

CHILD SAFEGUARDING ANNUAL REPORT 2020/2021

Child Care and Safeguarding Team
Programme Development International Competence
Centre

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



SOS CHILDREN'S
VILLAGES
A loving home for every child



Name of artist unknown, child's drawing of a house, Belarus.

The past year has included some significant developments for child safeguarding, including the conclusion of the **Independent Child Safeguarding Review (ICSR)**. The ICSR examined past cases of abuse and identified failures in the organizational response. The report included 46 recommendations for improvement in areas such as leadership and organizational culture; oversight, governance and accountability; care quality; and justice and support for victims, survivors, and whistle-blowers. The publication of the ICSR report on our [international website](#) was accompanied with the publication of our **Safeguarding Action Plan**, which includes 24 actions reflecting our commitment to take a more holistic approach and to create a safe environment everywhere we operate.

International projects and initiatives

The federation is undertaking numerous international projects and initiatives, including several that are also described in the Safeguarding Action Plan:

- Providing **immediate support** for children and other persons affected by abuse towards their healing, recovery, reconciliation and self-reliance
- Developing and rolling out an **ombudsperson** system to ensure that the organization fully meets the rights and needs of individuals who experienced abuse
- Establishing an **Independent Special Commission** to review past cases and recommend further investigation and governance improvements
- Providing extra support to member associations operating in **high-risk contexts** and with high risk profiles

Regional and member association highlights

Our programme and child safeguarding teams around the world continued to strengthen safeguarding through activities such as:

- Responding to the **COVID-19 pandemic** with specialized counselling for children and young people, as well as extra training for staff
- Developing channels through which children and young people can **report** any safeguarding concerns
- Providing additional training and materials to staff on **trauma-informed care** and positive parenting
- Increasing the participation of children and young people in **violence prevention** efforts, such as the Protective Behaviours programme, child rights training and safeguarding for online environments.

Incident analysis

We continue the practice of reporting the numbers of confirmed child safeguarding incidents across our global federation.

In 2020, a total of 1,311 child safeguarding incidents of **abusive behaviours** were confirmed across all SOS Children's Villages programmes, in which we provided alternative care for 65,500 children and young people, and supported 347,000 children, young people and adults in family strengthening programmes. Of those incidents, 590 were confirmed **adult-to-child** incidents, and 721 were confirmed **child-to-child** incidents. These confirmed incidents of abusive behaviours involved 1,862 children and young people in the direct care of SOS Children's Villages, representing approximately 3% of the total number of children and young people in SOS Children's Villages alternative care programmes.

During 2020, a total of 436 individual **staff** members (1.2% of our total staff) were involved in abusive behaviour incidents towards children, approximately half of which were physical abuse – mostly acts of corporal punishment.

In 2020, 19 staff were reported and confirmed as perpetrators of **child sexual coercion and abuse**, and 27 children were confirmed as victims in these incidents. Nine of those staff members were individuals working in administrative, maintenance, security and other support functions or at SOS Children's Villages schools and medical centres.

A total of 741 children and young people in the direct care of SOS Children's Villages displayed abusive behaviour towards other children or young people. Approximately 58% of those children and young people initiated incidents of physical abuse, which mostly involved acts of fighting and bullying, 27% initiated incidents of sexual coercion and abuse, and 15% initiated incidents of emotional abuse.



Recommendations

The Child Care and Safeguarding Team makes two general recommendations in this report:

1. Calling on the entire SOS Children's Villages federation to apply the organization's policies and procedures consistently and rigorously. Children everywhere have the same rights, requiring the organization to provide the same standards of quality care, protection and safety everywhere it operates.
2. Calling on the federation to fully implement the 24-point [Safeguarding Action Plan](#).