



# Independent Special Commission Report

## Fact sheet

### Background of the report

- **The Commission:** In 2021, SOS Children's Villages International appointed the [Independent Special Commission](#) (ISC) after receiving internally commissioned reports, including the [Independent Child Safeguarding Review](#) (ICSR), regarding past safeguarding and compliance failures, including child abuse, corruption, misuse of funds, and breaches of regulations that protect children's and employees' rights. The Commission is chaired by Dr. Willy M. Mutunga, former Chief Justice of the Republic of Kenya.
- **Our Apology.** In 2021, SOS Children's Villages [apologized for past organizational failings](#) and encouraged anyone with knowledge of abuse or misconduct to come forward. The past safeguarding failures in our organization go against everything we stand for. As a response, SOS Children's Villages developed a 24-point [Safeguarding Action Plan](#).
- **A priority initiative.** The appointment of the ISC was a prioritized action in our Safeguarding Action Plan which contains a range of measures to improve our safeguarding and address past failures, such as providing direct support to those affected by past abuse, strengthening our response to new incidents, and fundamental programme quality and prevention work.
- **The progress.** The ISC recognizes the progress already made by SOS Children's Villages. In 2021 we adopted our Safeguarding Action Plan. In March 2023 we published a [progress report](#). Key accomplishments since May 2021 include:
  - Introduction of an independent ombudsperson system to represent the needs of children and young people.
  - Individualized support provided to more than 500 people affected by past cases of abuse.
  - Strengthened policy framework including a new Code of Conduct and Child and Youth Safeguarding Policy.
- **Investigation in numbers.** The ISC has conducted field visits to 11 countries, reviewed thousands of documents and conducted over 188 interviews with people in different positions, including alleged victims and former and current staff of SOS Children's Villages.

### Key findings and recommendations

- **Safeguarding failures.** The extensive investigations and examination of specific serious incidents and allegations into child safeguarding and asset safeguarding helped identify root causes to be thoroughly addressed.
- **Gaps.** The ISC concludes that despite numerous reform initiatives, the transformation of the SOS Children's Villages Federation has not been fully implemented.
- **Accountability.** The critique of the leadership in the examination of historical allegations is primarily a reflection of previous senior and international leaderships. The organization had a wide overhaul of its leadership in 2021. However, certain "cultures" and "norms" from the old leadership structure and "system" remain and hinder the work of the new leadership. Since 2021, more than 60% of SOS Children's Villages International's supervisory board has been replaced.



- **Caregivers.** The report underlines the importance of the caregivers in SOS Children's Villages' ability to deliver on its mission. The collective well-being of caregivers must be integrated into reforms, and improving their remuneration should be a priority.
- **Final conclusion.** The report's final conclusion is that the SOS Children's Villages Federation's great mission and cause must continue, and the ISC can conclude that positive changes are being made overall, but the pressure to reform the organization overall, must persist.

### About SOS Children's Villages

- SOS Children's Villages, founded in 1949, is the world's largest organization focused on ensuring that children and young people without parental care or at risk of losing it grow up with the care, relationships, and support they need to become their strongest selves.
- Locally led, we work in more than 130 countries and territories to strengthen families under pressure so they can stay together. We operate in several active conflict situations, post-conflict and fragile states, including Ukraine, Syria and Sudan.
- Globally, SOS Children's Villages reached more than 2.5 million people in 2022. More than 500,00 people (from almost 100,000 families) took part in our family strengthening programmes.

### More information

- For updates and background about our safeguarding work, see <https://www.sos-childrensvillages.org/our-work/safeguarding-info-hub>
- Q&A on Devex: [SOS Children's Villages improves safeguarding to protect children](#)
- For more information or to request an interview, please contact [press@sos-kd.org](mailto:press@sos-kd.org)