



## Online Conference Strengthening Families, Protecting Children

30<sup>th</sup> and 31<sup>st</sup> October

Speakers, Moderators and Rapporteurs

### DAY 1 Opening of conference



#### Angela María Rosales

Angela María Rosales is the Chief Program Officer and interim Chief Executive Officer of SOS Children's Villages International, managing the organization operating in 136 countries. Prior to this role, she led SOS Children's Villages Colombia for over 12 years, where she innovated quality care services tailored to local contexts and centred on children and young people. She also led national level coalitions to advance children's rights. Her extensive background includes work with UNDP, national NGOs, and the Colombian government.



#### Katarina Ivanković Knežević

Katarina Ivanković Knežević is a Director for Social Rights and Inclusion in the Directorate General for Employment, Social Affairs, and Inclusion. Her area of activity is modernisation of social protection systems and wider social policies fostering social and labour market inclusion, through the implementation of the European Pillar of Social Rights and other relevant social policies of the European Union. She is leading a project on disability and inclusion and is also DG EMPL Equality Coordinator. Before joining the European Commission, she was State Secretary in the Ministry of Labour and the Pension System of the Republic of Croatia, responsible for the management and implementation of the European Social Fund and other EU instruments aiming at human resources development.



#### Dr Salma Nims

Dr Salma Nims is an international consultant on gender and social inclusion and WPS. She has served as Secretary General of the Jordanian National Commission for Women from 2014-2022, and Senior Social Affairs officer on Gender and Social inclusion at UN ESCWA 2022-2024. She holds a PhD and MSc from University College London and has 20 years in gender equality and inclusion in development. Dr Nims served on several global and regional committees and task forces including the UN High-level Task Force on Financing for Gender Equality. In 2019, she received Said Foundation Outstanding Achievement Prize, for her contributions to the development of the Arab region.



### **Nicola Oberzaucher – Moderator**

Nicola Oberzaucher joined SOS Children’s Villages International in 2005, initially leading the area of family strengthening, and currently serves as Director Programme for the region Central and Eastern Europe, Central Asia, and Middle East. She consults strategy and programme development in alternative care, prevention of child-family separation, childcare reform, and quality assurance, including in emergency contexts. Prior to this, she worked as Head of Health and Welfare for the European Centre for Social Welfare Policy and Research. She also served as programme officer with UNAIDS, as HIV/AIDS officer with UNICEF ECARO, and as a lawyer. Nicola holds a master’s degree in law and a MSc in social and organizational psychology.

## **Session 1: Presentation of research findings from the “Global Report on Children’s Care and Protection 2024: Understanding and preventing the separation of children from their families”**



### **Rosalind Willi**

Rosalind Willi has more than 15 years of experience as a research and development practitioner, in contexts such as Austria, Armenia, Bulgaria, Georgia, Lebanon, and South Africa. She currently works as Research Advisor at SOS Children’s Villages International, focusing on designing, commissioning, and carrying out research and trainings. She joined the Institute of Development Studies at Sussex University as a postgraduate researcher in 2020. Her doctoral research employs child-centred participatory and ethnographic methods to explore the wellbeing of Syrian-Armenian refugee children and their families in Armenia, in the context of family support services.



### **Dr Chrissie Gale**

Dr Chrissie Gale has a career spanning more than 30 years promoting child rights with specific reference to child protection and alternative care in an international context. She has worked in many different regions combining her professional expertise in the employ of international bodies and organisations such as UNICEF, UNHCR, UNWRA, Save the Children and Oxfam with an academic career. Until recently, Dr Gale led the international work for the Centre for Excellence for Children’s Care and Protection (CELCIS) in the University of Strathclyde during which she managed a global portfolio of child protection programmes and knowledge exchange opportunities. She remains affiliated to the University as a Senior Honorary Research Fellow as well as a Lecturer at the ASH University in Berlin.



### **Dr Joumana Yeretian**

Joumana Yeretian is an experienced biostatistician and public health researcher with a PhD in health management and a ScM and BSc in Biostatistics. She is currently an associate professor at the Higher Institute of Public Health at the Saint-Joseph University of Beirut, Lebanon, and serves as the coordinator of the Epidemiology and Biostatistics track and the director of the Centre for Collaborative Research Initiatives in Public Health. Joumana has over 25 years of working experience in the health sector. Her research interests include designing and analysing epidemiological studies, exploring, and assessing public private partnerships for healthcare governance and strengthening and optimizing health information systems.



### **Prof. Charlotte Bredahl**

Charlotte Bredahl has research experience from social work and health services research with children in out-of-home care, children in psychiatric treatment and children with chronic illnesses. She currently leads a research environment of researchers engaged in applied research in social work, seeking to improve early interventions to vulnerable young children and families as well as care for children in alternative placements.



### **Mehrigiul Ablezova**

Mehrigiul Ablezova is an Assistant Professor of Sociology at the American University of Central Asia (AUCA) and co-founder of PIL Research Company in Kyrgyzstan. She specializes in research methods, economic sociology, and the sociology of work and organizations. Mehrigiul leads applied policy research projects across Central Asia, working on consultancies supported by international agencies. Her research has been published in leading journals, including Theory and Society, Families, Relationships and Societies, Hommes & Migrations, and Central Asian Survey, as well as in numerous reference research reports.





## Session 2: Exchange on effective policies, strategies, and systems to strengthen families, protect children, and prevent child-family separation



### **Kateryna Novokhatnia**

Kateryna Novokhatnia is the First Deputy Head of the Coordination Centre for Family Upbringing and Child Care Development under the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine. With over 13 years of experience in the child protection sector, she leads reform efforts to transition Ukraine's child care system from institutional to family-based care. At the Coordination Centre, Kateryna leads international collaboration, plans, and monitors reform initiatives in 10 demonstration regions, and manages key coordination platforms—the Council of Regions and the Coalition of CSOs.



### **Aaron Greenberg**

Aaron Greenberg joined the UNICEF Regional Office for Europe and Central Asia as Senior Child Protection Regional Advisor in July 2017, working to support governments across Europe and Central Asia on issues related to child protection. Prior to this, Aaron served as chief of child protection in Georgia and in Myanmar where he directed UNICEF's support to government and NGO partners around social welfare, child care and justice reforms. Aaron is an internationally recognized expert in the area of child protection system reforms, with a particular focus on alternative care and social services.



### **Mathis Porchez**

Mathis Porchez works for the Directorate-General for Employment, Social Affairs & Inclusion of the European Commission, in a unit in charge of social (investment) policies. He supports Member States in the implementation of the European Child Guarantee to ensure children in need have access to a set of key services and benefit from the same opportunities as the others. He among others took an active part in the development of a common framework to monitor the implementation of the Guarantee at the EU level. He also deals with policies aiming to reduce child poverty.



### **Maria Dantcheva**

Maria Dantcheva serves as the Deputy Programme Director at SOS Children’s Villages International, focusing on the IOR CEE/CIS/Middle East region. Her work involves monitoring trends in the development of alternative care services, providing technical expertise, and offering consultation and capacity building. Before taking on this role, Maria spent over 15 years as a Programme Advisor at SOS Children’s Villages Bulgaria, where she consulted on the implementation of alternative care, youth development, and family strengthening programs. Maria has more than 20 years of experience in consulting NGOs on child welfare reforms and developing community-based social services that effectively support the needs of children and families.



### **Darina Krapchanska**

Darina, 18-year-old from Bulgaria, currently studying logistics and preparing herself for university studies in Psychology in Sofia. Active young person on the rights of young people and motivating them to become a voice for their change. Her hope for the future is to support people who struggle with mental health. During the last two years, Darina has received support from SOS Children’s Villages through the family strengthening programs and YouthCan project upgrading her employability skills.



### **Raluca Verweijen-Slamnescu – Moderator**

Raluca Verweijen-Slamnescu is an experienced consultant specializing in child safeguarding and participation. With extensive expertise, she has guided both national and international NGOs and governmental organizations in planning, implementing, and evaluating interventions for children and families at risk. Raluca works from Austria and Romania and has deep familiarity in the civil society sector in Central and Eastern Europe.



## DAY 2

### Session 3: Core principles of working with families at risk



**Lyudmila Kim, LMSW**

Lyudmila Kim, LMSW is a leading social work practitioner, educator, and consultant with over 20 years of experience. She holds a Master's in Social Work from Columbia University's School of Social Work (CSSW) and a Master's in Psychology from the National University of Uzbekistan. Her expertise includes child protection, gender-based violence, mental health, substance use, and crisis and trauma interventions. As a consultant for INGOs and UNICEF, she has helped strengthen social service workforces and services across Central Asia and the CIS. Currently based in New York, she serves as Program Director of the Uzbekistan-Columbia Center at CSSW. She also provides trauma-focused mental health therapy for diverse vulnerable populations in New York.

### Session 4: Sharing promising practices for strengthening families and protecting children



**Prof. Mark Jordans**

Mark Jordans, PhD, is Professor of Child and Adolescent Global Mental Health at the Center for Global Mental Health, King's College London, and Professor Child and Adolescent Global Mental Health at the Amsterdam Institute of Social Science Research, University of Amsterdam. He is a child psychologist and works as Director of Research & Development for the NGO War Child in the Netherlands. His research interests are the development, implementation, and evaluation of psychosocial and mental health care systems in low- and middle-income countries, especially for children in adversities and in fragile states.



**Hadil Al Faqih**

Hadil Al Faqih is the Program Director of the SOS Children's Village Amman. She is a licensed clinical psychologist by profession and is a seasoned psychologist with 2 master's degrees, the latest in Global Mental Health from Columbia University. She has years of experience in the sustainable development sector, communication for behaviour change, project management, therapy, child protection, MHPSS, research, employee wellbeing, and education. Hadil has a global perspective and has worked in several countries around the globe.





### **Alaa Fatafta**

Alaa Fatafta holds a master's degree in Psychological and Educational Counselling from Al-Quds University and is currently pursuing a Ph.D. in the same field at Al-Quds Open University. With over 16 years of professional experience in family empowerment and mental health, she currently serves as the Bethlehem Program Director for SOS Children's Villages Palestine, where she oversees the development and implementation of programs to ensure high-quality. In addition, she is a faculty member at Hebron University and has contributed to numerous projects, including collaborations with UNRWA, focusing on adolescent protection and rights. Her expertise encompasses program coordination, management, and stakeholder engagement. I have worked as a program coordinator and psychological counsellor for various local and international organizations and universities.



### **Anemari Nitu**

Anemari Nitu graduated in Philology, with a BA in Romanian -English Literature, then specialized in political science. She is holding a PhD in Political Sciences with a thesis focusing on the dialogue between civil society and political actors in post-communist Romania. Anemari has been working in the civil society sector for more than 20 years, in international and Romanian NGOs, having various positions in fields such as human rights, education, health, cooperation for development, social economy and housing. She recently joined the CONCORDIA Romania team as an Advocacy Specialist.



### **Ivona Bukovska**

Ivona Bukovska holds a Bachelor's degree in Social Work and Political Science, as well as a Master's degree in Law. With over 10 years of experience in child rights assurance and organizing support for children and families, she is also a mediator and facilitates preventive and psychosocial groups. Currently, she leads the Child and Family Center at Save the Children Lithuania, which provides case management, social care, and psychosocial services. She collaborates with municipalities, state institutions, and non-governmental organizations to ensure assistance for children and families.



### **Alesia Charniauskaja**

Alesia Charniauskaja graduated from the Belarusian Pedagogical University with a Bachelor’s Degree in Educational Science in 1997 and obtained a Bachelor’s Degree in Law at the Belarusian Institute of Jurisprudence in 2001. She has been working at National Education Institute as a specialist on Pedagogical Issues and Head of the Family Pedagogical Division. Since 2012 she has been the Family Strengthening Adviser with SOS Children’s Villages Belarus. Research interests: children’s rights, prevention of child abandonment and child abuse.



### **Alena Vysotskaya**

Alena Vysotskaya graduated from Vitebsk State University with a degree in social work and psychology 2007 and worked in various educational establishments. Between 2012 and 2014 she was the Director of the Minsk District Social and Pedagogical Center (support for families in crisis situations, working to restore their parental rights, training candidates for adoptive and foster parents, training, and support for professionals from regional educational establishments working with families in crisis situations. Since 2014 she has been working at the SOS Children's Village Barauljany as Social Center Leader (Family Strengthening Service).



### **Almadina Guma- Moderator**

Almandina, a licensed clinical psychologist based in Albania. She has extensive programmatic expertise with focus on alternative care, advocacy and child and youth participation and has worked on various regional projects and support dedicated to country programs in SOS Children’s Villages organizations in Western Balkan. Passionate about mental health and meaningful child and youth led designed programs.





**Lubos Tibensky – Rapporteur**

Lubos Tibensky is a Programme Advisor at SOS Children's Villages International, focusing on Mental Health and Psychosocial Support in the region of Central and Eastern Europe, Central Asia, and the Middle East. He holds a master's degree in psychology and has practical experience in alternative care and family counselling.



**Adile Shaqiri**

Ms. Shaqiri, with 22 years of experience, continues to contribute to the initiation and drafting of policies, and the development of systems for social and family protection services in Kosovo. As one of the founders of the social protection system in Kosovo, she has played an important role in promoting child protection as well as in the protection of victims of domestic violence and human trafficking within the framework of social protection. Ms. Shaqiri is actively involved in reforming the legal, professional, and institutional framework by establishing standards for the provision of social services in Kosovo.



**Bozena Narkun**

Bozena Narkun holds a degree in Resocialisation Pedagogy from the Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński University in Poland. She started working for SOS Children's Villages in Lithuania in 2009. Her work experience includes working with families as a social worker and as a Family Strengthening Programme coordinator, also as a coordinator and consultant of complex services project. Her experience encompasses work in international and national projects, such as the Leavig care project and the establishment of the "One Stop" crisis centre. She also works directly with young people as a trainer in The Treasure Archipelago and ART programmes.



### **Ruta Urbonienė**

Ruta Urboniene holds a Master's degree in Clinical Health Psychology from the Lithuanian University of Health Sciences, specializing in family psychology, and began her career as a psychologist at SOS Children's Villages. She counsels adults, adolescents, and families, leads group sessions, and organizes competency development workshops. She is passionate about ongoing professional growth and became a Parents under Pressure (PuP) therapist and is currently pursuing accreditation in the Parent-Child Reconnection Programme. Her work focuses on building authentic connections and finding creative solutions to support families in crisis.



### **Katja Borovac**

Katja Borovac is a psychologist with mentor status at CCS Izvor Selce and a school cybernetics and systemic therapy psychotherapist. She provides counselling and support to children, youth, and families through half-day care services, counselling, and psychosocial support. Before joining CCS Izvor Selce, since 2009, she has worked with children, young people, vulnerable, and marginalized groups at the Terra association (working with addicts and their families) and SOS Rijeka association (working with victims of violence).



### **Davor Vukelić**

Educator mentor at the Half-Day Care Service of CCS Izvor Selce. A PhD student and external collaborator at the Department of Pedagogy, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, University of Rijeka. His research interests include social and inclusive pedagogy, as well as holistic inclusion of children with ADHD. He publishes scientific and professional papers on ADHD and participates in national and international scientific and professional conferences.



### **Khaled Abu Jolban**

With over a decade of experience in child protection, Khaled Abu Jolban currently serves as the Child Protection Manager at International Medical Corps. In this role he provides leadership to a dedicated team, overseeing case management processes, ensuring the protection of children's rights, and fostering community-based protection mechanisms. Having previously held key positions within IMC, including Child Protection Team Leader and Case Manager, he brings expertise in case assessment, care planning, and child protection program development. Khaled holds a Bachelor's degree in Electrical Engineering from the Jordan University of Science & Technology.



### **Dildor Yusupova**

Dildor Yusupova began her career at SOS Children's Villages Uzbekistan right after earning her bachelor's degree in law from Westminster International University in Tashkent. Her interest in child welfare and social protection led her to pursue a Master's degree in Analysis and Design of Social Protection Systems at Bonn-Rhein-Sieg University of Applied Sciences in Germany. She is currently working as a Programme Advisor for alternative care and family strengthening at SOS Children's Villages Uzbekistan.



### **Nelly Akobia, MSW**

Nelly Akobia has over 15 years of experience in social work and social services development in Georgia. She earned master's degree in social work from Columbia University in New York. She has vast experience of working in the fields of the rights of the child, child care and child welfare, as well as family strengthening in both state and non-state organizations. Her functions over the years in various capacities have included direct field work, supervision, training and capacity development of professionals, development and revision of social services and programs, etc. At SOS Children's Villages Georgia Nelly is the National Family Strengthening Advisor responsible for supporting family strengthening services at the organization through training, capacity building, monitoring, and revision and development of services.





**Rimvydas Augutavicius - Moderator**

Rimvydas is a social worker by heart and by qualification, with a strong belief that combining social work and educational strategies deepens the understanding of human behaviour and promotes positive changes in attitudes. This conviction led him to earn a doctorate in Adult Education in 2019. His doctoral thesis, "Non-Formal Education of Families at Social Risk: A Grounded Theory," is an in-depth scientific exploration of patterns in at-risk behaviours and examines how adult education can help alter harmful behavioural patterns in vulnerable families.



**Rusudan Chkheidze- Rapporteur**

Rusudan Chkheidze, a graduate in Pedagogics and Linguistics from the University of Foreign Languages in Tbilisi, Georgia, has built her career advocating for human rights, particularly for children, youth, and vulnerable families. She has worked with the Human Rights Center in Georgia on youth and women's empowerment and led advocacy efforts for SOS Children's Villages in various capacities. Currently, as Head of Programme and Content Lead for Youth Employability in the SOS International Office CEE/CIS/ME, Rusudan supports Member Associations with strategic development and program quality. She is an RBM trainer and a master trainer for Aflatoun's "Next Economy" program.