach throughout the federation.

2.3 Advocacy positions and public awareness campaigns (NGO5)

In 2018, SOS Children's Villages International started the planning process for a new Global Campaign, called *I See You*, to mark the 2019 anniversaries of our organisation (70 years), the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (30 years) and the Guidelines for the Alternative Care of Children (10 years). The campaign aims to raise public awareness of children without parental care or at risk of losing it, which are largely invisible in society and constitute our main target group of children since 1949 (<https://www.sos-childrensvillages.org/i-see-you>).

Learning from past campaigns – including *No Child Alone* (mainly communications) or *Care for Me!* (mainly advocacy) – this time the design and implementation of the campaign has been a truly cross-functional effort of the Advocacy, Brand, and Communications teams. The cross-functional co-creation and planning sought to avoid the risk of inconsistency in the external messaging and outreach in such crucial year as 2019 and build on each other's strengths to speak with one voice for children and the cause we serve.

A cross-functional global campaign team was established at the international office at the end of the summer, and all the three functions were represented in each planning moment and work package. Moreover, the Global Campaign team has created a network involving Advocacy, Brand, and Communications experts from all six regional offices, and from all the European and North American Promoting and Supporting Associations.

This inclusive approach has helped achieve a better understanding and consideration of how to apply the global campaign objectives at regional and national levels. There has been an early analysis of member associations' needs, in order to build a relatively flexible campaign frame that would allow them to adapt the campaign to their own national anniversaries, local market requirements and political environments. Moreover, the inclusive approach in the design of the campaign has allowed to take into account the actual resources and capacities of regional and national offices around the world in the planning of campaign toolkits. These included campaign key messages and materials (including videos, visuals, social media sheets, and publications) as well as briefings on how to use them, which

helped greatly to save costs and align messaging and visual communication across the globe. Finally, the production plan of some campaign events and materials, including a child friendly booklet on the Guidelines for the Alternative Care of Children, has included participation of children and young people without parental care or at risk of losing it. The aim was to ensure that the views of our target group of children were taken into account, and that the campaign had a positive, child rights-based foundation that demonstrates an empowering ethos, rather than the language of victimisation that we so often see.

2.4 Resource allocation (NGO7)

The information regarding our management of resource allocation provided in our 2017 report remains valid and includes, in summary:

- The initiation of a new planning and steering process, in which each member association now conducts a financial mid-term plan;
- The roll out of an Analysis and Management Tool, which compares budget/actual data twice a year and articulates cost and income drivers for any deviations;
- The development and implementation of an This International Chart of Accounts which provides consistency in audit reports and accounting across the majority of member associations.

As stipulated in the federation statutes, all material operations are subject to full independent external audit as required by national laws, and these statements together with independent auditors' statements are all published in the relevant jurisdictions. In this regard, all member associations are obliged to submit a yearly external audit report.

With regards to the General Secretariat, starting in 2018, there was an audit report covering all GSC offices globally, whereas previously it covered only the Austrian entities, thus further improving the transparency of our operations. This report, the KDI Financial Audit, is available on our [website](#).

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

GSC	General Secretariat
KDI	SOS-Kinderdorf International
RBM	Results Based Management

A LOVING HOME FOR EVERY CHILD



SOS CHILDREN'S
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INTERNATIONAL

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