

# TRACKING FOOTPRINTS

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## Results at a glance

More than 2400 former SOS children from 41 countries in the world form the basis for the global report on hand. The national associations carried out the study mostly accompanied by external researchers; they analysed their data mostly with the help of external researchers and compiled a national results report, accessible via Intranet.

Based on national data we analysed global trends which you'll find as follows:  
In essence the SOS adults participating in this survey are quite satisfied with their current living situation. They are well-educated and have a positive perception of their former SOS mothers. Boys and girls had equal access to formal education, indicating that the organisation seems to be very successful in providing gender equality.

However, there are at least two aspects that qualify these findings. Firstly, we have to assume that these results are biased: those who stayed in contact with our organisation presumably participated more in the survey, and drew a more positive picture of the organisation than others we did not reach with this investigation.

Secondly, the results vary considerably according to region. This can mainly be explained by a marked difference in the socio-economic conditions of the countries in which we operate.

Obviously our efforts cannot compensate fully for the negative impact of adverse socio-economic circumstances, but it seems that their negative influence on our children's development can be reduced by good, close relations between our programmes and the surrounding communities. Moreover, in most cases we were able to confirm the positive impact of stable and long-lasting relationships between SOS adults and their former caregivers on the lives of SOS adults. These results are closely aligned to the principles described in the current SOS Children's Village programme policy (2009) and confirm its crucial relevance for the care services offered by SOS Children's Villages.

# 1 The study and its objectives

An international, long-term project which began in 2001 Tracking Footprints is designed to investigate the experiences of people who have lived in an SOS Children's Village facility (SOS adults). A major goal is to learn from SOS adults' recommendations and points of view in order to further develop the care services and to convey the results to external parties. Treating these SOS adults as experts, the study applies a questionnaire focussing on their experiences and individual development during their time in the SOS Children's Village facilities, the major events in their lives, their current situation, and what kind of values are important to them. The Tracking Footprints results also reflect whether the organisation is successfully following its mission, vision and values. The project also strives to support the organisation's attempt to contribute to a better life for many children around the world.

The main organisational units involved are the National Offices (in co-operation with external experts, universities, etc.), Regional and Continental Offices and the International Office.

## 1.1 Theory and values

The present report is a summary of the empirical results gathered from the different countries. At this stage the outcome is not discussed within the framework of general theoretical concepts, studies and research findings. We would like to point out that numerous connections could be made with expert knowledge in the areas of child development, bonding (family ties, form of family), etc. Nonetheless, we did compare some findings with a socio-economic indicator, the 'under-5 mortality rate' (see chapter 2.3.1.3).

Doing research within SOS Children's Villages and, at the same time, belonging to its staff represents a challenge to the research team: trying to be distanced, objective and independent as researchers while at the same time being confronted with tasks at an organisational development level. These issues demand positioning, judgement and a policy standpoint.

## 1.2 Method

According to the needs defined by various stakeholders for the project in hand (Secretary General, Senior Management Team, Promoting and Supporting Associations (PSA's) the study focuses on gathering basic and general information from SOS adults. The adequate method therefore was to rely mostly on quantitative data, i.e. presenting circumstances in a numeric way, gathered by a systematic and structured questionnaire. It allows a general picture to be given of SOS adults' experiences during their childhood at SOS Children's Villages and in their current living situation; it shows similarities by global trends and the differences between the group of SOS adults by gender, age, geography and/or cultural setting.

Within the social sciences, the quantitative approach has its equivalent in a more qualitative approach, using more flexible and less standardised methods. Results offer more in-depth information about a phenomenon and are at the same time less representative.

Based on ongoing co-operation with partners from the various SOS regions, the project follows a participatory approach and has been decentralised, with the result that the study was carried out on an independent level in the different countries.

Treating the SOS adults as experts, the study applies a carefully designed questionnaire<sup>1</sup> which highlights their experiences during their time in the SOS Children's Village facilities, the major events in their lives, their current situation, and what kind of values are important to them.

Twenty countries all over the world participated in the first phase of the study between 2002 and 2003. Based on the national reports, the Tracking Footprints core team in Innsbruck composed a global report which can be found on the Intranet.

Tracking Footprints entered its second phase in 2006. In close co-operation with the continental

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<sup>1</sup> Some countries have adapted the questionnaire according to their specific needs, so the versions differ slightly.

Steering Partners the original questionnaire was modified with more emphasis on life quality and life satisfaction. The new questionnaire has been in use since June 2006 and was applied in 55 countries until 2009. At the same time countries which carried out the study are focussing on using the results and learning from the project in order to further improve the care services offered by SOS Children's Villages.

Training was provided for external interviewers in Tracking Footprints workshops. The participating countries did the data analysis mostly with the support of an external researcher. National Tracking Footprints reports describe the detailed results and their meaning within the national association.

### 1.3 About the sample

The current sample consists of 2406 former SOS children from 41 national associations<sup>2</sup> that participated in the study between 2006 and early 2009. Each of the countries was asked to contribute data from 60 former SOS children who – by the time of the interview – should

- be at least 22 years old,
- have spent at least two years in an SOS family, and
- have left SOS Children's Villages at least 2 years ago.

As far as the number of respondents was concerned, not all national associations have been able to meet this requirement. By contrast, others involved far more people in the investigations than necessary. On average the national data sets provided information from 58.7 former SOS children.

The distribution of gender was almost equal in the country target groups and consequently the survey is equally balanced between women and men (at 50%).

Because of the unbalanced geographical distribution of the participating national associations we could not categorise them according to the usual geographical/administrative structures of our organisation (e.g. by continental offices). To get a better base for our statistical analysis, we clustered them instead, as can be seen in the table below.

AFME	462	ASEA	202	ASST	433	EURO	437	LACE	366	LASO	506
in %	19	in %	8	in %	18	in %	18	in %	15	in %	22
Benin	25	China	60	Bangladesh	59	Austria	46	Dominican Republic	60	Argentina	43
Botswana	61	Thailand	82	India	239	Spain	60	El Salvador	64	Bolivia	59
Burundi	63	Vietnam	60	Nepal	65	Finland	52	Guatemala	63	Brazil	59
Dem.Rep. Congo	21			Pakistan	70	Germany	67	Honduras	59	Chile	46
Ethiopia	60					Greece	31	Nicaragua	60	Colombia	70
Mali	50					Hungary	60	Panama	60	Ecuador	40
Namibia	26					Poland	60			Paraguay	56
Nigeria	31					Portugal	61			Peru	70
Togo	65									Uruguay	40
Tunisia	60									Venezuela	23

Within our global analysis we concentrated on a selection of 46 (out of 237 originally) variables and computed 36 new ones with them. Because of the huge social, economic, and cultural diversity between the participating countries it was not advisable to include more variables on a global level. It simply would have meant comparing apples and oranges in many cases. As a consequence, please refer to the reports contributed by our continental, regional and national offices to the Intranet project site<sup>3</sup> for more specific results.

### 1.4 Scope of results

The SOS adults' childhood spent in SOS care covers a time span from approximately 1986 to 2004.

<sup>2</sup> Raw data from the other 14 National Association carrying out the study did either not meet the requirements to be computed together with the rest of data or were not available to us.

<sup>3</sup> <https://intranet.sos-kd.org/areasofwork/PD/Content/Monitoring/research/TrackingFootprints/Pages/default.aspx>

Consequently, the results of their childhood experience within the care of SOS Children's Villages date back 7 years on average. Assuming that pedagogical services have undergone change and development since then, we might pose the question: how valid are the results as a basis for further development of care services at SOS Children's Villages?

On the one hand Tracking Footprints results acknowledge and emphasize the changes already made. In addition, the views of children and young people currently in our care concur to a great extent with those of SOS adults, showing that there is still a need for development in certain areas of SOS services. Relevant results from the global Listening to Children process (Lill-Rastern, 2006) and the African & Middle East Youth Status Quo Report (Croce, 2008) will be presented where they coincide with and/or support Tracking Footprints results.

## **2 Results**

### **2.1 The average respondent**

At the time of the interview the average respondent was 28 years old and had secondary education qualifications as a minimum. One in three former SOS children has been able to successfully complete some form of tertiary or university education.

Practically every second former SOS child had lost at least one parent before coming to SOS Children's Villages at the age of 6, and then spent 11 years within an SOS family alongside 7 SOS siblings. In two out of three cases biological siblings found themselves within the same SOS family. Also in two out of three cases the child went on to an SOS youth facility for another 3.5 years.

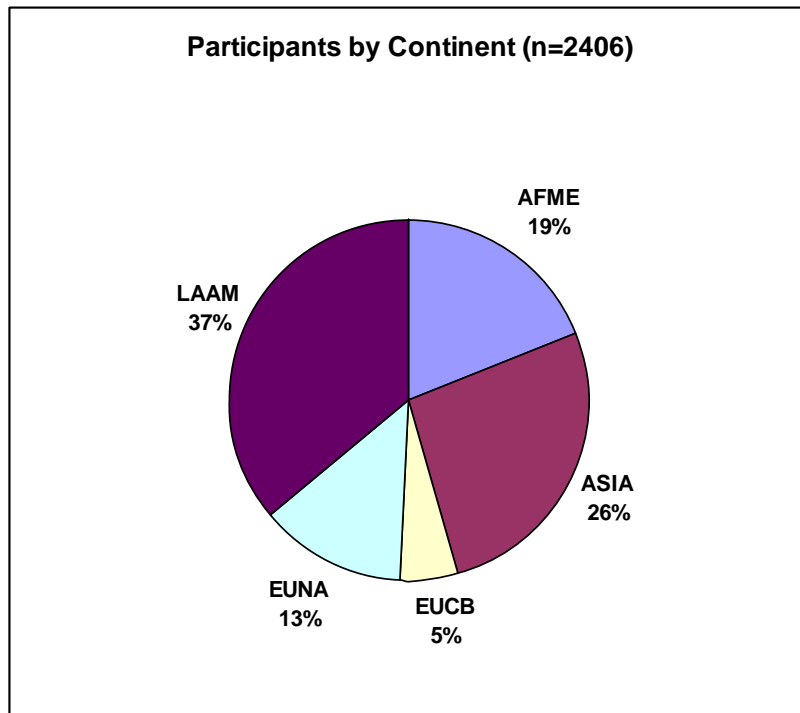
Accordingly, each child had left SOS Children's Villages 7 years ago, is currently quite satisfied with his/her life situation and has a very positive retrospective perception of his/her SOS mother.

Apart from the fact that this characterisation of the average survey participant can certainly not cover every factor imaginable in this context, this qualifies as a perfectly satisfactory result. But such a conclusion implies at least two assumptions that need very careful empirical verification. The first assumption is that these average results can be applied generally to the majority of respondents involved in the investigations and the second is that our programmes contributed significantly to these positive outcomes. The following passages will show if and to what extent this is correct.

### **2.2 Basic characteristics**

#### **2.2.1 Region**

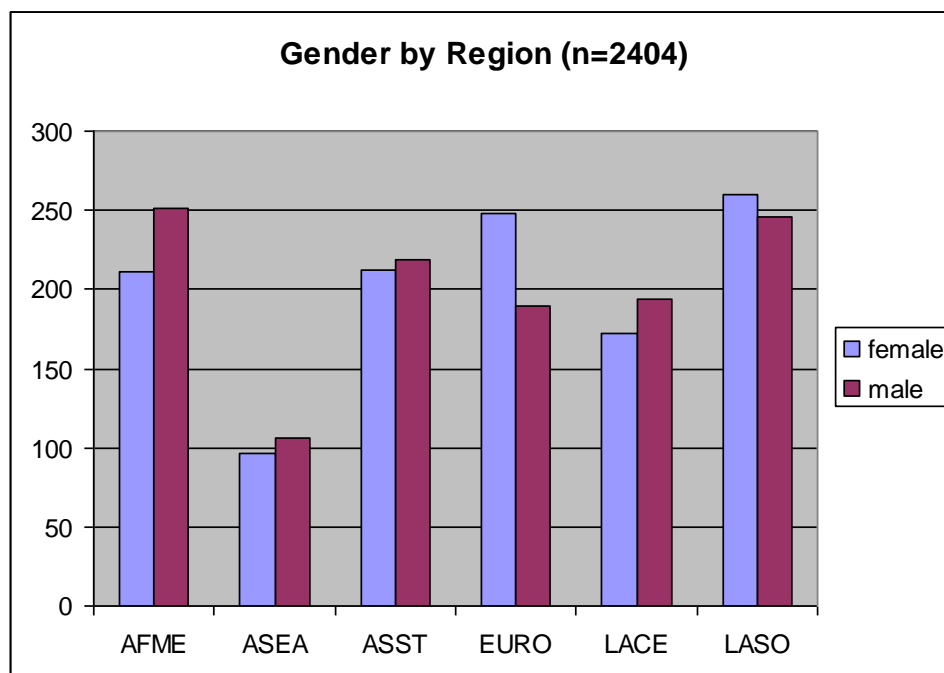
As mentioned initially, the geographical distribution of the national associations that participated in our survey was very unbalanced. According to our usual continental structures the sample was dominated by LAAM. Sixteen Latin-American national associations provided not only the biggest share of respondents (37%) but were also able to integrate their national data sets into two regional data files. This was a great relief in terms of the preparation of the global analysis, as well as an impressive indicator of the effectiveness of our organisational structures in this part of the world.



However, for the data analysis we had to choose other geographical categories to avoid distortions within our results as far as possible. Therefore, we decided to build regional clusters as displayed in the table under 1.3.

### 2.2.2 Gender

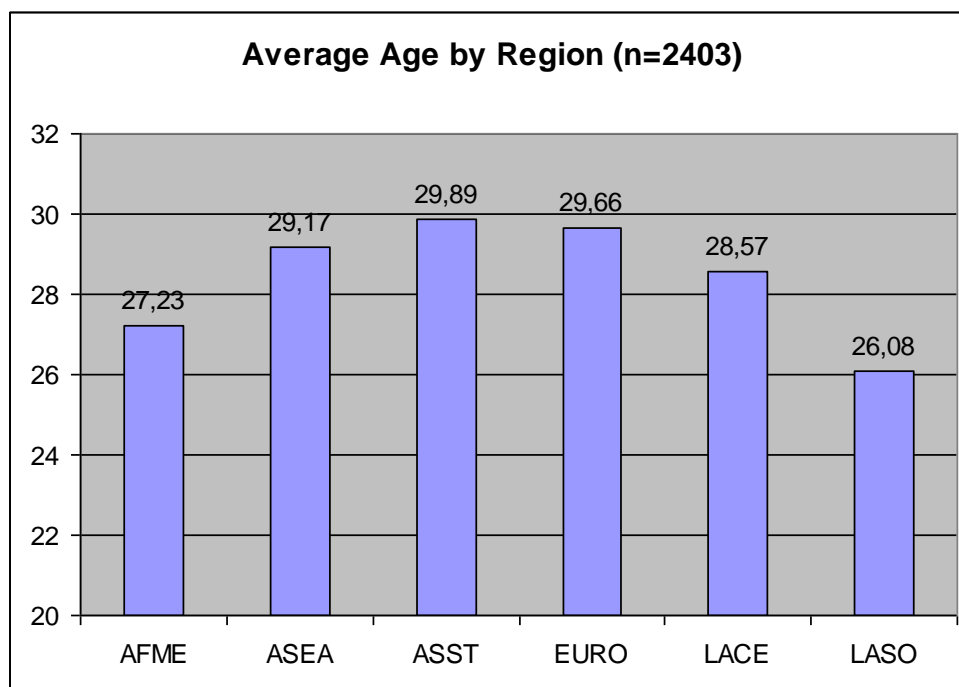
Gender is always a standard variable for differentiations in social sciences. Therefore, we were very pleased to see that in general the national associations were able to involve males and females equally in their investigations. Although not all national samples were perfectly gender balanced we were not able to observe statistically significant differences on the regional level in this context. For this reason and because of its size, our sample is a good base for reliable gender-related conclusions.



### 2.2.3 Age and Age of Admission

In scientific research the age of a person is usually as important as the respondent's regional provenance or gender. According to the description of the average respondent, most of the former SOS children (44%) were between 25 and 29 years old when interviewed. As a consequence, we had to build balanced categories (with a minimum of 22% and a maximum of 28% of survey participants in each) for this variable as well.

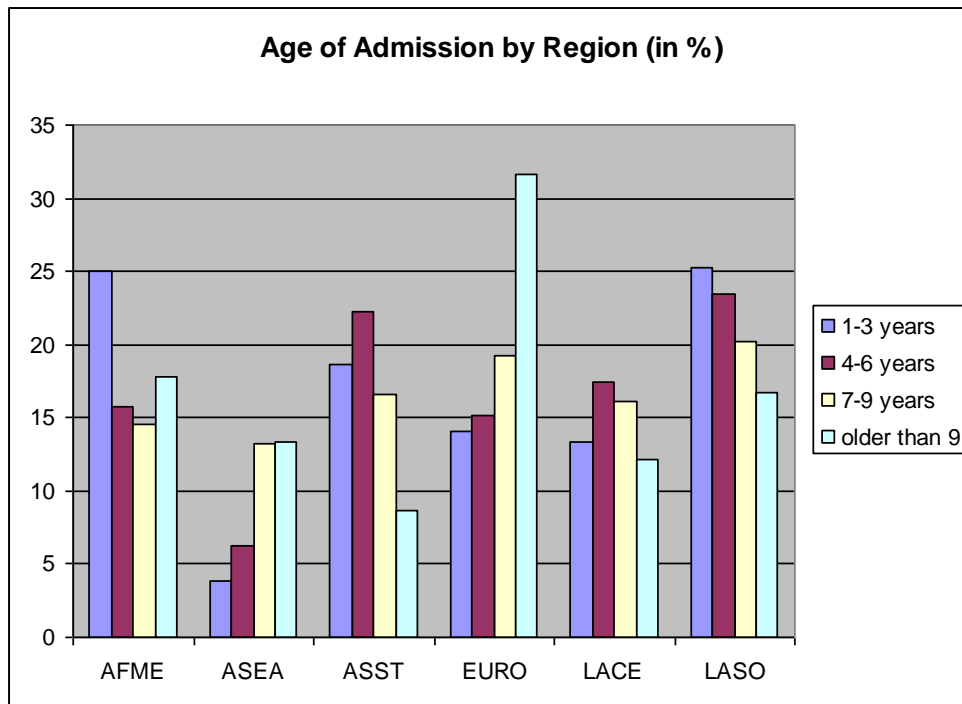
Talking about the average age we found significant differences by region, with LASO contributing the youngest (26.08 years) and ASST providing the oldest (29.89 years) regional sample; there were no significant gender distinctions.



Doing a study about former SOS children inevitably leads to the question of their age when they were admitted to one of our families. As well as the current age of the respondents their age at admission was not distributed normally in a statistical sense. On average it differed significantly at a regional level, with the lowest average age of admission in ASST (5.54 years) and the highest in EURO (7.7 years). For further analysis this variable was clustered in more balanced categories, ranging by size from a minimum of 20% (respondents who were older than 9 years when admitted) to a maximum of 29% (respondents who were between 4 and 6 years old at that time).

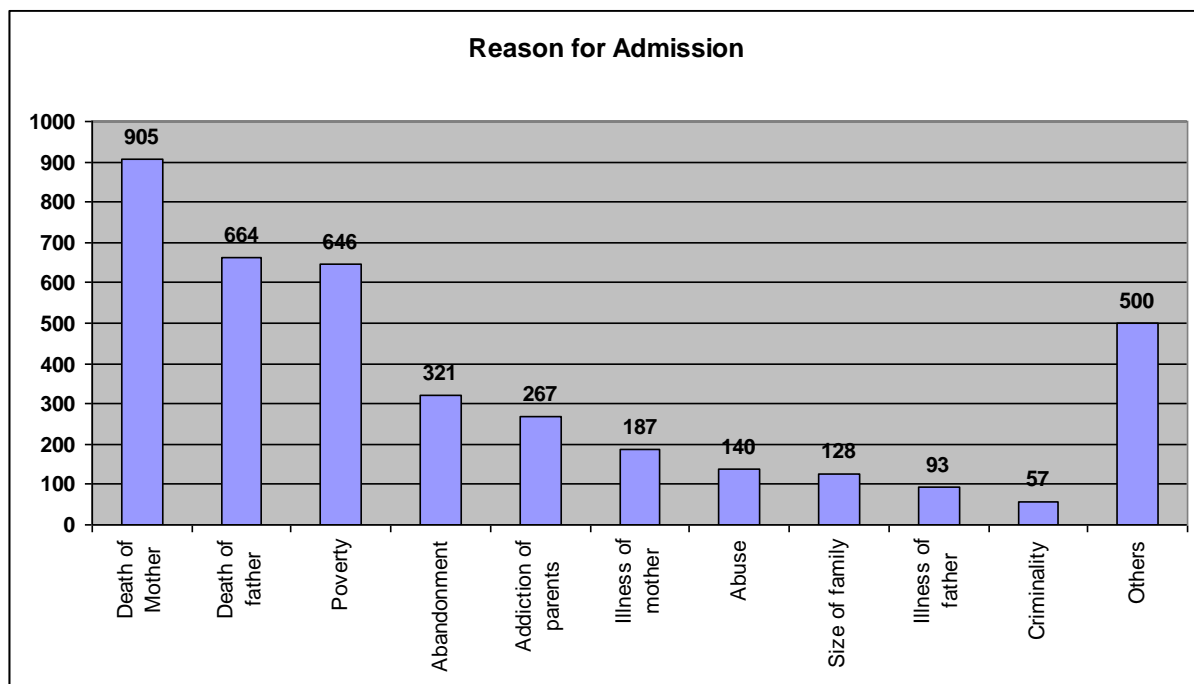
The following chart shows the regional share of the four categories we defined for the age of admission (e.g. 25% of those who were between 1 and 3 years old when they were admitted to SOS Children's Villages came from AFME).



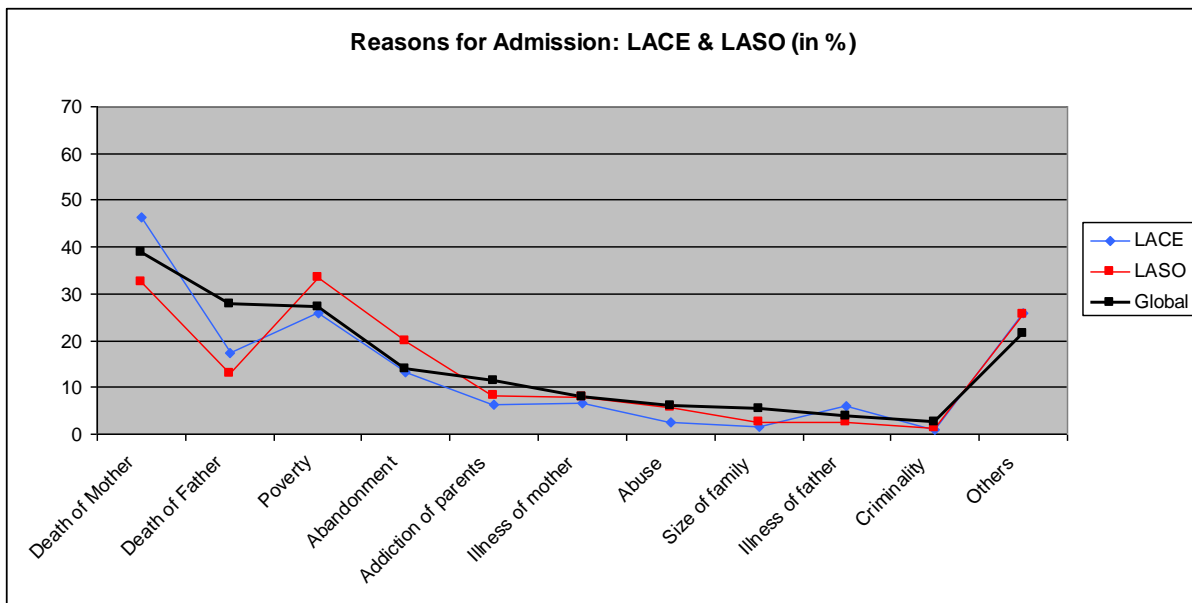


### 2.2.4 Reasons for Admission

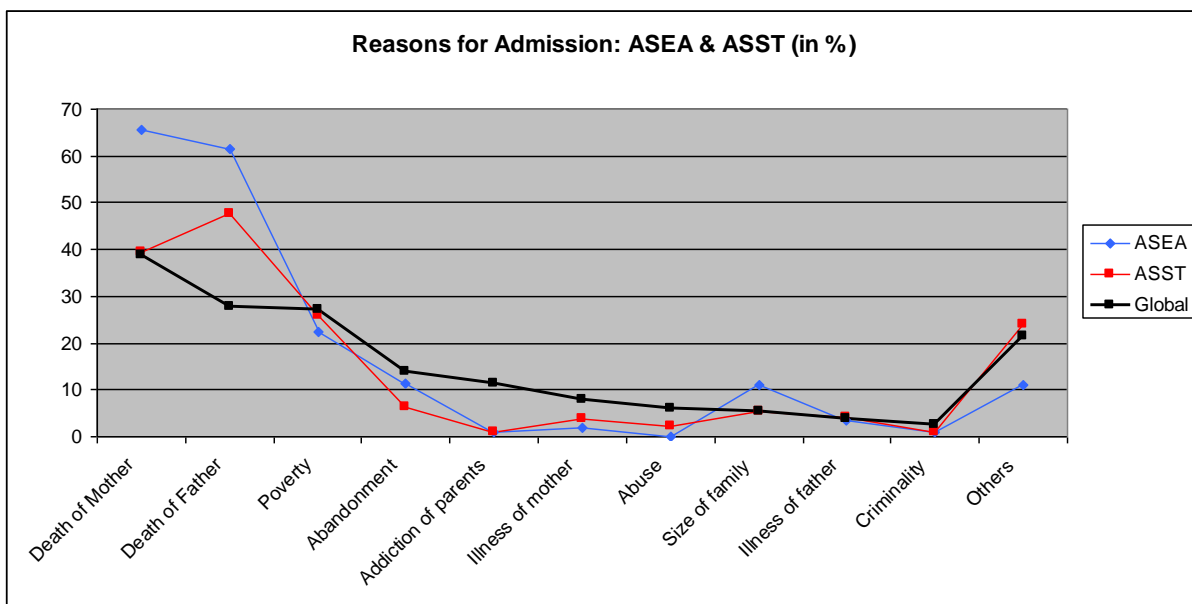
It was decided that the respondent’s reasons for admission to SOS Children’s Villages should be reflected. In this context the survey participants had the option of giving a maximum of three answers. The death of their (biological) mother was the most frequent reason globally (in 905 cases), followed by the death of their father (in 664 cases) and poverty in their family (in 646 cases). Generally, 47% of the former SOS children had lost at least one parent, and 18% had lost both.



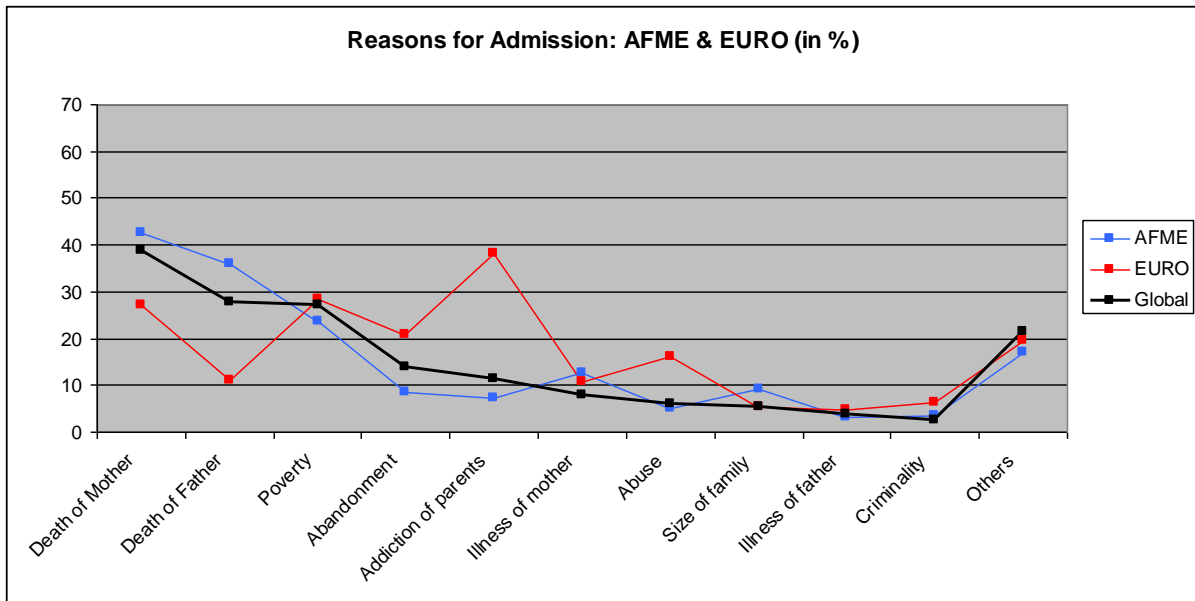
Differentiation by region generated significant disparities, which are displayed in the charts below. To make the results clearer, we have shown only two regions per diagram. The black curve represents the global average percentage of how often a single reason was mentioned in the questionnaires.



The comparison of LACE and LASO shows that in the latter the death of a parent was not named as often as in LACE or globally. By contrast, poverty in the family of origin seems to play a more important role.



Looking at the results from ASEA and ASST gives a completely different picture in many ways. Especially in ASEA the loss of a parent was clearly the most important reason for the admission of a child to SOS Children’s Villages. Notably, the death of the father in ASST turned out to be far more important in this context than the demise of the biological mother. It would be very interesting to do a more detailed analysis of this phenomenon. For now, we can only presume that unique cultural aspects reduce opportunities for children to stay with their widowed mother (e.g. through marriage to a husband who does not accept them).

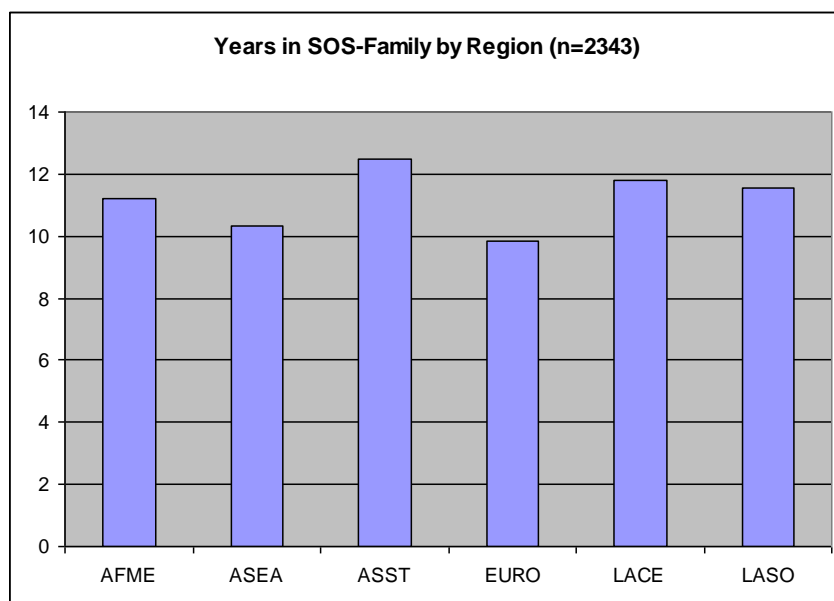


From a geographical or cultural point of view the comparison of AFME and EURO does not make much sense. Nevertheless, it shows most clearly the extremely heterogeneous character of the challenges we have to face with our programmes when we try to care for children globally. EURO appears to be the region with the lowest share of former SOS children who named the death of a parent as a reason for admission to an SOS family. On the other hand parental addiction or child abuse was mentioned more often here than anywhere else.

Other variables also caused some statistically significant differences, but these seem quite negligible compared to the impact of the region on the ranking of the reasons for admission.

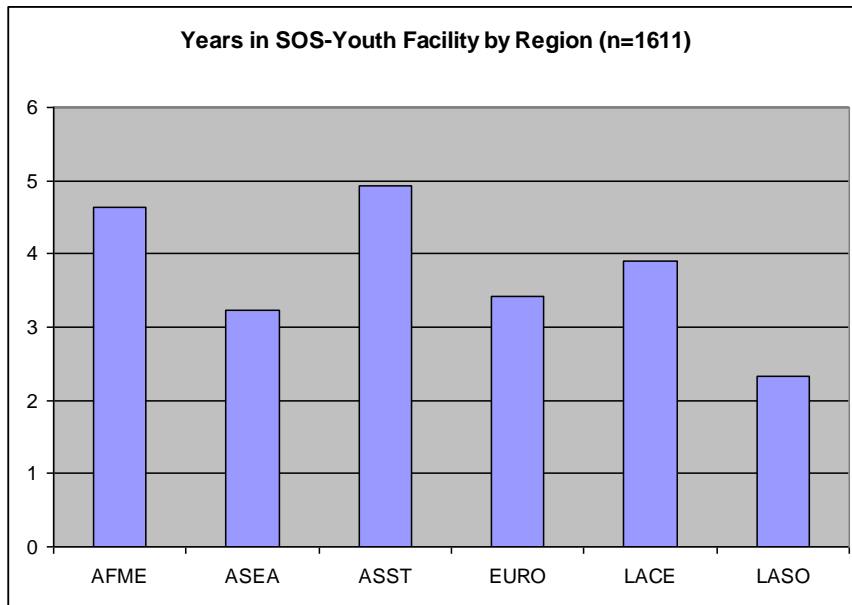
**2.2.5 Years spent in an SOS Family or SOS Youth Facility**

The average number of years the respondents spent in an SOS family varied significantly by region as did the length of their stay in an SOS youth facility. As far as the latter is concerned, one has to bear in mind that one in three did not spend time in an SOS Youth facility at all.



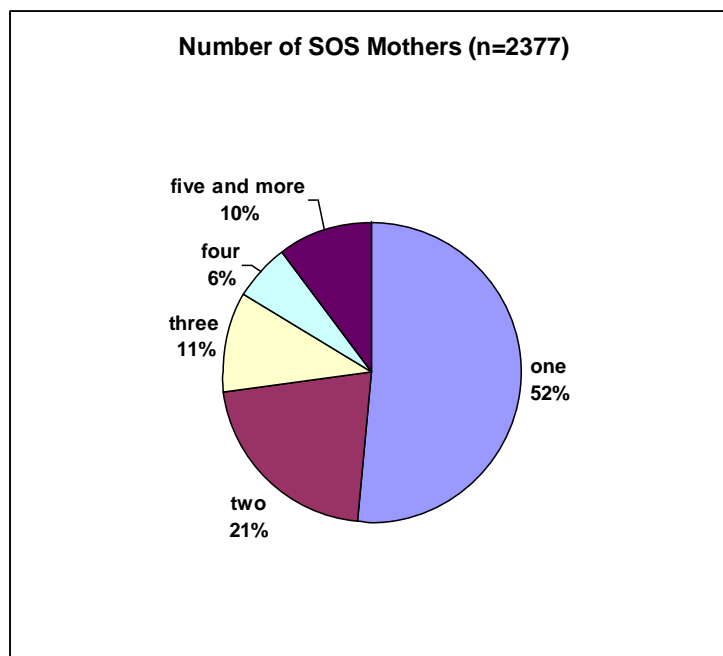
Additionally, we observed three significant gender-based differences in this context: on average women stayed 12 years in an SOS family and just 3 years in a youth facility, while men usually left

their SOS families after 10 years for another 4 years in a youth facility. Moreover, out of 5 young people who went to an SOS youth facility, 3 were male.

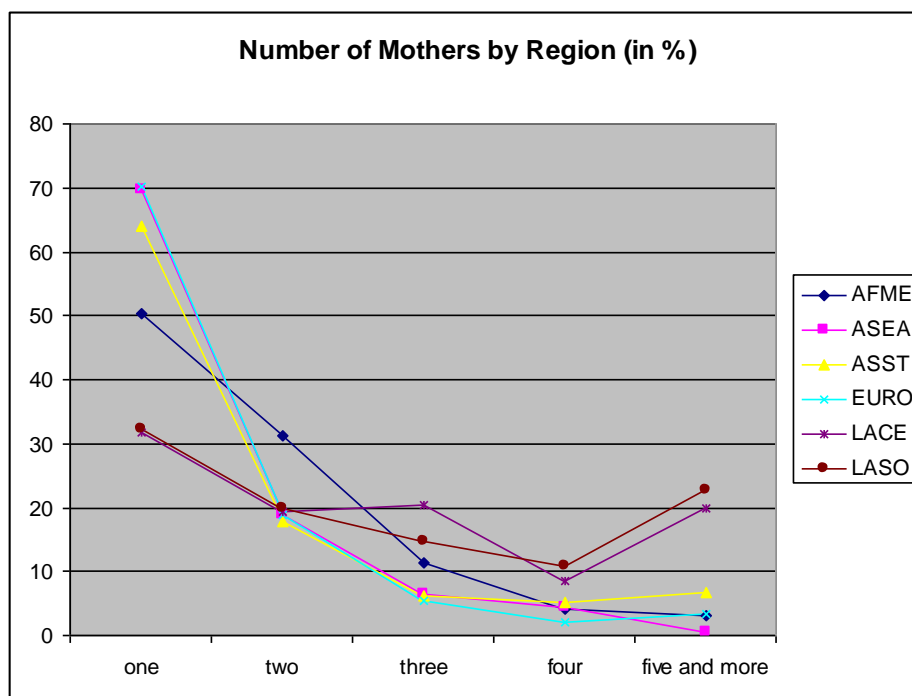


### 2.2.6 Number of SOS Mothers and their Retrospective Perception

When we refer to our mission as an organisation, where we declare our main aim as offering children stable and long lasting relationships, we also have to take a look at the number of SOS mothers that cared for a single respondent during his/her stay within an SOS family. In general only 52% of all survey participants said that they had just one SOS Mother: 48 % had two or more.



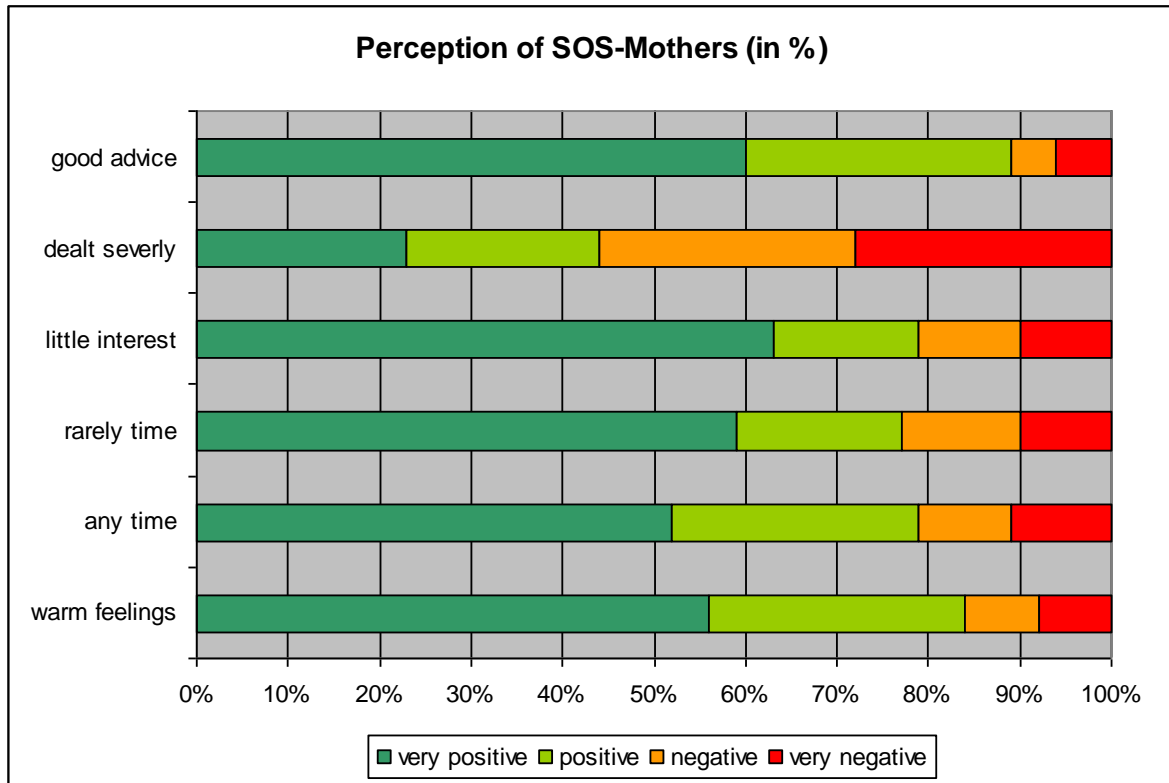
Once again, the region turned out to be the most powerful variable for explaining differences, showing clearly the highest average fluctuation of SOS mothers to be found within LACE and LASO.



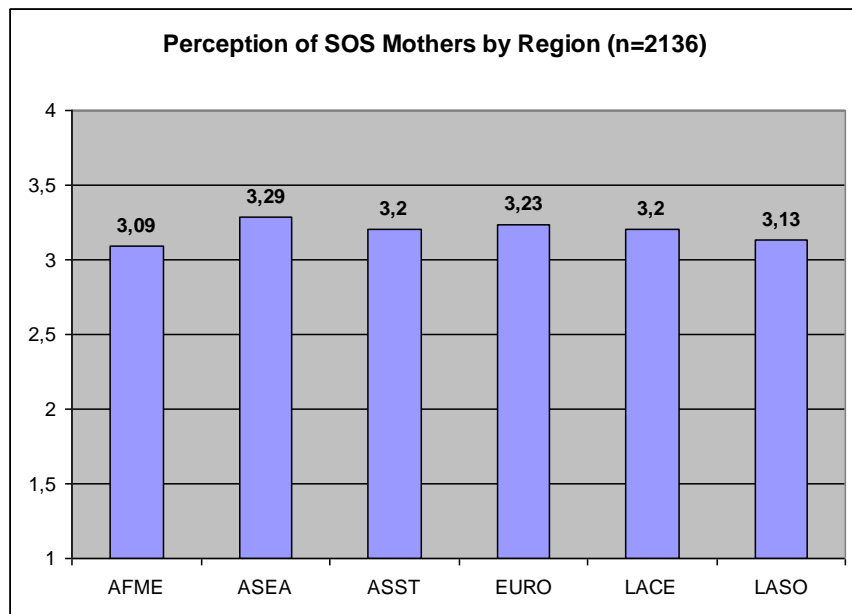
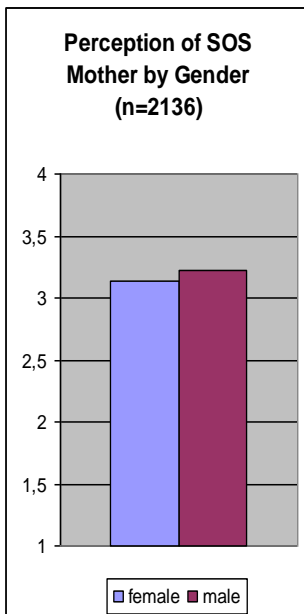
Measured by six different items describing the relationship between SOS mothers and the children in their care, the study generally came to very positive results. In detail, the respondents were asked if their SOS mother was someone who

- gave good advice
- dealt severely with them
- showed little interest in them
- rarely had time for them
- they could turn to at any time
- had warm feelings for them

These positively and negatively formulated items were combined to produce one common scale for the assessment of the relation to SOS mothers; this is standard procedure in quantitative social sciences in order to get reliable results for subjects that are otherwise difficult to measure. Contrary to our expectations we found that the item measuring 'severity' was not perceived as something completely negative as one can see in the diagram below (where the results for each of the six items are displayed separately). The values of the originally negative formulated items were of course positively recoded to fit into the scheme of presentation.



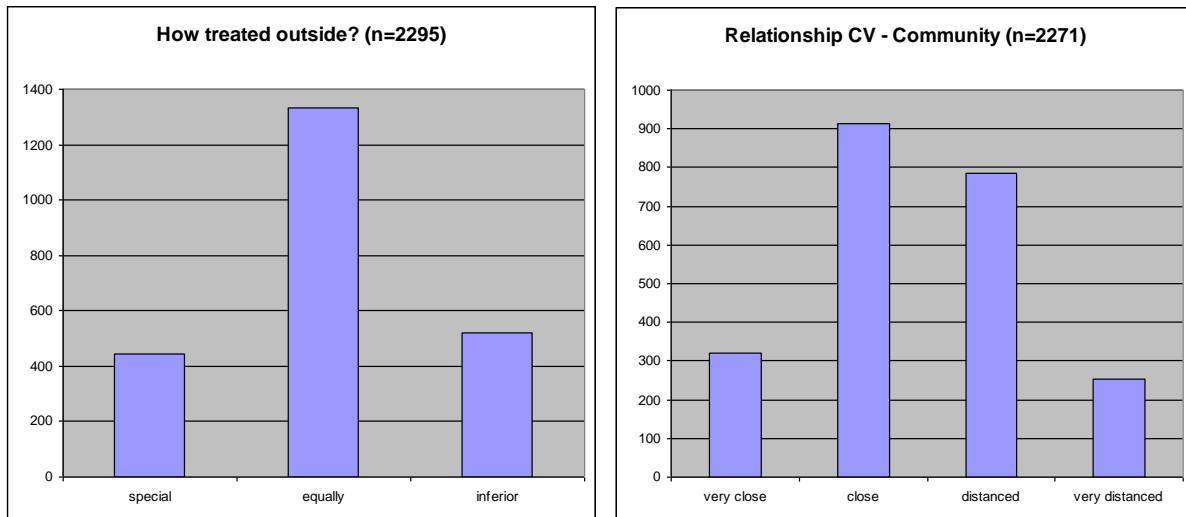
In contrast to the number of SOS mothers, the retrospective perception of them by the SOS adults did not vary that much regionally. Nevertheless, the differences are statistically significant and shown below (a higher value signifies a better perception of SOS mothers). Additionally, there was also a small difference by gender. In line with a well-known general finding of developmental psychology the women in our sample had a slightly more critical remembrance of their relationship to their female caregivers than the male respondents.



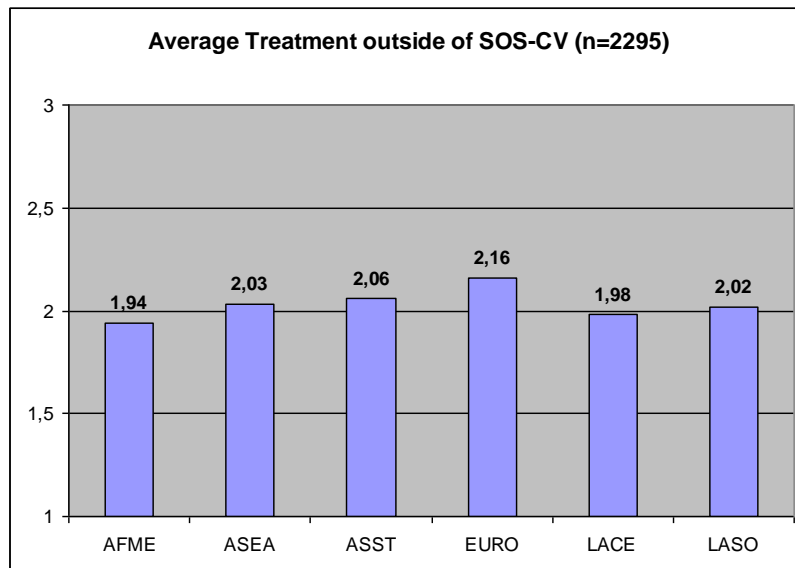
### 2.2.7 Retrospective Perception of Treatment outside SOS Children’s Villages and Distance to Communities

The following two items addressed aspects that extend to the communities around the SOS families and youth facilities. The first asked the SOS adults how they felt treated outside SOS Children’s Villages: as somebody special (in a positive sense), as equal to everyone else, or as someone inferior. In general the survey participants did not feel discriminated against, although some obviously experienced a lack of regard.

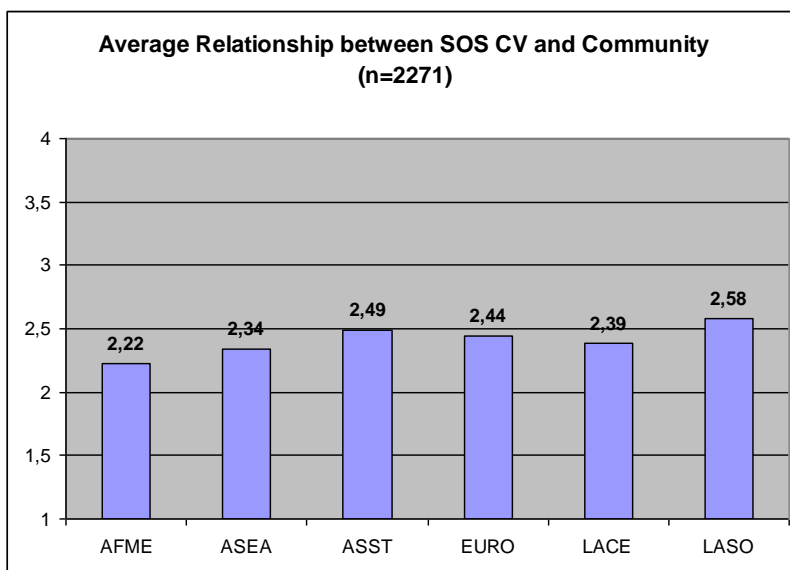
The second asked how the former SOS children perceived the relationship between their SOS Children’s Village and the community. The respective answers we got had a positive tendency, confirming a close relationship. But it probably would be more appropriate to call the result ambivalent.



Again, we were confronted with significant regional differences. In the case of the treatment outside of SOS Children’s Villages the lower the regional mean, the more privileged the former SOS children felt treated.

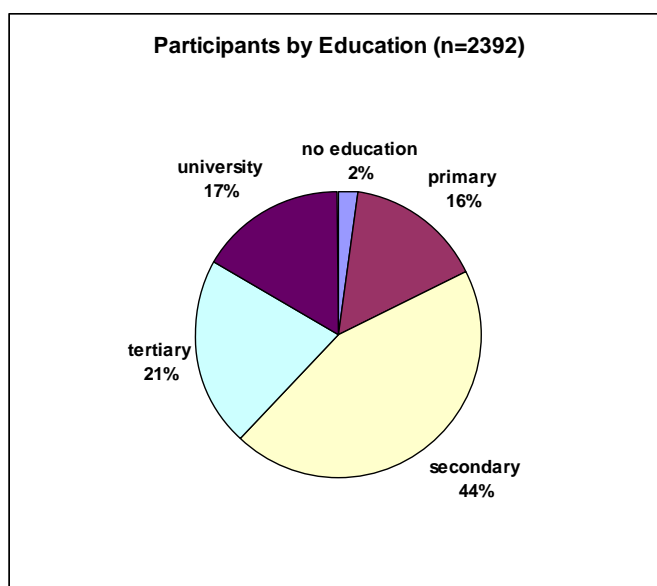


The graph indicating the perceived distance between the SOS Children’s Village and the community can be read the same way: the lower the value, the closer the average relationship from the respondent’s point of view.



### 2.2.8 Education

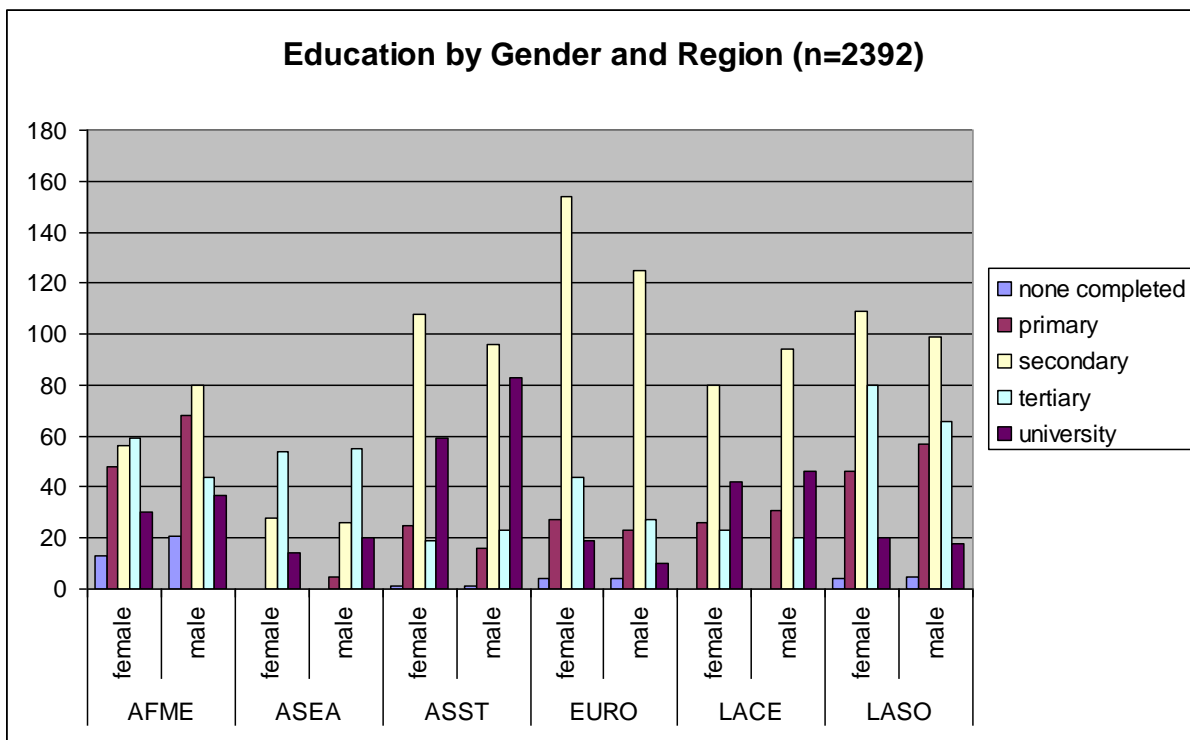
The education of the children within SOS programmes has always been a major concern of our organisation. For this reason Tracking Footprints pays considerable attention to this topic. In general – as we already pointed out at the beginning of this report – the former SOS children reached a reasonably satisfactory level of education: 44% completed their secondary education successfully, 21% attained a tertiary qualification and 17% a university degree. Only 2% did not complete any formal education.



Even more remarkable is the fact that within the scope of our analysis no significant gender-related differences could be found. The discrepancies in absolute numbers (as shown below) did not lead to relevant differing percentages. The disparities we observed in our data can primarily be explained by regional effects. According to the statements of the survey participants, SOS Children's Villages is obviously successful in avoiding gender inequality in education.

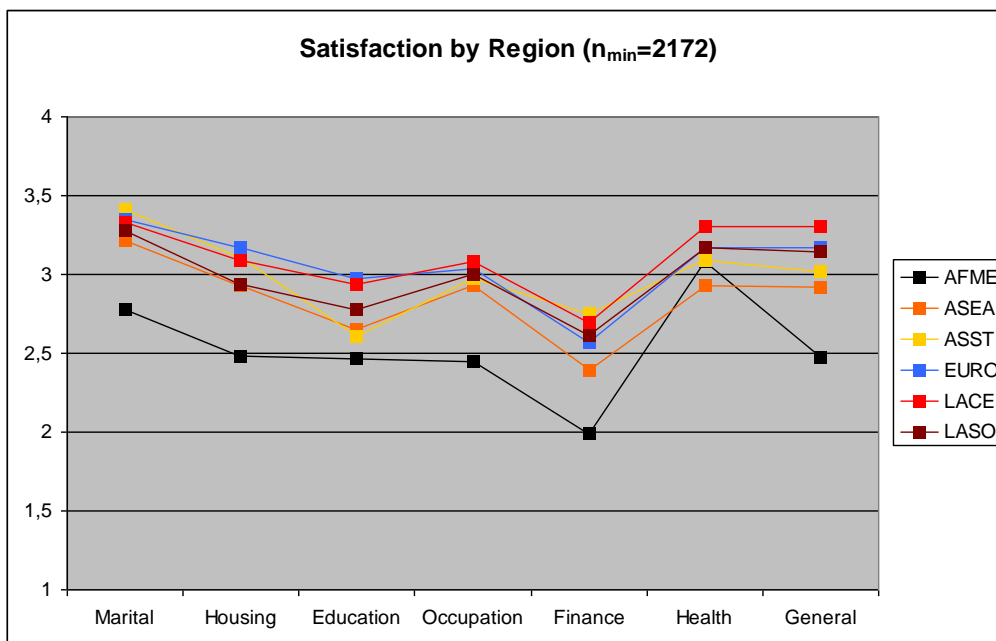
However, it seems that SOS adults from EURO faced the greatest problems in completing an education beyond secondary school, while we saw ambivalent outcomes in this context in AFME: on the one hand there were significantly more people without any educational degrees while on the other hand educational qualifications did not seem to be distributed as homogeneously anywhere else, including tertiary and university degrees.



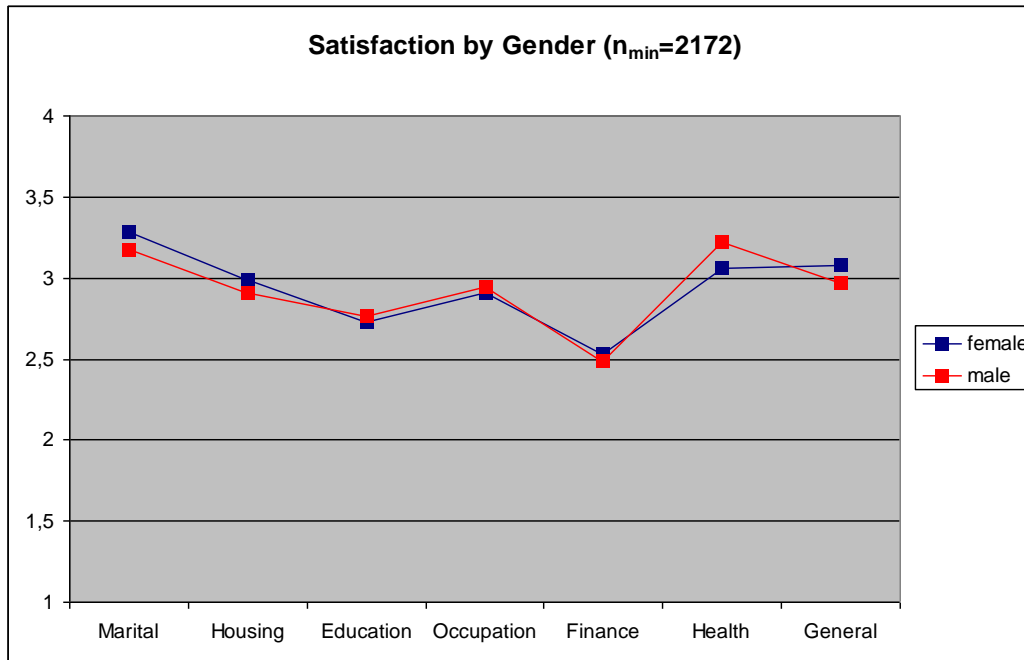


### 2.2.9 Current Satisfaction of Survey Participants

Asking SOS adults about their current satisfaction with their life we focussed on six different areas: marital status, housing situation, education, occupation, financial situation, health and one item that related to their general satisfaction. The results show significant regional differences: the satisfaction profile in AFME was clearly the lowest and the only one to drop more than once below the arithmetical mean of 2.5, which describes the average survey participant from AFME as dissatisfied. The differences between the other regional profiles were also statistically significant.



Additionally, there were statistically significant disparities by gender. Nonetheless, compared to the regional effects they were quite small.



## 2.3 Correlations and Advanced Differentiations

### 2.3.1 Correlations

Complementary to our questions about significant differences we were also looking for statistical correlations between the variables we examined. In this context we focussed on the current life satisfaction and the retrospective perception of the SOS mother. As a first step, we computed an average individual satisfaction for every survey participant out of the six satisfaction areas mentioned earlier. For the retrospective perception of SOS mothers we have done that already, as shown under 2.1.6.

Additionally, we linked the Tracking Footprints results with data from SOS external studies that have been carried out by others. For this purpose, we decided to refer to the 'Under-5 Mortality Rate', which is also used by UNICEF in their international reports as an index of socio-economic development.

#### 2.3.1.1 The Individual Average Satisfaction

The individual average satisfaction correlated significantly with several variables. However, these correlations were often so weak that we prefer to talk about them as correlative tendencies.

One of these tendencies was that the worse the respondents felt treated outside SOS Children's Villages, the less satisfied they described themselves at the time of the interview. This could be interpreted as an indicator for a long-lasting impact of the discrimination SOS adults experienced while staying in one of our families or youth facilities. The meaning of this tendency becomes clearer when we take into account that the closer the respondents perceived the relation of SOS Children's Villages to its surrounding community, the better they felt treated outside (shown through a highly significant correlation).

These two findings combined suggest that we can reduce the discrimination of SOS children to some extent by embedding our programmes better within the community.

As far as the respondents' retrospective perception of SOS mothers was concerned, we came across another interesting tendency: the better SOS children perceived their former caregivers, the more satisfied they appeared to be. In this respect there is another interesting tendency: the fewer SOS mothers the former SOS children had during their time in an SOS family, the better they perceived them. One conclusion could be that keeping the fluctuation of SOS mothers low could have a positive

effect on the development and satisfaction of SOS adults in later life.

According to this hypothesis it would be very interesting to take a closer look at countries like Honduras, Pakistan or Chile: how did SOS adults reach comparatively high levels of satisfaction although they obviously also had a high instance of SOS mother fluctuation?

The strongest correlative tendency in this context occurred between the average individual satisfaction and the respondents' educational level. It is not strong enough to conclude that a high educational qualification automatically leads to a high satisfaction level. In our opinion it should be understood as a symptom or evidence of successful integration into society, which probably contributes more directly to one's life satisfaction.

### 2.3.1.2 The Retrospective Perception of SOS Mothers

What we said about the individual average satisfaction can be repeated for the retrospective perception of SOS mothers. It correlated significantly with several variables; but in general these correlations happened to be comparatively weak. Again, we call them correlative tendencies.

Apart from the aforementioned tendency – the better the respondents perceived their SOS mothers, the more satisfied they describe themselves at the time of the interview – we found evidence that the length of stay within an SOS family seems to have considerable impact on the perception of SOS mothers: the longer a former SOS child stayed there, the better he or she assessed the relation to the caregiver. Complementarily, we found out that the shorter the length of time SOS adults have spent in an SOS youth facility, the more positive they characterised their SOS mothers.

Of course, at this point we cannot tell for sure if a longer stay within a youth facility (or a shorter stay within an SOS family) is not just an indicator of a difficult relationship between the former SOS child and his/her SOS mother. But it is certainly plausible to conclude that good relationships need time to develop; and the more time the people involved are spending with each other, the better their relations can become.

The strongest correlative tendency concerning the retrospective perception of SOS mothers was related to the way SOS adults felt treated outside SOS Children's Villages during their stay within an SOS family: the better they were treated outside, the better the perception of their SOS mother. Remembering the comparatively strong tendency (i.e. the better the former SOS children felt treated outside, the closer they perceived the relation of SOS Children's Villages to the communities) this finding can also be interpreted as confirmation of our improved efforts to link our programmes to the local communities. Adding up all the single pieces of evidence that point in that same direction, a close relationship to the surrounding community appears to be a very important key to the success of our programmes.

### 2.3.1.3 The Under-5 Mortality Rate

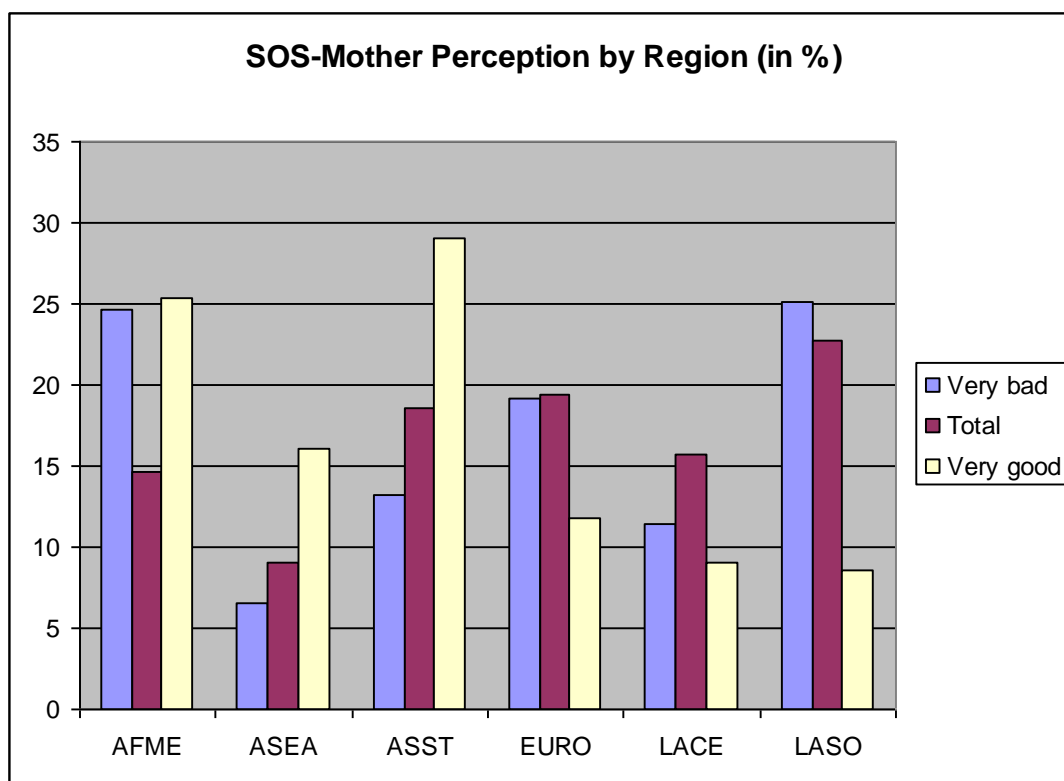
To get a better base for the assessment of our data and the conclusions we drew from our study, we were also interested in linking the Tracking Footprints results to external data generated by others. The 'Under-5 Mortality Rate' (U5MR), defined by the United Nations, and used by UNICEF in their global reports on the state of children, appeared to be an appropriate variable for this purpose. All countries and territories get ranked by their under-five mortality rate, which provides information about a child's risk/probability of dying between birth and exactly five years of age within a country, expressed per 1000 live births. When starting the second phase of Tracking Footprints in 2006, Sierra Leone led this list with 270 deaths of children under five per 1000 live births. With 3 deaths Sweden and Singapore found themselves together with several other nations at the other end of this ranking. UNICEF regards the under-five mortality rate as an indicator for the human as well as the economic development of nations. Its advantages compared to other indicators are that:

- it measures an end result of development rather than an 'input', such as school enrolment level, per capita calorie availability etc.,
- it is the result of a wide variety of inputs and
- it is less susceptible to the fallacy of the average than, for example, per capita gross national income (GNI) and therefore presents in some fields a more accurate picture (if far from perfect, of course) (see UNICEF 2007, 149).

Regarding the individual average satisfaction we found a not very strong, but highly significant, correlation with the U5MR: the higher the under-five mortality within a country, the lower the SOS adults' average satisfaction with life, as a rule. A further result shows the influence of the U5MR on the perception of SOS mothers: accordingly, the perception of SOS mothers suffered from high under-five mortality. Again, this emphasizes the importance of the regional (or more precisely, the socio-economical) context for our work: it cannot be assessed adequately without taking these aspects carefully into account.

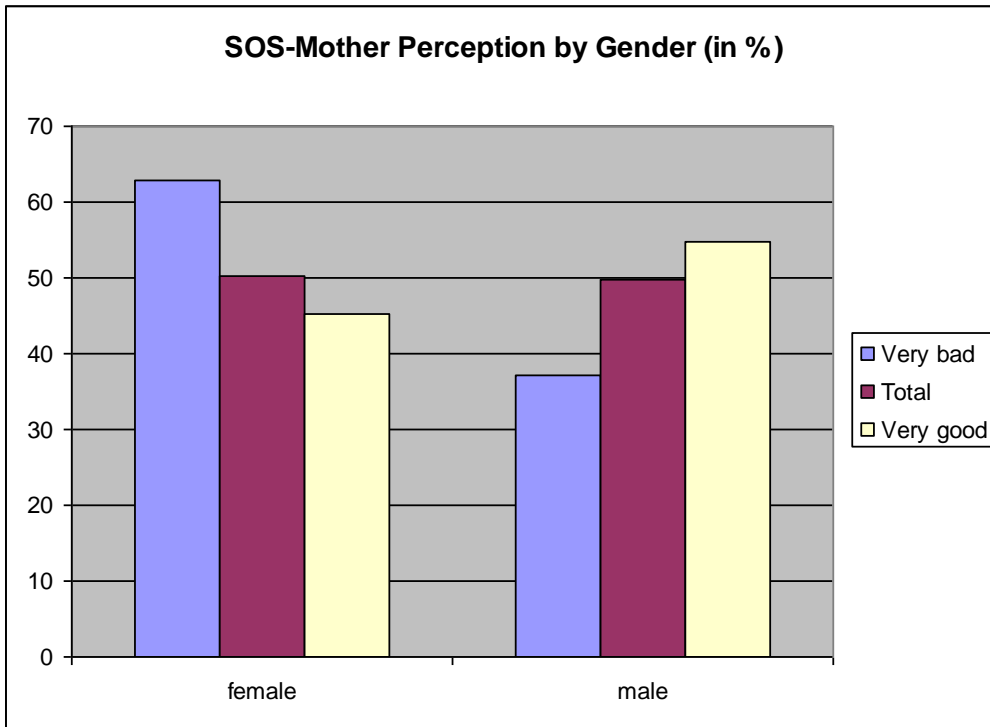
### 2.3.2 Comparison of Extreme Groups related to SOS Mothers Perception

Although the correlations and correlative tendencies were very plausible and fitted perfectly into the picture, their weakness made it necessary to do some more in-depth analysis in selected areas. Again, we concentrated on the perception of SOS mothers and the individual average satisfaction. Among all survey participants we selected those who attracted our attention by extreme values in the two variables. We merged them in extreme groups in order to compare them and get more precise results. In the following we will report firstly about those with an extremely positive and those with an extremely negative perception of their SOS mothers. As a second step we will make a comparison accordingly, based on the individual average satisfaction.

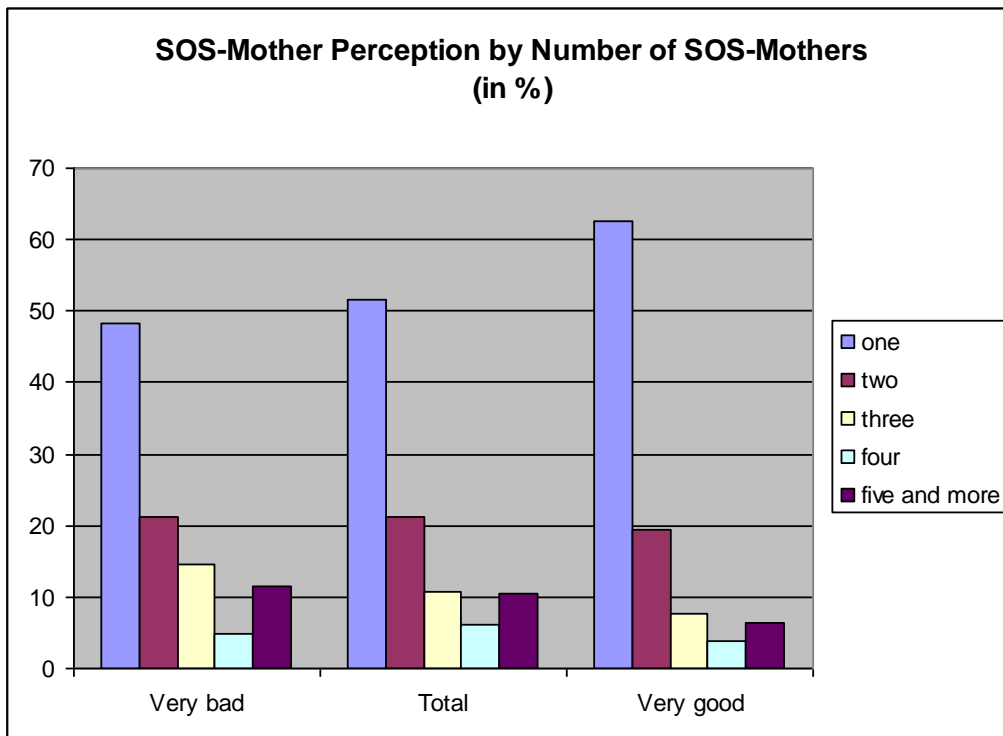


Referring to the perception of SOS mothers we assessed a mean of 2 or below as 'very bad' and a mean of 4 as 'very good'. The extreme group with a bad SOS mother perception contained 167 and the one with the good perception 186 individuals. The graph above shows how the members of these groups are distributed over the continents in percentages.

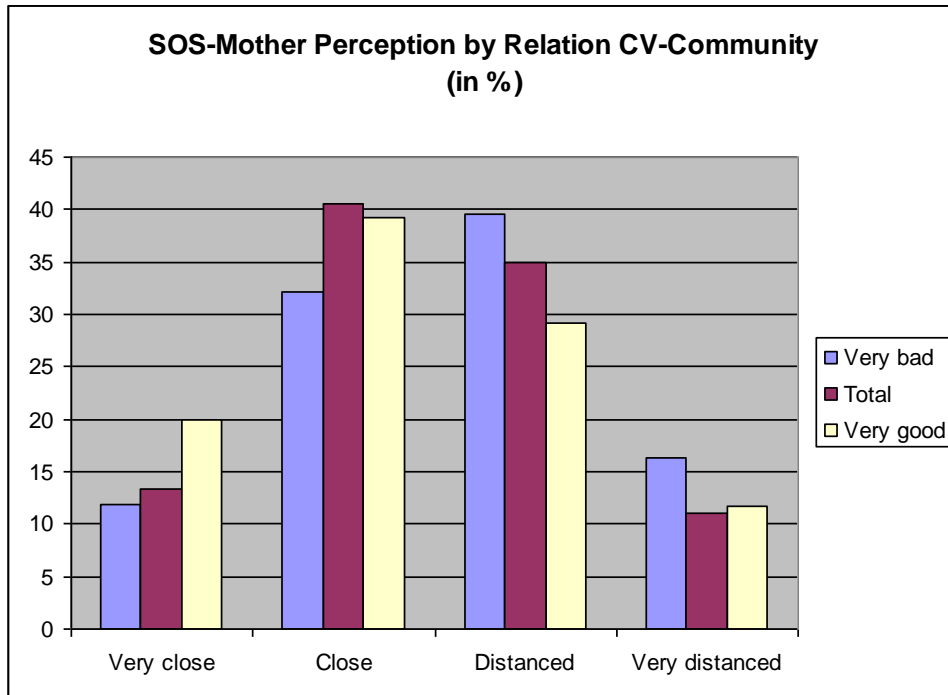
Please note that the bars do not add up to 100% within a continent but within a category ('very bad' versus 'very good'). This means that roughly 25% of those with a very bad perception of SOS mothers are from AFME while another 25% of them come from LASO. The bar in the middle, between the two bars of the extreme groups, represents the general share of people from each region within the sample. So it shows that, for example, survey participants from AFME are clearly over-represented in both extreme groups, while the two Asian regions are contributing more people than expected to the group with a very good perception of SOS mothers.



According to the gender-related correlative tendency mentioned earlier, we could see that within the group with a bad perception of SOS mothers, women were over- and men were under-represented.

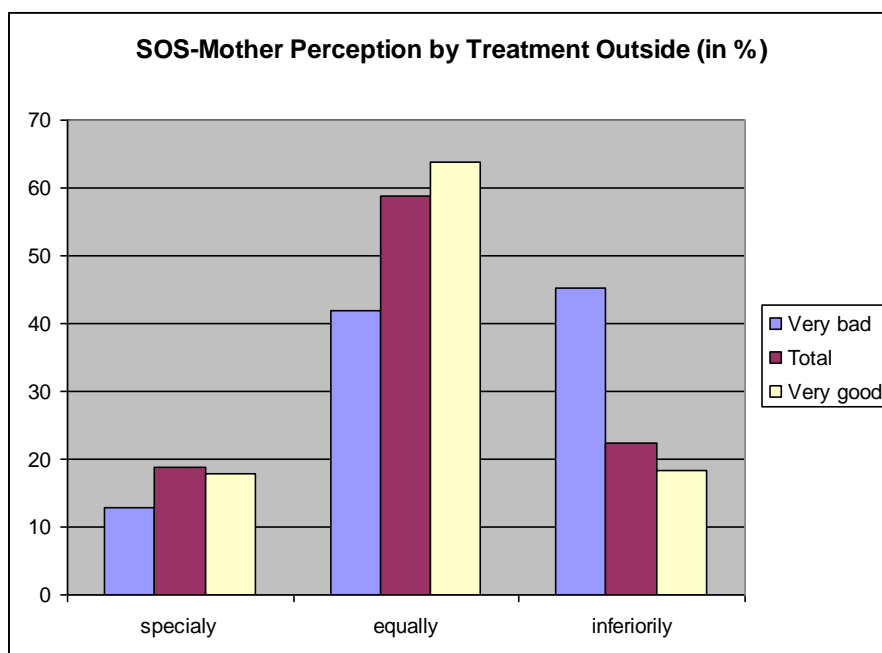


The correlative tendency between the number of SOS mothers and their perception became more obvious through the extreme group comparison: less than 50% of the respondents with a very bad perception of SOS mothers and more than 60% of the ones with a very good perception had just one SOS mother.



A new aspect is shown in the diagram above: survey participants with a bad perception of SOS mothers were significantly under-represented among the ones who described the relationship between SOS Children’s Villages and the community as ‘very close’ or ‘close’ but over-represented in the categories that characterised the relationship as ‘distanced’ or ‘very distanced’. Together with the over-representation of people with a very good perception (among those who perceived a very close relationship with the community) this result can be seen as a further indicator of the importance of a close relationship between our programmes and their social environment.

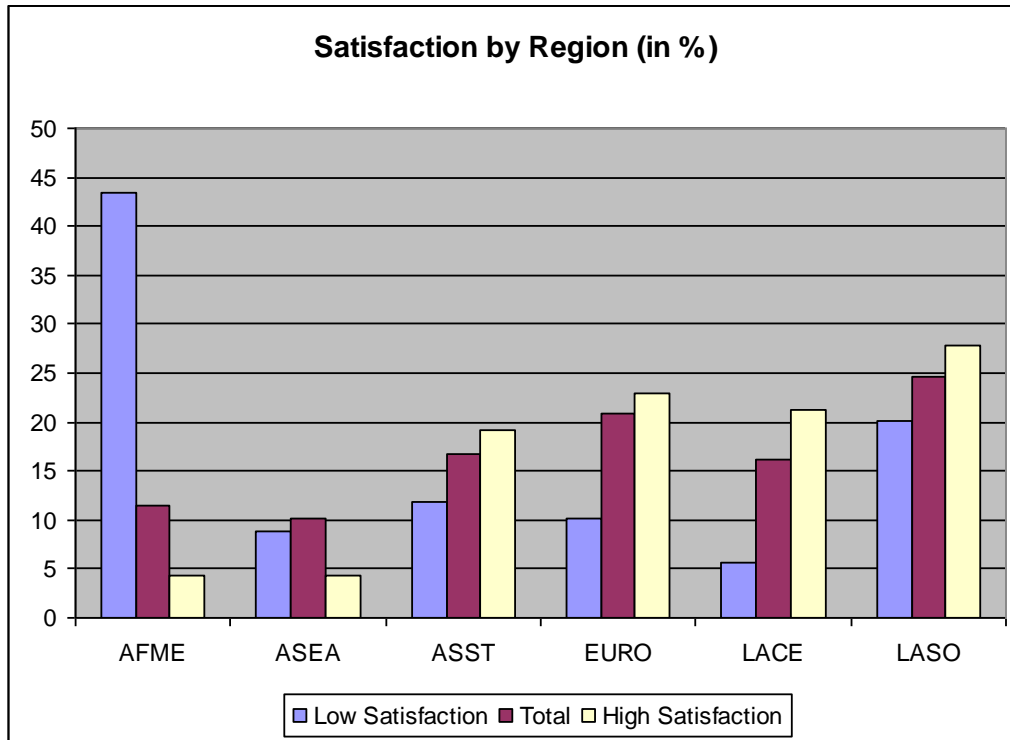
The last comparison (see below) concerning the perception of SOS mothers is on the one hand an additional confirmation of the correlation we had already observed (the better the former SOS children were treated outside, the better they perceive their SOS mothers). On the other hand it gives a better insight into the details of this relation: because of the greater difference among those who felt treated in an inferior way, it would probably be more appropriate to say that the worse they were treated outside, the more negatively they remember their former caregivers.



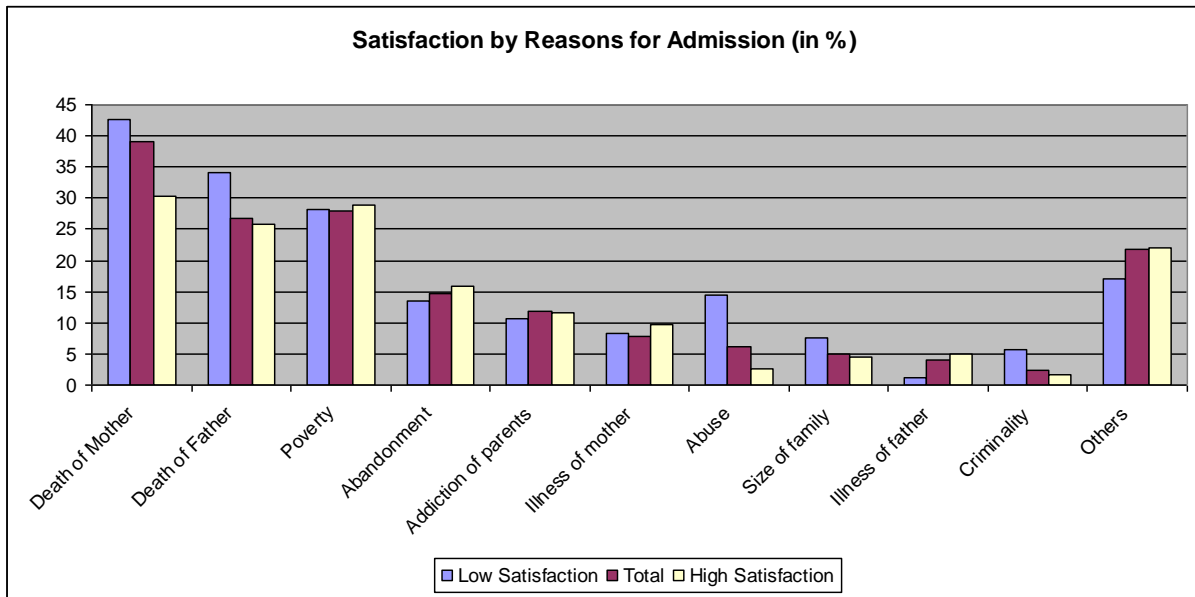
### 2.3.3 Comparison of Satisfaction-related Extreme Groups

The comparison of satisfaction-related extreme groups also gave some deeper insights. A mean of the individual average satisfaction below 2.33 stands for extremely low satisfaction and one greater than 3.5 for extremely high satisfaction. According to this categorisation, the group of respondents with a low satisfaction rating contained 159 persons while 183 survey participants can be characterised as highly satisfied.

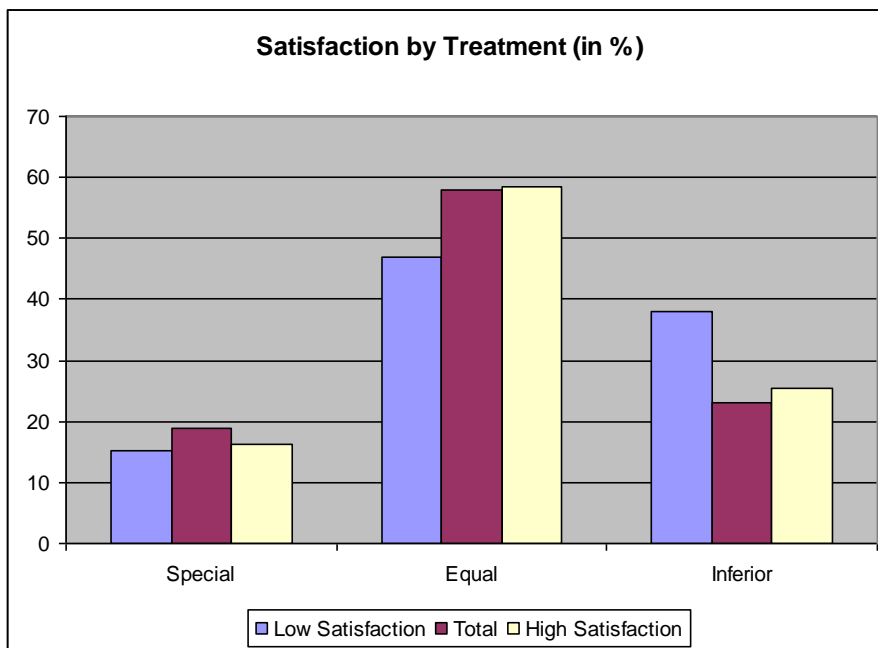
Again, the regional differentiation was a major reason for significant disparities, with people from AFME substantially over-represented. The region contributed more than 43% of the extremely unsatisfied and less than 5% of the extremely satisfied respondents.



There was one remarkable detail relating to the reasons for admission: those who are extremely unsatisfied mention 'abuse' almost three times as often as others. Bearing in mind that this group of respondents is dominated by people from AFME and that 'abuse' was mostly named by survey participants from EURO (who are clearly under-represented in this context), regional differentiation must again be taken into account. Whether the reason for this discrepancy is a different, maybe culture-specific understanding of 'abuse', a consequence of better ways of coping with 'abuse' in EURO, a mixture of both, or something completely different: the regional differentiation is in any case an indispensable step for assessing our work adequately. This seems to be very important as reasons for admission can be read as a local/regional requirement profile for our programmes.

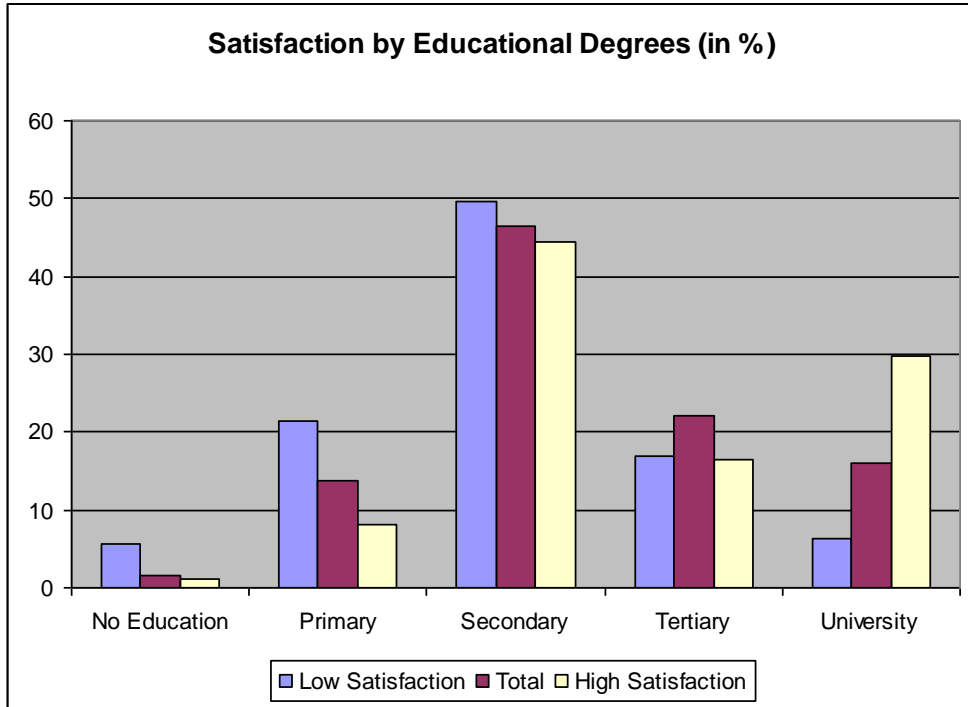


Another correlation related to satisfaction became more evident within the comparison of extreme groups: the least satisfied former SOS children felt discriminated against by the surrounding community to a significantly more frequent degree.

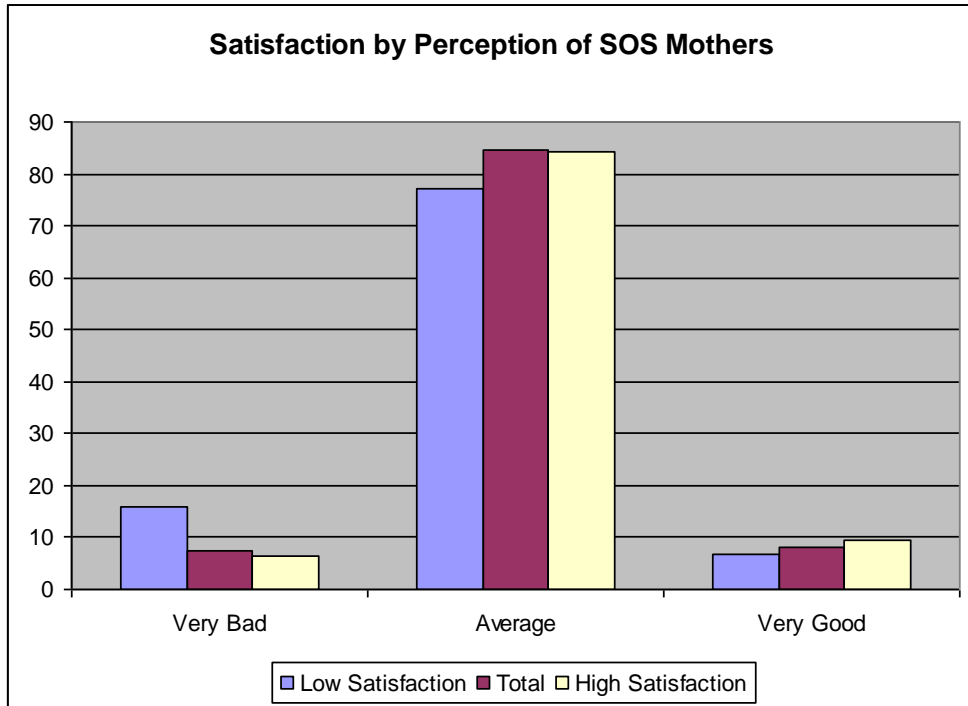


With regard to the highest educational degree achieved by former SOS children, the comparison of extreme groups gave us a more detailed impression of how these two variables are linked to each other. According to the diagram below, respondents with a university degree are on the one hand clearly over-represented within this group. On the other hand, not completing a higher (or even any) education qualification did not always lead to dissatisfaction among the SOS adults.





The correlative tendency between satisfaction and the perception of SOS mothers was also confirmed: the unsatisfied are clearly over-represented among those with a very bad perception of their former caregivers.



## 2.4 Summary of Results

**Overall, SOS adults are well-educated and able to establish relationships and families.** Girls and boys do receive more or less equal education opportunities. This is a valuable result, considering the different cultural positions regarding gender equality in the countries in which SOS Children's Villages operates.

**The average level of satisfaction with their education is marginally positive, differing regionally from a better value in Europe to a less satisfactory one in AFME.**

While gender does not seem to have any significant effect on the education of SOS adults, the region obviously makes a big difference. **In AFME there are significantly more respondents who did not complete an education** or who just finished primary school. Young people in Europe usually cannot achieve above secondary education level. By contrast, in ASST and LACE a surprising number of respondents have attained a university degree.

**Overall, SOS adults are quite satisfied with their lives,** evaluating different areas of their life, e.g. marital status, housing, education, occupation, financial situation, health. Respondents expressed the lowest satisfaction with their financial situation. This is remarkable, as satisfaction with the financial situation correlates the most with general satisfaction. On average, male SOS adults are less satisfied and over-represented among the singles group.

Again, region plays an important role in explaining differences: e.g. **dissatisfaction with life is greater in AFME than anywhere else.** Health is the only area of satisfaction where AFME is approaching a similar level to the other regions.

**Retrospectively, the majority of SOS adults describe the relation to their SOS mother as very positive.** Interestingly, the region has a huge effect on the perception of the SOS mother: **in AFME the perception of SOS mothers is rather negative compared to all other regions.** The social and economic circumstances within a society seem to be partly responsible for this result, as the perception of SOS mothers and the general satisfaction of SOS adults correlate with the Under-5 Mortality Rate (U5MR)<sup>4</sup>. **This means the lower the socio-economic status of a country (based on the U5MR), the lower the respondents' general satisfaction and the more negative their perception of their SOS mothers.** The general situation within a society therefore needs to be taken into account when assessing our services.

The results described so far provide an impressive demonstration of how variable the situation has been for children in the different regions. Consequently, the Tracking Footprints results strongly recommend focusing on the cultural and socio-economic situation in different regions when designing and developing SOS programmes.

**The better former SOS children perceived their former caregivers, the more satisfied they describe themselves.**

The fewer SOS mothers the former SOS children had during their time in an SOS family, the better they perceived them. This finding is supported by a study on African youth currently living in our care: "where the bond between youth and mother was not strong, there was high turn-over in SOS mothers" (Croce, 2008, ch. 5.1). Children currently in our care express their fears of losing their SOS mother, either through retirement or turn-over: "normal mothers do not retire" (Lill-Rastern, 2006).

These results lead to the conclusion that keeping the fluctuation of SOS mothers low could have a positive effect on the development and the satisfaction of SOS adults in later life. The length of stay also contributes to the perception of the SOS mother: the longer a former SOS child stayed in an SOS family, the better he or she assessed the relation to his/her caregiver.

**Generally, SOS adults felt treated equally by the community outside SOS Children's Villages.** Looking at regional differences paints a different picture: in AFME, more people than statistically

<sup>4</sup> The U5MR is based on the official statistics about child mortality in each country of the world. It shows the probability in a certain country of dying between birth and exactly five years of age, expressed per 1,000 live births.

expected stated that they felt treated as someone special (perceived positively) while in EURO significantly more young people felt treated as inferior.

The worse the respondents felt treated outside SOS Children's Villages, the less satisfied they describe themselves at the time of the interview. The closer the respondents perceived the relation between SOS Children's Villages and its surrounding community, the better they felt treated outside. Children currently in our care wish for more contact with children from the communities (Lill-Rastern, 2006).

Combined, these findings suggest that we can reduce the discrimination against SOS children to some extent by embedding our programmes better within the community. The African study on youth confirms the extent to which this is still a current issue: only 44% of the visited countries have partnerships outside SOS Children's Villages (see Croce, 2008). Establishing partnerships would be one of several possibilities for enhancing the relationship with the surrounding community.

The strongest correlative tendency we found concerning the retrospective perception of SOS mothers and the way SOS adults felt treated by the community during their stay within an SOS family was that **the better SOS children felt treated outside, the better their perception of the SOS mother**. These findings can be interpreted as confirmation of our efforts to improve the way we link our programmes to local communities. Adding up all the single pieces of evidence that point in that direction, a close relation to the surrounding community appears to be very important to the success of our programmes.

## 2.5 Conclusion

Based on the results described above, we can say that the stay within an SOS family (and if applicable in an SOS youth facility) had an impact on the lives of SOS adults, and according to the respondents in most cases it was a positive one. The strongest indicators for this assumption are the many correlations and correlative tendencies between the key variables of our examination, which were further confirmed by the comparison of the extreme groups. Due to the latter we even obtained a more precise picture of the nature of these correlations.

Nevertheless, there are of course many other variables we could not anticipate within our survey, but which influence the development of SOS children and are responsible for the comparably weak correlations. Several of these interfering factors are obviously subsumed under the strong regional differences we observed in almost any context. Our possibilities for generalising the basically positive results are therefore quite limited. No matter how hard we try, we cannot completely overcome the regionally different general conditions which are reflected within development indicators like the U5MR.

For further research – but also for the evaluation and monitoring of our programmes – this means that we have to focus more closely on these regional differences; and accordingly on the aspects that influence the relation between our programmes and their socio-cultural environment in a positive way. To do this successfully, our organisation will have to be more sensitive to the often very specific needs in each national and local context. Consequently, Programme Development and other functions of SOS Children's Villages at all levels should focus on: putting the needs of children first, acting through SOS programmes, paying close attention to content, and adapting actions accordingly; not vice-versa. This recommendation is inextricably linked to a stated intention in the SOS Children's Village Programme Policy (2009) which talks about 'putting the child's development needs and rights in the centre of the programme structure' (p.3).

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