

# THE RIGHT TO PROTECTION

## ENDING VIOLENCE AGAINST CHILDREN



SOS CHILDREN'S  
VILLAGES  
INTERNATIONAL



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## IMPRINT

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**Printing:** Dialogwerkstatt

**Date of publication:** March 2017



# Foreword

Gitta Trauernicht

**Every five minutes a child dies as a result of violence.** Despite the increasing condemnation of violence by the international community and a growing body of legislation, policy and institutions to protect them, violence remains a harsh reality in the daily lives of many children.

At its core, violence against children reflects an imbalance and abuse of power between children and the perpetrators that is used to inflict harm. Violence happens everywhere: it crosses continents and cultures, it is in our homes, communities and institutions, and it is often perpetrated with impunity.

Children without parental care or at risk of losing it face a heightened risk of violence, abuse, and neglect. Children growing up in alternative care have often experienced violence in their past lives, either at the hands of their families or communities. As a consequence they are prone to becoming more accepting of violence or risk to becoming aggressors themselves – violence begets violence and this vicious cycle must end.

Children fleeing war and conflict face the risk of violence and exploitation, especially when they are unaccompanied by parents or guardians. According to Europol, at least 10,000<sup>1</sup> migrant children have disappeared after arriving in Europe. It is feared many have fallen into the hands of child trafficking syndicates.

The Convention on the Rights of the Child guarantees that children everywhere have the right to live free from fear, oppression and all forms of violence. By adopting Agenda 2030 and its Sustain-

able Development Goals, the world's leaders have set ambitious targets to end all forms of violence against children by the year 2030. As a partner in the Global Partnership to End Violence Against Children, we have joined forces with stakeholders from across the world to deliver on that ambition.

This paper examines the risks that children face, what can and must be done to combat violence and how our work contributes to this effort. It highlights the importance of ending violence and its devastating impact on children without parental care or at risk of losing it.

We are convinced that the primary way to protect children is to keep families together. Where that is not possible, a secure attachment to a caring and non-violent caregiver is an important protective factor to mitigate the effects of violence and help build resilience. Our child-centred and relationship-based approach in our work with children, families and communities has had positive results.

As long as every five minutes a child dies as a result of violence, we need to scale up our efforts – in our programmes and together with our local and international partners – to make societies safer for children. We must raise our voice to condemn violence and close the gaps in child protection legislation.

*Gitta Trauernicht*  
Vice-President  
SOS Children's Villages International

<sup>1</sup> Missing Children Europe (2016)

# Executive summary and calls to action

Children without parental care are among the most vulnerable and left behind members of society, and they are one of the most likely groups to have been exposed to violence.

At least one in six children entering an SOS Children's Villages' programme has previously experienced violence.<sup>2</sup> This can have a devastating impact on children's survival, their physical, psychosocial and mental health, their development and well-being, and their dignity. International law clearly sets out the child's right to protection in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Guidelines for the Alternative Care of Children and most recently the Sustainable Development Goals. But even where legislative frameworks for child protection and the prevention of violence are in place, challenges often remain in implementation and the allocation of necessary resources.

This paper examines the various forms of violence to which children without parental care or at risk of losing it are exposed. It describes our commitment to preventing all forms of violence against children and adolescents, including those participating in our programmes, and how we respond to cases of violence when they occur.

The largest share of physical, mental and sexual violence against children occurs in the family environment, so support for families in vulnerable situations is crucial. This works best when families are embedded in social networks and receive adequate support from social service providers.

We actively strengthen social support networks, facilitate partnerships among service providers, and support the capacity-building of governmental duty bearers and others to respond to abuse cases and risks of violence in the family and community. We

raise awareness of the harmful effects of violence and foster social norms and attitudes that protect against the use of violence. We believe that the quality of child care can be most effectively improved through strengthening the capacity of parents.

When children lose parental care they have the right to special protection in alternative care. Children often suffer long-term effects from having experienced multiple traumas, including separation from their parents. The most effective response is to provide safe environments, reliable and trusting relationships with caregivers and positive experiences to mitigate the negative effects of this trauma.

We provide tailored care solutions that take the children's individual life situations, strengths and needs into account and create a culture of trauma-informed care where the values of safety, trust, choice, collaboration and empowerment are evident and where children can recover and develop resilience. Regular contact between children and their families of origin is supported when it is not harmful, as maintaining attachments can reduce anxiety and support a feeling of identity.

Care professionals are the most influential and significant individuals in the lives of children and young people, alongside their families of origin. We support the professional development of caregivers by recruitment based on a competence profile, an intensive in-service training programme, on-going professional development, and planning for the end-of-employment relationship. Quality care is supported through a multi-disciplinary approach where professional caregivers take a central role in promoting the interests and well-being of each child.

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<sup>2</sup> Data taken from the Programme Database of SOS Children's Villages International (2016a)

At the same time we support children's and young people's protective behaviours to strengthen them against child rights violations and abuse. Where child safeguarding allegations arise, action must be taken. We have put in place appropriate responses

for the effective management of child safeguarding incidents; and any concerns we have about children in our own programmes and within the communities in which we work are reported to the appropriate authorities.

## CALLS TO ACTION

Working towards the goal of ending all forms of violence against children, we call upon all stakeholders in the field of child protection, development, humanitarian aid and social services to take action to substantially reduce violence through appropriate prevention and response measures. In particular, we call on national governments as primary duty bearers for children's safety – as well as on policy-makers, international institutions, social, health and education services, criminal justice, NGOs and civil society groups, donors, community-based organisations and authority figures, alternative care providers, the private sector and the media – to consider, support and implement the following calls to action:

- (1) Violence against children is one of the main reasons for family separation. Policy and programming must support parents as primary caregivers through the provision of targeted services. Strategies must foster non-violent, positive parenting, reduce vulnerable situations such as poverty through access to appropriate support, and strengthen safe and trauma-informed schools and communities.
- (2) Children need reliable, stable and nurturing relationships when they are in the care of their families or in alternative care. Decision-making on care placements must be individualised to provide the best solution for each child, with their best interest as the primary consideration. Care must be trauma-informed and more definite data on the risks and the exposure of children to violence within alternative care must be compiled through collaborative efforts.
- (3) A child rights based approach must be embedded in the daily work of professionals

working with children and young people in alternative care. Professional caregivers must be carefully recruited, with special consideration given to their personal and professional competencies. Training, on-going professional development opportunities and support is required to underpin the quality of care.

- (4) Organisations working with children must implement the International Child Safeguarding Standards. Mechanisms to report violence against children must be safe, widely published, transparent and accessible, especially for children in alternative care. Data must always be treated confidentially. Compliance must be monitored through regular internal and external review processes and can be certified by the Keeping Children Safe Coalition.
- (5) All states must establish specific laws prohibiting all forms of violence against children in families and in alternative care. States must effectively resource and implement law, policy and practice to prevent violence. This includes, but is not limited to, international child protection standards, such as the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Guidelines for the Alternative Care of Children and the Sustainable Development Goals.
- (6) Efforts must be scaled up to break the cycle of violence against children. This requires an integrated and systematic approach on national and international levels: to raise awareness and prevent violence in all spheres of life, provide care and support to all child victims, build capacity to effectively manage child abuse incidents, and improve data collection.

# Introduction

*“No violence against children is justifiable; all violence against children is preventable.”<sup>3</sup>*

Every day children in all countries and cultures continue to experience violence. Violence happens in places where children should feel protected, such as at home, in school and in their communities. Children living in conflicts, as refugees or separated from their families, are at a greater risk of abuse, neglect, violence and exploitation. The perpetrators are often people children know and trust, such as parents, other family members, teachers, caregivers, law enforcement authorities and other children.<sup>4</sup>

The prevalence of violence against children is devastating. Every five minutes a child dies from violence.<sup>5</sup> Estimates suggest that in 2014 alone:

- One billion children – over a half of all children aged two to 17 years old – experienced emotional, physical and/or sexual violence.<sup>6</sup>
- Four out of five children aged two to 14 are violently disciplined in their homes.
- One in 10 girls (120 million) under the age of 20 has been subjected to forced sexual acts.<sup>7</sup>
- Nearly one in 10 children (250 million) lives in a country affected by conflict.<sup>8</sup>

Violence against children is often hidden and only a small proportion of cases is reported and investigated. Children and adolescents are often too young and feel too vulnerable and ashamed to disclose their experiences. What's more, the

legal system too frequently fails to respond to cases and child protection services are commonly unavailable.<sup>9</sup> Many forms of violence remain legal, are socially accepted as cultural practice or are disguised as discipline; and there continues to be a lack of awareness of its pervasiveness and harm.<sup>10</sup> This risk is reinforced by a concerning scarcity of data and research on the subject.<sup>11</sup>

SOS Children's Villages' experience shows that children who are temporarily or permanently deprived of a protective and caring family environment are among the most vulnerable and left behind members of society.<sup>12</sup> It is estimated that 140 million children worldwide have lost one or both parents,<sup>13</sup> and that 13 million have lost both parents.<sup>14</sup> These children are also among those who are the most likely to be exposed to violence.<sup>15</sup> At least one in six of the children entering our programmes has previous experience of violence.<sup>16</sup>

Our message is clear: All forms of violence against children are unacceptable and every child has the right to be protected.<sup>17</sup> We are committed to preventing all forms of violence against children and adolescents without parental care or at risk of losing it, and we are dedicated to preventing and appropriately responding to all cases of violence in our programmes.

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<sup>3</sup> Pinheiro, P. (2006)

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> The Global Partnership to End Violence Against Children (2016)

<sup>6</sup> Hillis, S. et al. (2016) in: WHO et al. (2016)

<sup>7</sup> UNICEF (2014a)

<sup>8</sup> UNICEF (2016a)

<sup>9</sup> UNICEF (2014a)

<sup>10</sup> Pinheiro, P. (2006)

<sup>11</sup> UNICEF (2014a); SOS Children's Villages International and the University of Bedfordshire (2014)

<sup>12</sup> SOS Children's Villages International (2014b)

<sup>13</sup> UNICEF (2016b)

<sup>14</sup> UNICEF (2015)

<sup>15</sup> Committee on the Rights of the Child (2011)

<sup>16</sup> According to the Programme Database. SOS Children's Villages International (2016a)

<sup>17</sup> As stated in §19(1) of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, United Nations, 1989 and reiterated by the Committee on the Rights of the Child (2011) and further anchored in the Guidelines for the Alternative Care of Children (2009) and most recently in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).



## SOS CHILDREN'S VILLAGES FACTS & FIGURES<sup>18</sup>

We work to enable children without parental care or at risk of losing it to grow up in caring and safe family environments with positive, stable and responsive relationships free from all forms of violence. We do this together with specialist organisations, local and national authorities, community partners and families.<sup>19</sup> Our actions are shaped by listening to children and young people.

**ALTERNATIVE CARE:** More than 84,000 children and young people who have permanently or temporarily lost parental care are supported with long-term or short-term family-like care in SOS families, foster families, small group homes, and through other support services.

**FAMILY STRENGTHENING:** More than 460,000 children and young people at risk of losing parental care, around 87,000 families, benefit from services supporting families to care for and protect their children, preventing family separation.

**EMERGENCY RESPONSE:** Over 789,000 services were provided to children and families in emergency situations in 2016, providing safe environments and meeting children's basic needs, access to education, play, family counselling and reuniting unaccompanied children with their families.

<sup>18</sup> Data from 2016; taken from Lucy, SOS Controlling System database and Programme Database of SOS Children's Villages International (2016a; 2016b).

<sup>19</sup> SOS Children's Villages International (2008; 2009a; 2014a)

# Impact of violence on children

There is growing condemnation of the violence inflicted upon children, especially in its extreme forms, such as sexual exploitation and trafficking, the worst forms of child labour and the impact of armed conflict.<sup>20</sup> However, while international child rights and development frameworks have been adopted by virtually all UN member states,<sup>21</sup> many children are still waiting for their right to a life in dignity and integrity to be fully recognised, respected and protected.<sup>22</sup>

## The devastating impact of violence on children's survival and development

Exposure to violence, exploitation and abuse can have a devastating and long-lasting impact on children's survival and their physical, psychosocial and mental health, including their cognitive and behavioural development and wellbeing, and their dignity.

The effects of violence vary with the frequency, nature, severity and length of exposure. They are not the same for all children, but depend on factors such as age, gender, personality, socio-economic status, role within the family, and the availability of secure attachments and emotionally supportive relationships.<sup>23</sup>

Children and young people can to a certain degree remain resilient in the face of violence and adopt coping strategies, as demonstrated by

research<sup>24</sup> and our long-standing experience with children at risk. However, the effects of violence cannot be underestimated: the Committee on the Rights of the Child has captured the toll that it takes on children:<sup>25</sup>

- Fatal or non-fatal injury (possibly leading to disability)
- Health problems (including delays in children's growth and development, lung, heart and liver diseases and sexually-transmitted infections later in life)
- Cognitive impairment (including impaired school and work performance)
- Psychological and emotional consequences (feelings of rejection, impaired attachment to other people, trauma, fear, insecurity and shattered self-esteem)
- Mental health problems (depression and anxiety, post-traumatic stress disorder, memory disturbances and suicide)
- Risky behaviours (substance abuse, unintended and adolescent pregnancy, physical inactivity)
- Developmental and behavioural consequences (non-attendance at school and antisocial, aggressive and destructive behaviour, leading to poor relationships, school exclusion and conflict with the law)

When the impact of violence and trauma is not actively addressed and mitigated, children often have substantially more difficulty forming trust-

<sup>20</sup> Pinheiro, P. (2006)

<sup>21</sup> Such as the Guidelines for the Alternative Care of Children and the Sustainable Development Goals. SOS Children's Villages International (2009b); United Nations (2016)

<sup>22</sup> Committee on the Rights of the Child (2011); Pinheiro, P. (2006)

<sup>23</sup> Holt, S., Buckley, H. and Whelan, S. (2008)

<sup>24</sup> UNICEF (2014a)

<sup>25</sup> Committee on the Rights of the Child (2011) in SOS Children's Villages International (2014b); with adaptations from WHO et al. (2016)



## FORMS OF VIOLENCE<sup>26</sup>

Violence against children includes all forms of abuse or neglect, perpetrated by adults or children.

**PHYSICAL VIOLENCE** describes physical force that is used to cause pain or discomfort, including hitting, kicking or shaking children, or forcing them to stay in uncomfortable positions. It can be the result of violent discipline.

**SEXUAL VIOLENCE** comprises the coercion of a child to engage in all unlawful or psychologically harmful sexual activities, commercial sexual exploitation or the sale of children for sexual purposes, child marriage and forced marriage.

**PSYCHOLOGICAL VIOLENCE** includes psychological maltreatment, mental, verbal and emotional abuse and neglect, where children are threatened, exploited, rejected, isolated, ignored, or humiliated in degrading forms of detainment, exposed to domestic violence or bullied by other children or adults.

**NEGLECT OR NEGLIGENT TREATMENT** constitutes the failure of parents or caregivers to provide for children's development needs when they are in the position to do so, in areas such as nutrition, clothing, medical care, protection, supervision and education.

**INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE**, or domestic violence, can also have a detrimental immediate and long-term impact on children who witnesses the abuse. It can severely compromise a mother's parenting capacity and attachment to her children and often occurs with other forms of abuse.<sup>27</sup>

<sup>26</sup> Definitions adapted from the Committee on the Rights of the Child (2011); UNICEF (2014a); SOS Children's Villages International (2008); SOS Children's Villages International and the University of Bedfordshire (2014)

<sup>27</sup> Holt, S., Buckley, H. and Whelan, S. (2008)

## FORMS OF VIOLENCE *(continued)*

**HARMFUL INSTITUTIONAL PRACTICES** refer to all forms of violence against children in alternative care settings that take place on a regular basis and as the result of practices enforced or allowed by staff members. They can also relate to the violation of children’s privacy.

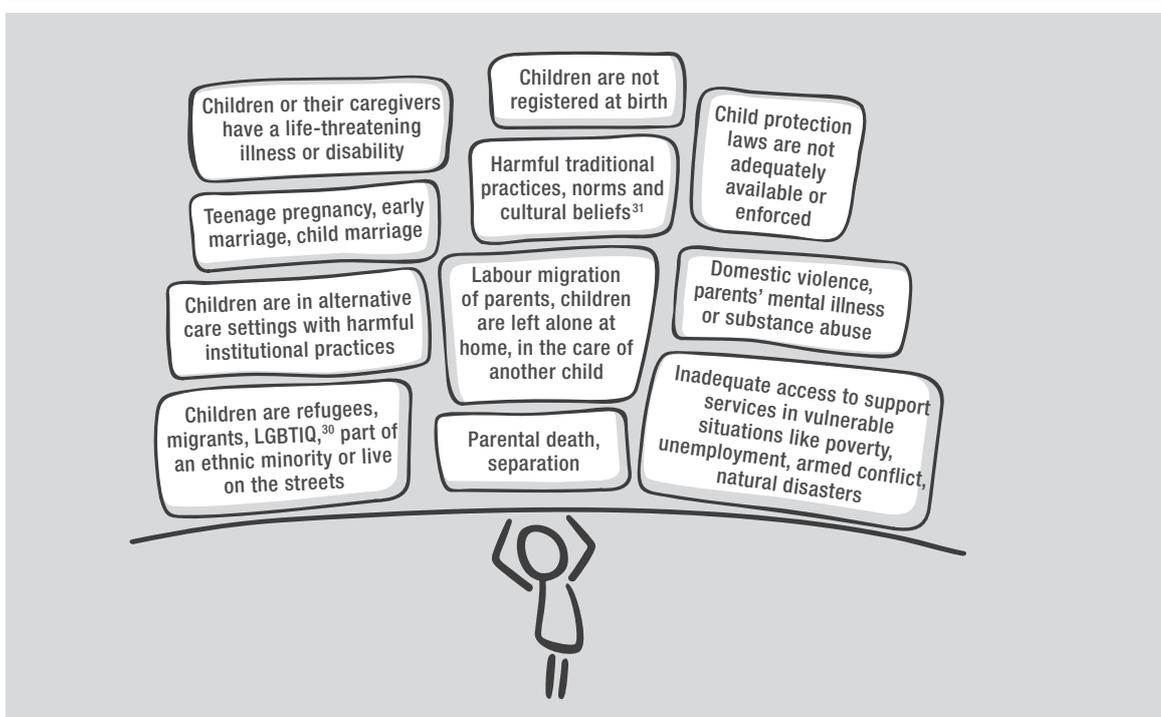
**VIOLENCE AMONG CHILDREN** encompasses all forms of violence inflicted on children by other children, which can also have harmful effects on those who witness it. It is often the result of present or past experiences of abuse and is not the sole responsibility of the child perpetrator.

**HARMFUL TRADITIONAL PRACTICES**, socially condoned and imposed on children by community or family members, include female genital mutilation (FGM), early and forced marriage, so-called honour crimes or ‘reasonable’ corporal punishment.

**HARMFUL GENDER NORMS AND SOCIAL STRUCTURES** can include, for example, the assertion that those higher up in the social hierarchy have the right to control those lower down through violence. It can apply in families, relationships between men and women, boys and girls, parents and children, children and adolescents at school and between school staff and children.<sup>28</sup>

## RISK FACTORS FOR EXPERIENCING VIOLENCE

Our experience and research show that children who are inadequately protected and cared for are at a higher risk of experiencing violence by a number of factors.<sup>29</sup>



<sup>28</sup> Pinheiro, P. (2006)

<sup>29</sup> SOS Children’s Villages International (2009a); (2016a); (2016c), Keshavarzian, G. (2015); Committee on the Rights of the Child (2011); Irwin, L., Siddiqi, A. and Hertzmann, C. (2007); Pinheiro, P. (2006); UNICEF (2014c)

<sup>30</sup> Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex and questioning

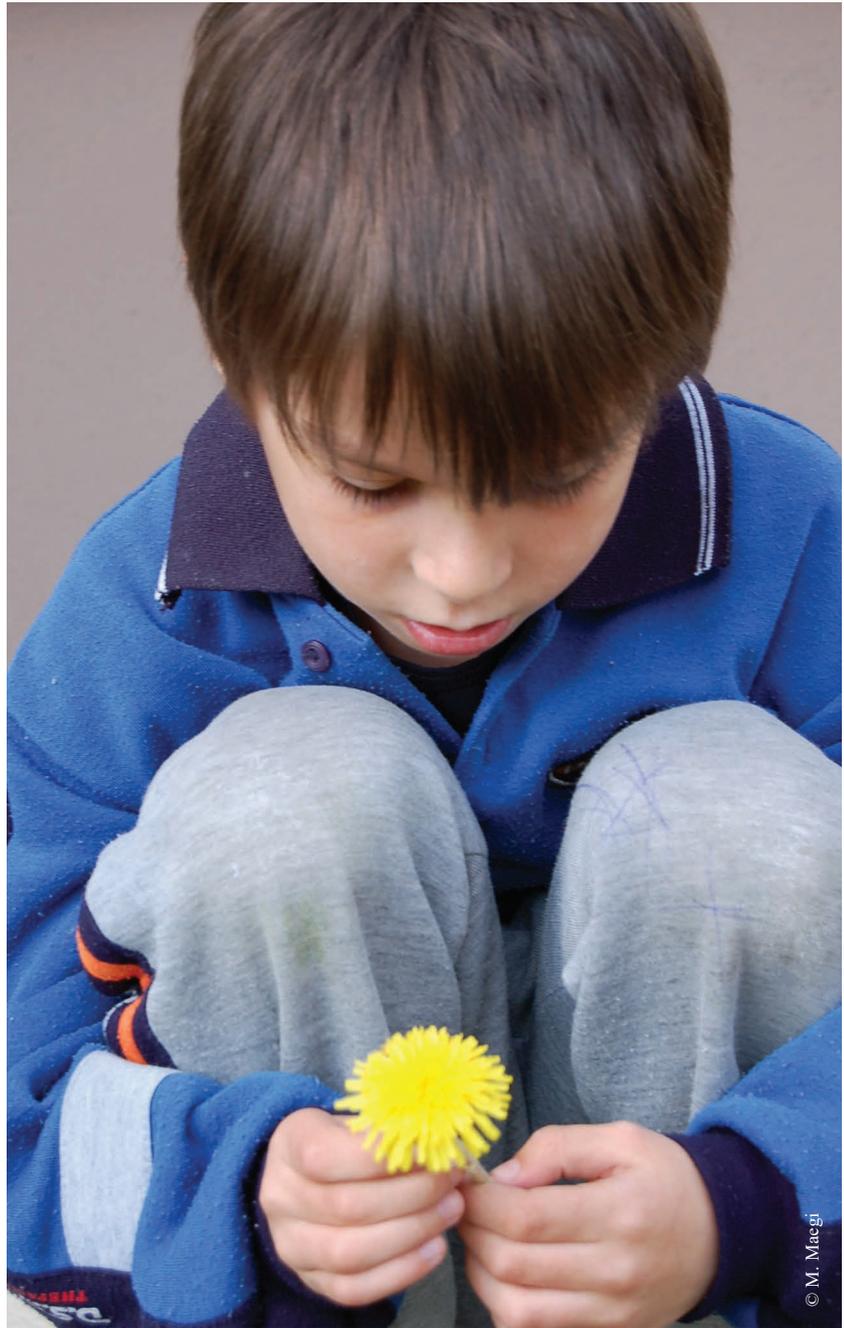
<sup>31</sup> Such as aggressive masculinity, violent disciplining or female genital mutilation

ing relationships and struggle to cope with the demands of schooling or finding employment.<sup>32</sup> The stress and trauma of violence can impair brain development, particularly during early childhood. Traumatic stressors tend to cluster together and children in vulnerable situations are likely to be exposed to multiple stressors.<sup>33</sup>

The effects of childhood trauma are long-term, cumulative and powerful; they extend far beyond visible behavioural indicators to include a range of physical and mental health problems, such as cognitive impairment, developmental delays, emotional problems and high-risk behaviour.<sup>34</sup> The link between such effects and the trauma that caused them is often concealed over time and therefore invisible to parents and caregivers. Experiences of violence can also result in children having a higher acceptance of violence or becoming violent themselves,<sup>35</sup> passing patterns of violence on to their peers and the next generation.

### CALL TO ACTION

Efforts must be scaled up to break the cycle of violence against children. This requires an integrated and systematic approach on national and international levels: to raise awareness and prevent violence in all spheres of life, provide care and support to all child victims, build capacity to effectively manage child abuse incidents, and improve data collection.



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<sup>32</sup> SOS Children's Villages International and the University of Bedfordshire (2014); UNICEF (2014a); WHO et al. (2016); Zielinski, D. (2009)

<sup>33</sup> Shonkoff, J. and Phillips, D. (2000) in Pinheiro, P. (2006); Center on the Developing Child at Harvard University (2016)

<sup>34</sup> Felitti, V. et al. (1998)

<sup>35</sup> UNICEF (2014a)

# Supporting families and communities



SOS Children's Villages supports the idea that parents and other legal guardians have the primary responsibility for the upbringing and development of their children.<sup>36</sup> Families in vulnerable situations must be supported so that children can remain within their family environment whenever it is in their best interests.<sup>37</sup> While the family can represent the primary means of protection from abuse and exploitation, it is important to acknowledge that the largest share of physical, mental and sexual violence against children occurs in the family context.<sup>38</sup>

Our support services seek to strengthen families where children are at risk of experiencing violence and allow for case-by-case decisions about the best interests of children. They can mitigate the need for family separation and placement in alternative care.<sup>39</sup>

## Parent, caregiver and family support

Families are strengthened when they are embedded in supportive networks and receive support from other families, neighbours, friends or rela-

<sup>36</sup> §18(1) of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, United Nations (1989); SOS Children's Villages International (2009a)

<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

<sup>38</sup> Committee on the Rights of the Child (2011); SOS Children's

Villages International and the University of Bedfordshire (2014); Pinheiro, P. (2006)

<sup>39</sup> As emphasised by the Guidelines for the Alternative Care of Children, paragraph 4. SOS Children's Villages International (2009b)

tives as well as from formal social service providers. Family support can include childrearing support, helpful information and advice, social and psychological support and economic support.<sup>40</sup>

We actively strengthen social support networks,<sup>41</sup> facilitate partnerships among service providers and support measures that mobilise and build the capacity of governmental duty bearers and other community stakeholders to adequately respond to abuse cases and risks of violence. We refer children and families to other service providers or, in collaboration with partners, directly provide support services when we are best placed to do so,<sup>42</sup> or when no other stakeholder can provide the necessary support.

As such, we support, and in some cases operate, savings and loan groups, small business development programmes and other income and economic strengthening initiatives. These initiatives can provide families with a degree of economic stability and a sense of security. Often linked to life skill and parenting skill programmes, they can promote confidence in parents and curb violence and child rights violations.<sup>43</sup>

Violent discipline – where physical force or verbal intimidation is applied to punish unwanted and encourage desired behaviour – can be a deliberate disciplinary choice, the result of a lack of knowledge, or the expression of anger or frustration.<sup>44</sup> Our experience shows that violence often occurs in the family due to parents' stress and the challenges of dealing with everyday parenting tasks. Evidence confirms that the quality of child care can be effectively improved through parental capacity-building.<sup>45</sup>

Parenting support services include interventions that reduce harmful parenting practices and aim to increase the understanding of positive parent-



ing, non-violent discipline and practical skills to effectively care for and protect children,<sup>46</sup> addressing their physical, emotional, social and spiritual needs. We assist or run support groups such as mothers' clubs and facilitate dialogue among parents and community members to achieve this.

We provide individualised home visits from health or care professionals, but also from non-professionals such as trained and supported volunteers acting as mentors and coaches. These interventions have shown to increase positive parent-child interactions and bonding and foster stable and positive relationships.<sup>47</sup> The secure attachment to a non-violent and caring caregiver, the availability of someone to turn to for emotional support and a social support system are important factors determining and mitigating the impact of violence,<sup>48</sup> particularly in high-risk environments.

Mothers tend to be the main recipients of parent support services, and efforts to engage fathers to play a more active role in child-rearing remain minimal. However, when children have involved fathers, they are more likely to be emotionally secure, confident and have better social connections with their peers.<sup>49</sup>

<sup>40</sup> Daly, M. et al. (2015)

<sup>41</sup> SOS Children's Villages International (2014a)

<sup>42</sup> SOS Children's Villages International (2009a)

<sup>43</sup> SOS Children's Villages International (2014a); WHO et al. (2016)

<sup>44</sup> UNICEF (2014a)

<sup>45</sup> Ibid; WHO et al. (2016);

<sup>46</sup> Daly, M. et al. (2015)

<sup>47</sup> Ibid; WHO et al. (2016)

<sup>48</sup> Pinheiro, P. (2006); Riggs, S. (2010)

<sup>49</sup> Rosenberg, J. and Wilcox, W. (2006)



### Safe and empowered communities

Children and adolescents are at risk of violence in communities all over the world, and even more so where high rates of violence prevail.<sup>50</sup> For example, the risk of victimisation from gang-related violence is concentrated in areas of poverty, in densely populated areas and disproportionately affects adolescents.<sup>51</sup> Children and young people are also at risk of becoming perpetrators themselves, for example by being recruited into gangs.

Schools should be safe and nurturing environments, but often exhibit patterns of systematic violence against children, including corporal punishment, cruel and humiliating forms of psychological punishment, sexual and gender-based violence and bullying.<sup>52</sup>

SOS Children's Villages recognises the need for an integrated and systematic approach involving multiple sectors to effectively prevent and respond to violence against children.<sup>53</sup> We work closely with national and community stakeholders to increase awareness of child protection and child abuse and to provide a coordinated response, particularly where national legislation is

lacking or not enforced and child protection services are not functioning at an optimal level.

We actively participate in child protection networks that monitor and address the safety of children in their communities. We support campaigns to raise the awareness of child rights and the detrimental impact of violence together with children's clubs, women's groups, schools, faith-based organisations, traditional leadership or social services.

Norms and conditions that sustain violence can be targeted for change by connecting trained individuals with high-risk young people to detect and interrupt conflict, make service referrals and change community beliefs about the acceptability of violence. Supervised safe spaces, such as safe parks,<sup>54</sup> can provide children with spaces where care professionals can establish safe relationships with children through play and activities. We provide such safe spaces in co-operation with partners, including sports clubs and events, cultural activities, homework supervision, toy libraries, holiday programmes and life skills discussions.<sup>55</sup>

### CALL TO ACTION

Violence against children is one of the main reasons for family separation. Policy and programming must support parents as primary caregivers through the provision of universal and targeted services. Integrated strategies must foster non-violent, positive parenting, reduce vulnerable situations such as poverty through access to appropriate support, and strengthen safe and trauma-informed schools and communities.

<sup>50</sup> Pinheiro, P. (2006)

<sup>51</sup> Davids, A. (2005)

<sup>52</sup> Pinheiro, P. (2006)

<sup>53</sup> Ibid.

<sup>54</sup> Phelan, J. (2007)

<sup>55</sup> National Association of Child Care Workers (2014)



## OUR PRACTICE

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### Grow Without Violence: A project of SOS Children's Villages Peru

San Juan de Lurigancho, a district in Lima, has high rates of violence: according to the Ministry of Women and Vulnerable Populations, in 2012 about 1,090 cases of family and sexual violence were reported. The actual figures are likely to be even higher.

SOS Children's Village Zárate initiated the Grow Without Violence project to reduce the level of violence in families and in the community and to advocate for a society in which children are raised with love, respect and security. By working directly with families and through public campaigns, activities and advocacy work, the project strives to break the cycle of violence and contribute to a more cohesive, considerate and creative society with equal opportunities and rights for all.

As part of this initiative, SOS Children's Village Zárate conducted parenting skills workshops to promote the active participation of fathers in the care for their children. More than 80 fathers participated in the workshops: "Working with men so they get involved in the direct and tender care of their children is a cultural challenge to be faced," said Rosa Vilchez, Resource Mobilisation Advisor, "Our activity is also important in the sense that we address a concern for the district. Therefore, it is necessary to extend our intervention to influence public policy".

The workshops used the MenCare methodology, which introduces 10 themes as a backbone, such as "be involved from the start", "share the care work", "just play", "be brave: show affection", "raise without violence", "teach equality and respect", and "support the mother".

Inspired by these themes and the methodology, SOS Children's Villages worked with the fathers on the following topics:

- Pregnancy from the male perspective
- Gender and non-violent parenting
- Learning to identify and stop violence against women and children
- Child care at home

In other training sessions, over 200 mothers learned about positive education, promoting a culture of good treatment and prioritising the healthy development of their children. Furthermore, 47 members of the Non-violence Inter-Agency Network were trained in intervention strategies for family violence, and 2,000 secondary level students participated in disseminating the message. There are plans to reproduce the workshops in other programme locations.

Today, municipalities, communities and civil society are more aware of their co-responsibility in promoting a non-violent culture.



## Dealing with stress and trauma

### An interview with trauma therapist Paul Boyle

In July 2016, Paul Boyle, trauma therapist and trainer, offered a five-day training to over 50 staff working in the SOS Children's Villages' emergency programme in Ukraine, particularly in the Lugansk region and in Kiev.

In Lugansk, there were staff members working on both sides of the conflict, often with displaced, traumatised and impoverished families – families who have lost family members, property or their jobs. The conflict is far from over and both SOS Children's Villages' staff and children supported by the programmes constantly feel insecure and fearful. The economic situation is extremely hard. All this leads to people developing chronic stress and even trauma. The co-workers are overwhelmed and coping skills are strained.

In the following interview Paul Boyle talks about the content of the training, the methods used and some of the results.

#### Q: What were the main topics of the training?

##### Paul Boyle:

The workshop helps SOS Children's Villages' staff come to an understanding of how stress and trauma affects them, and they are given methods to overcome them. We discussed and defined what stresses us, how to identify symptoms, possible ways of overcoming them, and how unresolved trauma can lead to developing the symptoms of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder.

In the beginning, participants presented themselves by saying who and how they are vis-a-vis their current position or status in life. The *how*

focused on the effects stress or trauma has had on their lives. This part of the workshop was therapeutic and transformational for each individual.

During the workshop participants learned how stress and trauma may result in negative thinking, poor self-image, low self-esteem, depression, anxiety, anger and aggression, as well as – if not treated – serious psychological and psychiatric disorders and addictions. The participants looked into the unique working of the brain including instinct, feelings and intellect.

In another section participants heard about the role stress and trauma play in triggering the fight, flight or freeze response. We talked about the fact that men tend to react differently from women and children when exposed to threat, fear or danger. Men tend to fight when threatened or in danger, whereas women and children tend to flight, but when faced with neither choice of fight or flight they freeze. On the other hand, it was shown that anyone can develop any of the three responses. They depend on factors such as age, previous experience, coping mechanisms, faith, upbringing and the like.

The response to stress and trauma can release various hormones in the body that ensure an instinctual response to a perceived threat. However, if these hormones are active persistently for over six months, these changes may lead to the person developing long-term physiological and psychological problems such as diabetes, hypertension, low immunity or depression.

One of the effects of long-term stress or trauma is that it affects one's belief system. In the section

on the soul we focused on relationships between self and self, self and others and self and God. A second course within this section focused on the need and the benefits of forgiveness.

Participants were also taught that when one develops stress it may get out of control or worse if it is a trauma. Then the emotions of that person will certainly be affected, such as being angry when one is stressed, being enraged when traumatised and even becoming homicidal when suffering from severe trauma.

### Q: Which techniques did you explore for better stress management?

#### Paul Boyle:

For example peer counselling equips colleagues to consider offering peer support and counselling to a friend or a colleague who is stressed and not coping very well. This section provided the various skills and tools to become an effective peer counsellor.

Meditation and out-of-body experience helps people to imagine they are somewhere else in a peaceful environment and is a technique that taught participants to find ways to deal with stressful environments, as well as curbing the symptoms of stress and possible trauma. Reflexology techniques such as foot massage were taught – it can help in team building, as well as dealing with stresses, as it induces relaxation to the individual as well as the group. Bioenergetics is a technique used to trigger the body to shake like an animal to release stress and tension. Through a series of physical exercises the participants learned how to reduce stress through shaking and restore the body's equilibrium and calmness. Deep breathing techniques allowed participants to find a quick remedy that reduces the effects of stress.

### Q: What were the outcomes of the training?



#### Paul Boyle:

Coping skills and stress management greatly increased. Staff reported that they felt emotionally and physically healthier and were sleeping far better. Trauma issues were in many cases dealt with. The workshop participants were able to forgive those who may have hurt them in the past. They developed a greater insight into the effects of stress and trauma on themselves as well as on the children and adults they work with. It was great to see the staff going through a healing process.



## OUR PRACTICE

### **We have the right to feel safe: The Protective Behaviours Programme**

Everyone has the right to feel safe; this is a basic human right (article 3 Universal Declaration of Human Rights). Studies have highlighted, however, that many children do not feel safe and don't know what to do about it. Protective Behaviours is an educational programme, which originated in the US with Peg Flandreau West's vision of a violence-free world for all. She experienced first-hand in her work with children how many were feeling unsafe and didn't know where to get help.

Protective Behaviours is designed to equip children, parents, caregivers, educators and service providers with the knowledge and skills necessary to protect them against dangerous, risky, violent and abusive situations. It focuses in particular on the prevention of sexual violence against children, as this kind of abuse is usually pre-meditated and unsuspecting children are victimised, often due to their lack of understanding of the process.

The programme aims to prevent violence against children through early intervention and education. It also empowers children already suffering in silence by giving them the tools to disclose their experiences and break

the continuing cycle of violence. Starting as young as pre-school age, it is possible to empower children and protect them against becoming the targets of violence.

In 2010, Hilda O'Callaghan took Protective Behaviours to South Africa, after 10 years of experience with the programme in Australia. Today, all SOS Children's Villages' caregivers, staff and children in South Africa have received the Protective Behaviours training, as well as more than 600 teachers, social workers, parents and caregivers, who are now teaching these protection skills to the children of South Africa.

In the first few years, Hilda O'Callaghan mainly focused on short "information sessions" promoting the concept of teaching children how to protect themselves, but later she offered the fully accredited training. An evaluation is planned to assess the children's learning through a pre-questionnaire and a post-questionnaire, measuring their understanding of Protective Behaviours and their level of knowledge and skills on keeping safe.



Thoko, SOS mother in South Africa,  
on the Protective Behaviours training

The training empowered me to be aware of all forms of abuse, both physical and psychological.

The exciting part of it is that it teaches children as young as two to three about their bodies' warning signals and personal boundaries, e.g. by naming body parts using proper names and telling children that certain parts are private: "They are for you, not anyone else, and not to let anyone else touch your private parts".

I also learnt that I have to describe to children situations when it is okay to show their private parts or have them touched, such as when washing or being at the doctor.

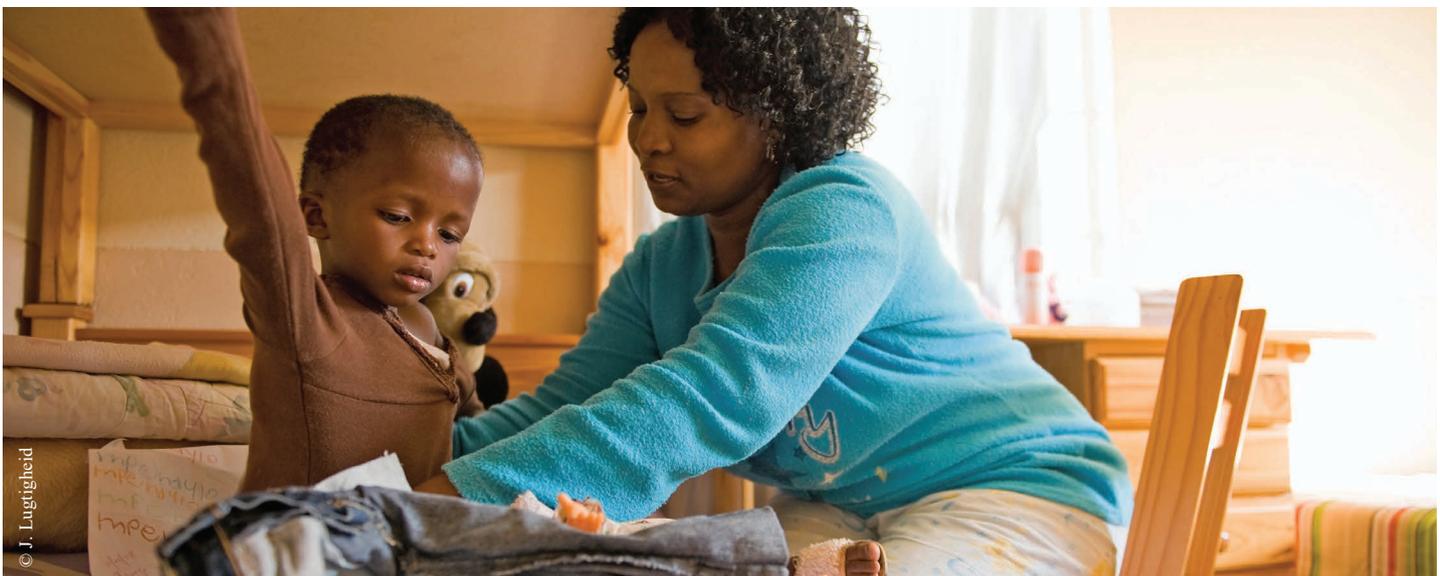
During the training Hilda made us aware of unsafe secrets and safe secrets (happy surprises) which children can face and which can end up in bad or happy endings; and that children must always report unsafe secrets to me, even if a person asks them not to tell. We as caregivers have

to be creative to test the child's understanding of unsafe secrets and surprises.

I use the skills I learnt in my everyday work; e.g. children need to pay attention to their bodies. There are certain warning signs which can tell them that something very bad may happen to them.

*"We as caregivers have to be creative to test the child's understanding of unsafe secrets and surprises."*

When a child is frustrated, nervous and shy, this tells me that something happened along the way of the child's life that needs to be investigated. I have to sit down with the child, bond with the child, until the child opens up about the secret behind all these feelings. Then I will be able to help the child.



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## Mali: Gender-based violence and early marriage

Early marriage is a deeply rooted cultural practice in Malian society: more than 60% of girls are married under the age of 18, and 15% are under 15 years old. These girls are often cut off from family and friends and other sources of support and have limited opportunities for education and employment.<sup>58</sup>

To protect children – especially girls – from early marriage, SOS Children’s Village Socoura supports an initiative to change behaviours: the “Let’s spare our daughters our painful memories” project works with a committed group of women volunteers.

The initiative was born out of a women’s discussion on harmful practices. This prompted an adult survivor of early marriage to speak out and share her story and suffering: “At an early age, my father gave me in marriage to a man I didn’t like. I wanted to refuse the marriage but because of the weight of custom and the risk of bringing shame on my mother, which would have led to her being marginalised within the family, I finally accepted. From that day, I stopped going to school. I have never loved that man, despite the fact that we now have children together. I have not felt a single moment of happiness in this union but I feel obliged to stay with him for the honour of the family and also because I don’t want

to abandon my children. I have plucked up the courage to appeal to you to take action to save the lives of our daughters from these memories”.

The group remained silent until another woman spoke out to express her feelings of sadness in relation to early marriage. She had been married off at a young age and forced to leave school in the ninth year. She now stays at home doing nothing other than housework and her needs are rarely met by her husband.

These statements and appeals strongly motivated the women to take action against the early marriage of girls in their community. They were given guidance by SOS Children’s Village Socoura and are currently carrying out community awareness activities on the consequences of early marriage to encourage their husbands and community leaders to change their behaviour and guarantee equal educational opportunities for boys and girls. SOS Children’s Village Socoura offered training on how to use a picture box, a set of pictures that illustrate the topic of early marriage, and the women also put on a theatre play based on a text prepared by SOS Children’s Villages to stimulate discussion in their communities.

<sup>56</sup> UNICEF (2013)

# Violence and children in alternative care



When children lose parental care, they have the right to special protection in the form of alternative care,<sup>57</sup> which ranges from family- and community-based care to residential care.<sup>58</sup> While alternative care should provide a safe and protected environment for children not living with their families, children can be at a heightened risk of physical, sexual, verbal and emotional abuse, bullying and peer-to-peer violence in such settings.<sup>59</sup>

When entering alternative care, children and young people might continue to suffer from traumatising experiences of violence that occurred in their previous care setup or in their families of origin, and be traumatised again by the separation from their families.

## Safe environments and reliable relationships

The most effective response to this challenge is to reduce children's exposure to violence and provide safe environments, reliable and trusting relationships and positive experiences. Even amidst stressful conditions, the negative effects of stress can be mitigated greatly through nurturing relationships with caring adults.<sup>60</sup>

For this reason, SOS Children's Villages provides individualised care solutions based on a thorough assessment of each child's best interests, life situation, strengths and needs. When children cannot be supported within their families of origin, alternative care most suited to their needs is provided,

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<sup>57</sup> UNICEF (2009)

<sup>58</sup> SOS Children's Villages International (2009b)

<sup>59</sup> Committee on the Rights of the Child (2011)

<sup>60</sup> Data Resource Center for Child and Adolescent Health et al. (2012)

with a strong emphasis on creating family-like environments with reliable relationships and professional support services.

Healthy relationships are necessary for the development of emotional health. When children do not have these in their early development, it is even more important that the alternative care setting provides stable and safe relationships. Often, early disruptions to attachment lead to dysfunctional attachment patterns with enduring negative effects on subsequent relationships – and eventually a likelihood of poor attachment with their own children perpetuating the cycle of abuse and violence.<sup>61</sup> When violence and toxic stress continue in alternative care, the effects are especially devastating.

### Trauma-informed care to address causes of behavioural aggression

There is a strong link between child maltreatment and subsequent aggression in children.<sup>62</sup> SOS Children's Villages understands that effective outcomes for children are strongly related to the quality of professional care provided to them.<sup>63</sup> Services for children should aim to break the cycle of violence both within families of origin and within places of care. The impact of maltreatment is most visible in children's behaviour, but this is often mistakenly seen as the problem rather than the symptom of violence or children's attempts to protect themselves in a world that seems hostile.<sup>64</sup> When caregivers fail to respond effectively to the deeper needs of children and focus only on the management of behaviour, these behaviours may intensify, making interactions unpredictable and volatile. They can result in placement failures and start a cycle of repetitive placements, each further diminishing the chances of lasting and stable caregiver relationships.



Relational and trauma-informed approaches<sup>65</sup> emphasise creating safe relationships and environments in which individual needs are met through genuine connection and engagement. SOS Children's Villages fosters cultures of trauma-informed care that facilitate recovery and resilience, where the values of safety, trust, choice, collaboration and empowerment are evident in the practices of our staff and the experiences of children.<sup>66</sup>

Life-space interventions are woven into daily activities to respond to children's development needs and stimulate their life skills in a natural and non-intrusive way. This can take many forms and make use of the natural opportunities that occur in the flow of events to interrupt, direct or redirect behaviour in such a way that children can experience themselves as successful in creating a constructive outcome.<sup>67</sup> For example, where conflicts are building between two children, a caregiver can engage with them and use their proximity to provide safety, interrupt what is happening or challenge the children to reach a compromise.

<sup>61</sup> Siegel, D. and Hartzell, M. (2003)

<sup>62</sup> UNICEF (2012)

<sup>63</sup> Anglin, J. (2002)

<sup>64</sup> Brendtro, L., Brokenleg, M. and Van Bockern, S. (1990)

<sup>65</sup> Garfat, T. and Fulcher, L. (2012)

<sup>66</sup> Fallot, R. and Harris, M. (2009)

<sup>67</sup> Garfat, T., Fulcher, L. and Digney, J. (2013)



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### Contact between children in care and families of origin

Regular contact between children and their families of origin is associated with higher levels of family reunification.<sup>68</sup> Our experience shows that these contacts may preserve family links, maintain attachment with parents, help children sustain their cultural history, reduce anxiety, support a feeling of identity and break down any emotional barriers that might exist in their relations with their families and their current caregivers.

Decisions on contact with families of origin should serve the best interests of each child, considering the unique features of the child's circumstances. A risk assessment is useful to determine factors that may cause harm. Particular attention must be paid and support given to addressing the root causes of separation, including those relating to neglect, and domestic and sexual violence.

This is critical to successful reunification and to prevent re-separation. By supporting and building the capacity of families of origin to provide care, more children can benefit from growing up within their own family.

#### CALL TO ACTION

Children need reliable, stable and nurturing relationships when they are in the care of their families or in alternative care. Decision-making on care placements must be individualised to provide the best solution for each child, with their best interests as the primary consideration. Care must be trauma-informed, and more definite data on the risks and the exposure of children to violence within alternative care must be compiled through collaborative efforts.

<sup>68</sup> Bromfield, L. and Osborn, A. (2007)



## OUR PRACTICE

### Violence prevention: An initiative in Egypt

From September 2015 to May 2016, SOS Children's Villages Egypt, together with the NGO Circle, organised a programme to raise young people's awareness of violence and violence prevention, including how to reduce socially unacceptable behaviour and consolidate skills of dialogue and positive thinking. In total, 28 SOS Children's Villages youth care workers and 30 young people between 14 and 18 years old participated in the programme.

The training started with defining violence, such as bullying, violence against parents and the surroundings, breaking public property and fights between young people. The causes of violence were addressed, such as violent care and education, feelings of inferiority, lack of understanding of religion and the role of the media; as well as increasing feelings of frustration, lack of self-confidence and feelings of failure and privation from love. The themes were discussed by watching a documentary, followed by discussions, role-play, drawing and handicraft, in which the young people expressed themselves and their understanding of the topic.

Finally, measures to reduce violence were discussed in a couple of workshops. They concluded with the following recommendations:

- Promote an educational culture among parents and educators to help distance young people from violence
- Focus on the statements of the Islamic religion and the stories of the prophets
- Promote a culture of tolerance and understanding, emphasising intelligence rather than physical abilities
- Raise awareness of the role of the media and how they impact on people's states of mind
- Join efforts to create job opportunities, as the lack of employment of young people is one of the reasons for violent behaviour
- Give young people the chance to express their needs: find realistic solutions according to ability rather than building dreams and hopes on falsified promises that lead to frustration and violent reactions

According to the workshop leader, the workshops did not only help young people to become more aware of violence, but also increased their capacity to react properly: "One important thing I learnt from the trainings is how to control myself and my emotions," said one young person; "From now on, I will try to avoid being a person who initiates or is a reason to raise violence. I am sure I will not be violent with my children, because these trainings shed light to the gravity of violence in the family".



## OUR PRACTICE

### Safe spaces to heal trauma: The Alegría project in Nicaragua

The Alegría (Happiness) project focuses on healing unresolved trauma. Children and adolescents are provided with opportunities to discuss their experiences and deal with the pain of loss, abandonment or violence. The project was piloted at SOS Children's Village Managua in 2010 and then extended to the other five SOS Children's Villages in Nicaragua.

The project creates safe spaces both inside and outside of SOS Children's Villages where children can speak about painful experiences, feelings and thoughts. Children and young people's participation is seen as the basic condition for development, empowerment, self-esteem, safety, and rebuilding confidence.

One of the first tasks was to build a baseline of the emotional state of the children, adolescents, young people, and SOS mothers using a measurement tool (Likert scale), assessing their levels of sadness, anxiety, fear and mistrust in the future. Based on these outcomes, the team generated actions, turning the items around into protection variables. So instead of looking at sadness, fear and anxiety, they were talking about trust, safety, support networks and future perspectives.

Activities in these spaces vary: counselling on personal development, monthly family meetings, dance therapy, swimming lessons, art classes, deep relaxation exercises and oth-

er therapeutic methods such as systemic constellation workshops. Children are also encouraged to participate in excursions, such as camping and sporting activities to help them socialise with their peers. Artistic expression including theatre, poetry, narrative, speeches, music, singing, dancing, drawing, and painting are used as a way of "talking out" trauma.

Quarterly monitoring and assessment meetings schedule activities, and monitor and assess action plans for children, adolescents, young people, and co-workers in charge of SOS family houses.

Assessments showed improved team collaboration and synergies related to monitoring family recovery processes in all SOS Children's Villages. There has been progress in spontaneous expressions of feelings and thoughts, and all those identified to be in urgent need of specialised attention received treatment.

Participants have gradually taken ownership of the spaces, making the most of them, while developing their recognition and appreciation of themselves and others. Furthermore, the project has helped establish collaborative relationships with other organisations and institutions, building a support network for the development of participatory processes.



## OUR PRACTICE

### Stepping into a new life: Support for children coming into alternative care in Tanzania

Many children entering SOS Children's Villages in Tanzania have been victims of physical, emotional and in some cases, sexual abuse. These traumatic experiences can lead to behavioural problems, including bullying and child-to-child abuse. SOS Children's Villages Tanzania offers them support in various ways.

Many children find it hard to form social ties with other children and caregivers. When children arrive at the SOS Children's Village, they are provided with training on social skills, the culture of good relationships and sexuality. This helps to reduce physical violence among children.

Child parliamentary sessions enable children to vocalise the challenges in the care and community setting. For example, children have reported emotional and physical abuse by their fellow children or by their teachers in school. As a result, co-workers have visited schools and talked to teachers about appropriate disciplinary measures.

Children also benefit from individual counselling focusing on social relations and education. Some suffer from post-traumatic stress disorders or find themselves stressed and

depressed being away from their relatives. One-on-one counselling sessions help them to solve or cope with their situation.

Group counselling for SOS mothers is conducted monthly. They share their experiences of parenting children and raise their concerns and the challenges they encounter. Those who have benefited from this process have conducted mentoring and coaching for other mothers outside the SOS Children's Village. They teach them positive parenting practices as well as the means to avoid child abuse. This helps to reduce violence towards children in neighbouring communities.

Co-workers have noticed a tangible change: "Self-awareness has strongly developed among the children. Children are now valuing education, respect others and engage in productive activities like taking care of the small vegetable farms in the village".

A girl from the SOS Children's Village said: "In the past, I used to become so aggressive when bullied by other children but the village counsellor has been such a help. I can now cope with different situations and people".



## OUR PRACTICE

### Establishing safe places: A qualification programme to care for troubled children and young people in Germany

During workshops in 2007 and 2008, it became clear that working with troubled children and young people was having a high psychological impact on SOS Children's Villages' caregivers. As a consequence, in 2009, SOS Children's Villages Germany developed a specialised and tailored qualification programme to guide the caregivers' work and increase their competencies to provide stable care to children and young people with psychological issues. It provides clarity on actions that should be taken by caregivers and managers and promotes the development of new services.

The Q-Programme includes a training curriculum of six modules run over a period of two and a half years, as well as an implementation process applying the new knowledge on clinical syndromes and the skills acquired on how to best respond to troubled children and young people.

The programme covers essentials and the basic model of trauma sensitive care, cooperative case advice, trauma and its effects, admission and care planning process, AD(H)D, dialogue with schools, social behaviour disorders, group work practice of participation, self-harm, suicidal behaviour, co-operation with psychiatry, parents under psychological strain, and young people becoming independent.

Changes in attitudes are regarded as key and the goal is to understand and communicate better with children, increase openness and tolerance, understand the whole support system of SOS Children's Villages, become aware and utilise one's own feelings, act instead of react, and co-operate with child and adolescent psychiatry. Each SOS Children's Villages' programme follows its own organisational development process towards "trauma-sensitive care" and has a steering team and a project coordinator who cooperate with the programme manager.

Outcomes include caregivers' increased sensitivity, understanding and management of individual cases; the recognition of the need to make time for one-on-one contact between caregivers and children; the set-up of structures to facilitate participation and the creation of a vivid participatory culture in all facilities; and progress towards becoming a safe place for psychologically troubled children as well as for caregivers and programme managers.

Following the positive results of an external evaluation, the Q-Programme is being rolled-out in all SOS Children's Villages programmes in Germany while the concept is continuously adapted and improved.

# Supporting professional caregivers



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When children lose the care of their parents, care professionals work directly with them to safeguard them from harm and to provide them with appropriate quality care. In providing individualised child care, caregivers are the most influential and significant people in the lives of children and young people,<sup>69</sup> besides their families of origin, and so they need to be appropriately trained and supported.<sup>70</sup>

Caregivers must possess appropriate personal and professional competencies. SOS Children's Villages supports the professional development of caregivers by ensuring formal policies and procedures<sup>71</sup> for recruitment based on a competence profile, an intensive in-service training programme, on-going professional development, and planning for the end-of-employment rela-

tionship.<sup>72</sup> Quality care is supported through a multi-disciplinary approach where the professional caregivers take a central role in promoting the interests and wellbeing of each child.

## Professional support in caring for traumatised children

There is a strong link between child maltreatment and subsequent violence in children,<sup>73</sup> and so professional caregivers need to support children in overcoming their trauma and promote their further development. They need to be well trained to do this effectively, and especially when children's behaviour is challenging or includes aspects of violence, crisis assistance may be needed from a support team.<sup>74</sup>

<sup>69</sup> Fulcher, L. and Garfat, T. (2008)

<sup>70</sup> SOS Children's Villages International (2009b)

<sup>71</sup> SOS Children's Villages International (2002)

<sup>72</sup> SOS Children's Villages International (2009c)

<sup>73</sup> UNICEF (2012)

<sup>74</sup> Hudson, P. and Lavoisier, K. (2002)

Caregivers working with maltreated or traumatised children are themselves at risk of developing secondary trauma.<sup>75</sup> Children's pain and helplessness can be passed on to their caregivers, many of whom have experienced their own personal loss or trauma. Caregivers who work without systemic support and resources, feel isolated or have insufficient recovery time are especially at risk of secondary trauma or compassion fatigue. Regular professional supervision and emotional support can combat the development of secondary trauma and support caregivers in providing quality care.

Caregivers can be at risk of developing compassion fatigue due to the unique attachment relationship they develop with children in their care; this is different from professionals such as social workers or psychologists.<sup>76</sup> The separation between private and professional life hardly exists in this shared environment where a caregiver's personality and personal life have a direct bearing on their ability to provide good care.<sup>77</sup> Therefore, professional caregivers also need access to counselling to provide for their own emotional needs and support them in living balanced lives. A supportive team is critical to the effective care of children.<sup>78</sup>

### Other challenges faced by care professionals

Caregivers in foster and residential care face other challenging issues, such as the dynamics of children joining or exiting the care setting. Support systems are important, especially during these cycles of grief and loss. For some caregivers there is the challenge of managing the effect of fostering on their own children, as well as the role their own children play in fostering.<sup>79</sup> Special sensitivity may be required to help children remain rooted in their own traditions and culture; deal with health issues such as HIV/AIDS; and handle issues such as sexual orientation and identity. This requires caregivers to

be well trained, informed and embedded in a functioning organisational support system.

Maintaining contact with families of origin is an important aspect of alternative care, but it also presents its challenges. Children in care may have deep emotional attachments to members of their family and experience profound loss at separation. With the help of a support team, professional caregivers can ensure that on-going connections with families of origin are appropriately and carefully managed. In cases where the family can be sufficiently strengthened reunification might be possible.

In addition to a professional team, peer support and exchange are valuable support measures, which enable those with more experience to share their wisdom and encouragement. Peer support normalises the experiences of families as they make connections with others living in similar circumstances. This can reduce isolation and stress and provide families with hope and encouragement.<sup>80</sup>

### CALL TO ACTION

A child rights based approach must be embedded in the daily work of professionals working with children and young people in alternative care. Professional caregivers must be carefully recruited, with special consideration given to their personal and professional competencies. Training, on-going professional development opportunities and support are required to underpin the quality of care.

<sup>75</sup> Perry, B. (2014)

<sup>76</sup> Parker, T. (2009)

<sup>77</sup> SOS Children's Villages International (2009)

<sup>78</sup> Fulcher, L. and Garfat, T. (2008)

<sup>79</sup> Durand, B. (2007)

<sup>80</sup> AdoptUSKids (2015)



## Early childhood trauma as a challenge: Trauma-informed care training in Poland

SOS Children’s Villages Poland was faced with an increasing number of children with serious behavioural problems and difficulties in working with those children and their caregivers. Therefore, the association decided to invest in specialised training in trauma-informed care.

Two training sessions were offered to SOS parents, family assistants, youth care co-workers, psychologists and educators from different programmes.<sup>81</sup> They provided opportunities to exchange and learn together. Trauma-informed care means incorporating the knowledge about a child’s trauma into the care provided. Key requirements are:

- Ensuring the physical, emotional and psychological safety of the child’s environment
- Increasing stability in daily life in all the places where the child spends time
- Including trauma-informed care in all areas of life which influence the child’s wellbeing – home, school and community

To be successful it is important that professionals believe in the child’s history of abuse and trauma; support the child in understanding their life story, coping with their emotions and regulating their behav-

our; and expand their own tolerance of the child’s behaviour and cope with their emotional reactions.

One method used during the training was the Tree of Life<sup>82</sup> exercise, where children were asked to draw their own “tree of life” in which they speak of their ‘roots’ (where they come from), their skills and knowledge, their hopes and dreams, and the special people in their lives. The children were very interested in drawing their trees of life and it enabled them to talk openly about the positive things in their lives and their gifts and talents.

Child development expert Malgorzata Kolodziejczak observed that when children drew the roots, they started to talk about their own roots, even if it was painful: “It was heart-breaking, because for two children the roots that symbolised their pets were stronger and bigger than those symbolising their biological parents. For most children the grandparents were the most important and positive roots”. She continued: “Great things started to happen. Children now talk about problems they could not talk about before”.

<sup>81</sup> One was led by the Polish psychologist and child development expert Teresa Szumilo, another one by the Danish narrative therapist, cultural sociologist and sys-

temic psychotherapist Hanne Robenhagen, who used different methodologies.  
<sup>82</sup> Dulwich Centre (n.d.)



## OUR PRACTICE

### Taking interpersonal relationships and context into account: The approach of SOS Children's Villages Spain

To prevent child abuse in family settings, SOS Children's Villages Spain applies a multi-faceted approach that consists of awareness raising, prevention, and reporting and responding. Interpersonal relationships and context are taken into account because there is no simple, single answer to preventing violent behaviour.

- The Values Education Programme<sup>83</sup> promotes harmonious relationships and provides children, caregivers and other child care professionals with joint spaces to reflect on the standards that should guide their behaviour and ways of dealing with moral dilemmas.
- The SOS Training Centre in Granada promotes positive parenting<sup>84</sup> through parent education,<sup>85</sup> with emphasis on training the following skills:
  - Creating healthy affectionate bonds
  - Stimulating self-esteem, resolving conflicts
  - Organising domestic life and managing family finances
  - Managing stress associated with the parental role, "Caring for the caregiver"

- Get-togethers for caregivers are arranged for parents and caregivers where they can share experiences and concerns and build supportive relationships.
- SOS mothers and other child care professionals work together to foster community networks. Psychologists, educators and social workers support them to jointly tackle the challenges of parenting, while coordinating with social and child protection services.
- Caregivers and other child and youth care professionals receive continuous training on child rights and child protection<sup>86</sup> to improve their capacity to prevent, detect and deal with violence against children and sexual abuse.

All services work in accordance with the Standards for Out-of-Home Child Care in Europe<sup>87</sup> and each year they are subject to internal and external evaluations and quality audits. SOS Children's Villages Spain also has an Ethics Observatory<sup>88</sup> to analyse and resolve ethical dilemmas and to prepare good practice protocols.

<sup>83</sup> Aldeas Infantiles SOS España (2016)

<sup>84</sup> FEMP and MSSSI (2015)

<sup>85</sup> Academia SOS (2016)

<sup>86</sup> Aldeas Infantiles SOS España (2015)

<sup>87</sup> SOS-Kinderdorf International, IFCO and FICE (2007)

<sup>88</sup> Torralba Roselló, F. (2016)



## OUR PRACTICE

### Training professionals working with children in care: A joint European project on child rights-based care

Training Professionals Working with Children in Care is a two-year partnership (2015-2016) between SOS Children's Villages International, the Council of Europe, Eurochild and partners in Bulgaria, Croatia, Estonia, France, Hungary, Italy, Latvia and Romania.

The project aims to improve the living conditions and life prospects of children and young people in alternative care, by providing care professionals with training on how to apply a child rights based approach to their work: an approach that demonstrates respect and contributes to fulfilling child rights.

Between January and June 2016, more than 800 care professionals underwent training that builds on two guides developed by SOS Children's Villages International and the Council of Europe: *Securing Children's Rights*,<sup>89</sup> written for care professionals and based on experiences and best practices, and *Discover Your Rights*,<sup>90</sup> written for children and young people in care, as well as on the handbook *Realising Children's Rights*.<sup>91</sup> International experts conducted a "training of trainers" workshop and subsequently national training sessions were held for care

professionals from various organisations. Throughout the project, young people have been involved as members of the national steering groups or by participating in youth focus groups and training.

Training evaluations have demonstrated clear improvements in participants' knowledge and attitudes about child rights in alternative care and that the training was helpful for their daily practice.

At the closing conference 'Children's Rights in Alternative Care: Walk the Talk' in Paris in November 2016, representatives from the European Commission, the Council of Europe, national ministries, child ombudspersons, NGOs and universities discussed how to increase the capacity of the alternative child care workforce, so that child rights could be met and individual development supported. The "European Recommendations on the implementation of a child rights based approach for care professionals working with and for children"<sup>92</sup> were released, including the main headings from the national recommendations of the eight project countries.

<sup>89</sup> Council of Europe and SOS Children's Villages International (2013)

<sup>90</sup> Council of Europe and SOS Children's Villages International (2009)

<sup>91</sup> SOS Children's Villages International (2015)

<sup>92</sup> SOS Children's Villages International (2016e)

# Child safeguarding in SOS Children's Villages



**CHILD SAFEGUARDING** includes all the activities an organisation undertakes to ensure that its staff, operations, and programmes do no harm to children and do not expose them to the risk of harm and abuse; that appropriate responses and effective management of child safeguarding concerns are in place; and that any concerns the organisation has about children's safety in its own programmes and within the communities it works in are reported to the appropriate authorities.<sup>94</sup>

Every child has the right to develop in a caring and safe environment, free from all forms of violence, abuse, exploitation and neglect. However, too often these boundaries are breached by people children know and trust, including staff members and volunteers, who either intentionally or unintentionally pose serious risks to children and young people. SOS Children's Villages is not immune to these risks. In order to minimise them, we commit ourselves to keeping children safe by implementing the International Child Safeguarding Standards.<sup>93</sup>

## Prevention of child abuse

Effective child safeguarding requires an understanding of the risks associated with working with children and young people in our programmes in communities and within alternative care. The fac-

tors leading to rights violations and abuse range from deep rooted cultural, societal and religious beliefs, which have a strong influence on care professionals' relationships and attitudes towards children, to systemic weaknesses and patriarchal leadership styles that create an environment where rights violations are passively condoned.

Preventive actions include: children and young people learn protective behaviours,<sup>95</sup> enabling them to avoid harmful situations and to know what to do if they have any concerns. Child participation is secured in the design and the implementation of child safeguarding measures.

The recruitment and engagement of all staff and associates depend on suitable references and criminal record checks. Staff members must also have the necessary attitudes, knowledge and skills

<sup>93</sup> Keeping Children Safe (2014)

<sup>94</sup> Ibid.

<sup>95</sup> Ibid.

## CHILD SAFEGUARDING STANDARDS<sup>96</sup>

**STANDARD 1 - POLICY** The organisation develops a policy that describes how it is committed to preventing and responding appropriately to harm to children.

**STANDARD 2 - PEOPLE** The organisation places clear responsibilities and expectations on its staff and associates and supports them to understand and act in line with these.

**STANDARD 3 - PROCEDURES** The organisation creates a child-safe environment through implementing child safeguarding procedures that are applied across the organisation.

**STANDARD 4 - ACCOUNTABILITY** The organisation monitors and reviews its safeguarding measures.

to care for children, to keep them safe and act appropriately when rights violations or abuse occur. They are therefore trained on the organisation's child safeguarding policy, procedures and the code of conduct.

Special attention must be paid to prevent child-to-child physical and sexual abuse. Many children enter the care system traumatised, some with emotional and behavioural deficit disorders. We support care professionals to identify and respond to bullying, emotional, physical or sexual abuse, to minimise further risk, and help those with aggressive behaviours to understand the consequences of their actions.

### Dealing with child abuse

Despite all preventive actions, rights violations and abuse have happened and still happen within organisations working with children. Where safeguarding concerns arise, appropriate action must be taken.

All children must have access to child-friendly, safe, effective and anonymous reporting. There should be more than one reporting channel for children and staff, including age appropriate reporting channels for children. SOS Children's Villages has clear reporting and responding procedures in place, and step-by-step guidance is provided on what to report and to whom.

In responding to concerns it is critical to adapt the internal processes to national and legal contexts. In

some countries, there is mandatory external reporting with subsequent external investigation processes. Where this is not the case, we conduct internal investigations in line with international best practice. Based on our experience, this requires trained and experienced staff capable to lead such processes objectively.

### Accountability

For SOS Children's Villages, it is important to have clear mechanisms to ensure that individuals are accountable for their actions. Internal child safeguarding processes have regular internal and external reviews to ensure compliance with child safeguarding standards. The internal annual Child Safeguarding Survey monitors the compliance of member associations with child safeguarding standards, and its findings help management and governance structures to identify gaps and priorities.

When things go wrong, it is important to draw lessons for organisational learning and programme improvement. This includes identifying the cultural, structural or systemic reasons that led to the failures. These experiences are discussed in internal networks and taken up by management to find solutions and build the capacity of care professionals.

### CALL TO ACTION

Organisations working with children must implement the International Child Safeguarding Standards. Mechanisms to report violence against children must be safe, widely published, transparent, confidential and accessible, especially for children in alternative care. Compliance must be monitored through regular internal and external review processes and can be certified by the Keeping Children Safe Coalition.

<sup>96</sup> Keeping Children Safe (2014)

## OUR PRACTICE

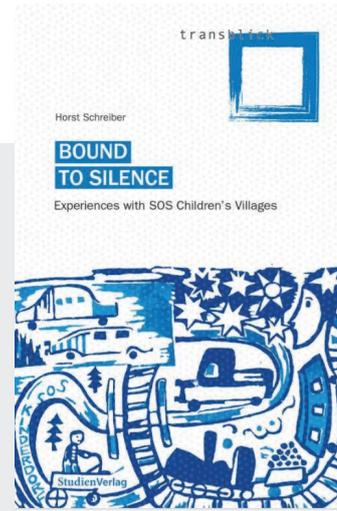
## Bound to silence: Dealing with historical cases of abuse in SOS Children's Villages in Austria

In 2012, SOS Children's Villages Austria commissioned the historian Horst Schreiber to conduct a study on child care practices within the organisation from the 1950s to the 1990s. The study was released as a book, *Bound to silence: Experiences with SOS Children's Villages*.<sup>97</sup>

Elisabeth Hauser, Director of the Programme Department of SOS Children's Villages Austria, is convinced that the findings of the study has helped SOS Children's Villages better understand the structural reasons and systemic weaknesses that led to failures in recognising, responding and adequately handling child abuse cases in the past. It is an important sign of the organisation's transparency and accountability. "First and foremost," she says, "it is important for the former children who suffered. Our publication shall encourage others to understand that the child comes first, no matter how painful for the organisation". Those affected have expressed relief that they were able to share their experiences and this has diminished their feelings of sadness and disappointment.

Horst Schreiber interviewed adults who had grown up in SOS Children's Villages and had been affected by violence, as well as caregivers who had witnessed violations. Parallel to the research, a space for victims has been set up where they find someone to talk to and a "clearance process" was initiated where the long-term effects of the abuse and the required support are assessed by an external psychotherapist or psychologist. Based on the outcome of this assessment an internal commission decides on the kind of support the victim receives.

<sup>97</sup> Schreiber, H. (2016)



The main aim of the study was to learn from it and to improve child safeguarding in the future. Thus, SOS Children's Villages Austria conducted workshops on the research results in all parts of Austria, which were mandatory for managers and open to all interested caregivers. They discussed learnings from the results, prevention measures and dealing with reports of violations. Topics such as family myth, idealising the past, fouling one's own nest and authoritarian structures were debated in a factual and future-oriented manner. The results of the workshops have flown into planning processes and training sessions, aiming to promote open communication, learning and dealing with errors in a transparent way as a part of the organisational culture.

"By coming to terms with our own past, we take responsibility", says Elisabeth Hauser, "We become more credible for children and young people in our care, for staff and for our partners. Reviewing our past means to take an important step towards healing and reconciliation also for the organisation as a whole, and it means to look towards the future, so that children and young people in the SOS Children's Villages of today and tomorrow can have positive experiences and good lives".



## Preventing and dealing with child-to-child abuse: An initiative in Latin America

Internal evaluations have shown the importance of addressing and preventing child-to-child sexual abuse. SOS Children's Villages in Latin America, with the support of the NGO PAICABI, has developed activities to combat abusive sexual practices.

Two workshops supported by PAICABI with representatives of several Latin American SOS Children's Villages associations took place, including child safeguarding specialists, programme advisors and human resources advisors. These face-to-face meetings were followed up by online sessions.

During the training, the causes and effects of child-to-child sexual abuse were discussed, as well as prevention and intervention measures, how to minimise the risk of re-victimisation, and how to help a child or adolescent with sexually abusive behaviour. Different psychological methods for working with victims and with children or adolescents with sexually abusive behaviour were presented. SOS Children's Villages associations have now developed processes for capacity-building and awareness training for their care-givers and support teams. All have implemented, through workshops and training, working guides on how to respond to abusive sexual practices.

The implementation of the Guide to Problematic Sexual Behaviours and Abusive Sexual Practices led to strengthening practices in all Latin American countries. Significant efforts have been made to develop activities addressing child-to-child abuse in line with the guide. Some countries created their own documents such as a curriculum on prevention and a document describing sexual risk indicators of abusive practices. Some associations started to sensitise civil society through seminars in which national stakeholders participated, such as governing bodies, justice institutions, and other NGOs.

The evaluation of the training was positive. Participants valued the approach to working with both the victim and the child that had committed the abuse. Some challenges were raised such as how to avoid reproducing stigma or myths in raising children, how subjective views based on moral principles affect caregivers' actions, and how to make sure that a human rights approach is understood and applied. Participants acknowledged the detailed work on this very complex issue and emphasised the importance of an annual training session.

# National and international protection systems



The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) clearly sets out the child’s right to protection. Article 19 protects children against “all forms of physical or mental violence, injury or abuse, neglect or negligent treatment, maltreatment or exploitation, including sexual abuse”.<sup>98</sup> This call for protection is echoed in various regional treaties, for example from Europe and the Americas, and in the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of Children.<sup>99</sup>

The international understanding of violence against children and growing concerns were elaborated in the 2006 World Report on Violence against Children (the UN Study). This seminal work provided a clear definition of violence and identified the need to prohibit, prevent and adequately respond to violence against children in

all its forms and in all settings. This increasing international focus on violence against children led to the United Nations establishing the office of the Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General on Violence Against Children.

## Guidelines for the Alternative Care of Children: A milestone

In 2009, the United Nations General Assembly formally welcomed the Guidelines for the Alternative Care of Children (the Guidelines).<sup>100</sup> The Guidelines are legally non-binding, but represent authoritative internationally endorsed guidance to promote the implementation of the UNCRC for children without parental care or at risk of losing it. They reinforce the need to prevent and adequately respond to violence in both family

<sup>98</sup> United Nations (1989)

<sup>99</sup> Global Initiative to End All Corporal Punishment of Children (2016a)

<sup>100</sup> SOS Children’s Villages International (2009b); United Nations General Assembly (2009)



and alternative care settings. The International Senate of SOS Children’s Villages adopted the Guidelines in 2010 as a key internationally recognised framework for guiding our work.

The Guidelines focus on preventing the separation of children from their families, unless demonstrably necessary and in the best interests of the child. Preventative approaches are foreseen to “empower families with attitudes, skills, capacities and tools to enable them to provide adequately for the protection, care and development of their children”.<sup>101</sup> The Guidelines emphasise the responsibility of states to provide appropriate support to strengthen families and prevent violence.<sup>102</sup>

For children placed in alternative care settings the Guidelines reiterate the need to prohibit forms of discipline or behaviour management that constitute “torture, cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment”.<sup>103</sup> They also restrict the use of force and restraints and prohibit treatment that may compromise physical or mental health.<sup>104</sup> Finally, where violence has occurred children must have access to impartial, effective and participatory procedures to report and respond to any concerns.<sup>105</sup>

### The Sustainable Development Goals: Agenda 2030

In 2015, the United Nations adopted the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which commit

the international community to a broad ranging agenda of goals and targets to be delivered by 2030. The SDGs address protecting children from violence, particularly under Goal 16 – Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions. Target 16.2 is to, “End abuse, exploitation, trafficking and all forms of violence against and torture of children”.

The SDG commitment to reach the furthest behind refocuses advocacy and policy efforts on the most marginalised and discriminated-against children – including children without parental care or at risk of losing it. Research demonstrates that these children are highly vulnerable to various forms of poverty, inequality and violence.<sup>106</sup>

The international impetus to end violence, founded in the UNCRC and elaborated in the Guidelines and SDGs, prompted the launch of significant international initiatives in 2016. The Global Partnership to End Violence against Children<sup>107</sup> brings together partners across sectors and constituencies to build political will, promote solutions, accelerate action and strengthen collaboration to end violence against children. It supports efforts on the global, regional and national levels to deliver on the targets of the SDGs related to violence and to implement and scale up strategies that effectively prevent violence, as well as to monitor their effectiveness and expand the evidence base.

<sup>101</sup> §34 of the Guidelines for the Alternative Care of Children; SOS Children’s Villages International (2009b)

<sup>102</sup> §32, Ibid.

<sup>103</sup> §96, Ibid.

<sup>104</sup> §97, Ibid.

<sup>105</sup> §99, Ibid.

<sup>106</sup> SOS Children’s Villages International (2014b)

<sup>107</sup> The Global Partnership to End Violence (2016)

Other international initiatives launched in 2016 include:

- The High Time<sup>108</sup> initiative launched by the Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General on Violence Against Children to promote the engagement of national, regional and international actors to prevent violence.
- The Elevate Children Funders Group,<sup>109</sup> a funding consortium dedicated to family strengthening and a life free from violence for all children.

The international child rights and development frameworks have clear implications for all state and non-state providers of family services and alternative care. This includes family support and strengthening to prevent violence, prohibition of violence against children in all alternative care settings, professional selection and workforce capacity and skills training, and effective state supervision and monitoring of alternative care.

### Challenges in implementing legal frameworks

In many contexts, legal frameworks for child protection and the prevention of violence are in place, but implementation challenges, social acceptance and resource restrictions to delivering services and interventions remain.<sup>110</sup> Advocacy to support the implementation of legislation and the allocation of necessary resources is required to ensure that those with responsibility for the development of children (e.g. care, welfare, education and health) have the necessary capacity to prevent and respond to violence. State action and oversight must ensure that professional capacity is developed to confront all forms of violence. For care professionals, training, a commitment to a rights based approach and using tools such as our Realising Child Rights<sup>111</sup> handbook, are all useful steps for increasing their capacity to prevent violence against children.

### Eliminating corporal punishment

The UN Committee on the Rights of the Child has a long-standing legal position on the obligations of the state with regard to corporal punishment. In 2006, it established an obligation on states to “move quickly to prohibit and eliminate all corporal punishment” and “to outline legislative and other awareness-raising and educational measures”.<sup>112</sup> The Committee has also noted that addressing the traditional/social acceptance and practice of corporal punishment, in the home, schools, alternative care and other relevant settings requires explicit prohibition.<sup>113</sup>

There is full prohibition on corporal punishment in all settings in 51 states; a further seven states have explicit prohibitions in all alternative care settings; and 32 states have prohibitions in some alternative care settings.<sup>114</sup> This is a positive trend that cuts across regions and cultures and constitutes a vital step towards preventing violence and protecting children. As the author of the 2006 UN Study noted a decade later, “The absence of explicit prohibition of corporal punishment implicitly condones violence against children”.<sup>115</sup>

#### CALL TO ACTION

All states must establish specific laws prohibiting all forms of violence against children in families and in alternative care. States must effectively resource and implement law, policy and practice to prevent violence. This includes but is not limited to international child protection standards, such as the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Guidelines for the Alternative Care of Children and the Sustainable Development Goals.

<sup>108</sup> Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary General on Violence against Children (SRSG) (2016)

<sup>109</sup> Elevate Children Funders Group (2016)

<sup>110</sup> SOS Children’s Villages International and the University of Bedfordshire (2014)

<sup>111</sup> SOS Children’s Villages International (2016d)

<sup>112</sup> §2 UNCRC; Committee on the Rights of the Child (2006)

<sup>113</sup> §34-35 UNCRC; Committee on the Rights of the Child (2006)

<sup>114</sup> Global Initiative to End All Corporal Punishment of Children (2016b)

<sup>115</sup> Prof. Paulo Sergio Pinheiro, launch of the SRSG’s High Time initiative Human Rights Council, Geneva, 9 March 2016



## OUR PRACTICE

### Creating an action plan to end violence against children and young people in Paraguay

Through the Sustainable Development Goals, the world is committed to ending all forms of violence against children. The Global Partnership to End Violence Against Children was conceived to serve as a platform to accelerate efforts to ensure the safety of children.

In Paraguay, a National Commission was created by Presidential decree in 2013 to build effective policies for preventing and addressing violence against children and young people. SOS Children's Villages Paraguay is part of this Commission, and from 2013 to 2016 Paraguay positioned itself as a pioneering country in reducing violence against children.

In 2015, SOS Children's Villages applied to the government to be part of the steering group of the Global Partnership to End Violence Against Children and to lead the consultation process with civil society. At the official launch in New York, SOS Children's Villages Paraguay participated as organisational representative and Ramón Ayala, a teenager from the SOS Children's Village Paraguay, represented the voice of children and young people in Paraguay.

Following this event, SOS Children's Villages Paraguay led and coordinated the Country

Action Plan along with two allies. This involved calling on government, civil society organisations and private companies to confront violence against children and young people. For that reason, seven strategies were considered which were recommended by the Global Partnership in the INSPIRE<sup>116</sup> document that together provide a framework for ending violence against children.

SOS Children's Villages Paraguay has provided expertise in:

- Prevention of family separation due to violence, developing parenting skills and creating protective environments
- Caring for and treating children and young people who have suffered violence
- Legal matters, for example, they supported parliament in drawing up a law prohibiting physical punishment

Through these actions, it is expected that Paraguay will achieve better prevention and care for children and teenagers affected by or at risk of becoming victims of violence, and reduce the factors that contribute to it, such as child labour, homelessness, alcoholism, drug addiction, sexual exploitation and poverty.

<sup>116</sup> WHO et al. (2016)

## OUR PRACTICE

### Advocate for child protection through the Care for ME! campaign in Nepal

Through the Care for Me! campaign, SOS Children's Villages Nepal has worked in partnership with the Ministry of Women, Children and Social Welfare (MoWCSW) to improve the quality of care for children in alternative care settings.

When Minister Riddhi Baba Pradhan formally inaugurated the Care for Me! campaign on 11 December 2013, she declared that the MoWCSW would lead the process to carry out research on alternative care homes in 10 districts to ensure quality care by strengthening child protection mechanisms. The campaign also aimed to ensure the implementation of the Guidelines for the Alternative Care of Children and the Central Child Welfare Board's Standards for Operation and Management of Residential Child Care Homes – 2012.

In 2014, it was decided that the MoWCSW would coordinate a six-member Steering Committee to provide technical support for the campaign activities, among them was SOS Children's Villages Nepal.

In 2015, the Report on the Assessment of Alternative Care in Nepal and Quality Care in Residential Child Care Homes in 10 Study Districts<sup>117</sup> was launched in Kathmandu. It found that comprehensive efforts needed to be made to conceptualise, realise and mobilise quality care and a child safeguarding mechanism in residential child care homes. Based on the assessment, recommendations have been formulated, which include



setting up a database of children at risk as detailed information is missing; monitoring alternative care settings; and clarifying the roles and responsibilities of service providers and stakeholders – including the government – and ensuring they have the capacity to carry out their tasks. A proposal recommends organising training on child care such as:

- Fundamental aspects of child care
- Systems and procedures to ensure child protection within different models of care
- Participation of children in residential care
- Psychosocial support for children
- Positive discipline techniques
- Career/future guidance for young care leavers
- Plans and procedures for family reunification
- Management of alternative care facilities
- National laws, policies and standards for children in care settings

In 2016, based on these recommendations, a two-day training was held for managers of child care homes in partnership with District Child Welfare Boards in 10 districts. The main focus was on strengthening child safeguarding mechanisms. More training sessions are planned.

<sup>117</sup> SOS Children's Villages Nepal and the Ministry of Women, Children and Social Welfare (2014)

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# NO CHILD SHOULD GROW UP ALONE



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*"I think that the most important right for children is to grow up in an environment that can offer you protection, love, care – a family. In that way, you are able to build a strong personality and to feel confident in expressing your own opinion."*

Giorgos, formerly in care at SOS Children's Villages Greece