

75 Years of Impact

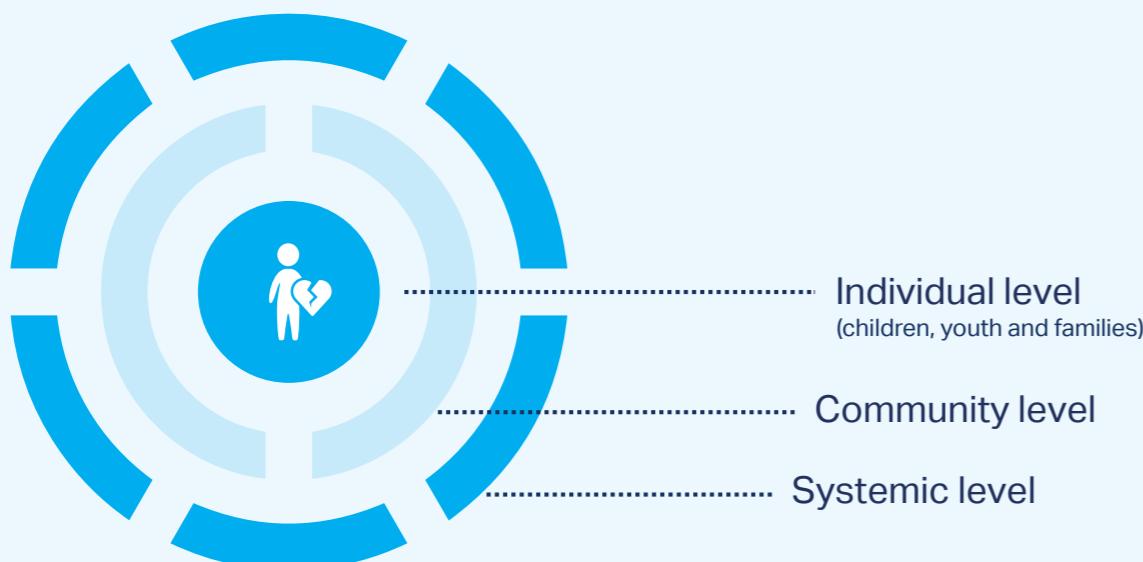


Children need nurturing relationships to grow and develop. The lack of positive interactions in early childhood can harm brain development; neglect, abuse and child-family separation can have long-term consequences for physical and emotional well-being in adulthood.

Preventing this harm requires a multi-faceted approach, one that addresses children's individual needs but also provides the frameworks and resources that strengthen their families and communities.

Since our founding in 1949, SOS Children's Villages has been dedicated to ensuring that children grow up with the supportive relationships they need to become their strongest selves. Over 75 years, as society and our own understanding of child and youth development have evolved, so have our responses to the issues faced by the children we work with. The first three decades of our existence were devoted to directly caring for children and youth who were without parental care. Then in the 1970s, as we learned more about the reasons for children being placed in alternative care, we began our prevention work, supporting families at risk of breaking down to stay together. And in the early 2000s we began coordinated advocacy work at the international level, aiming for systemic change in policy and practice to improve the situation of children and youth without parental care or at risk of losing it.

Today, SOS Children's Villages works along three main levels in order to maximize our impact: the lives of individual children and young people, working also with parents and extended family; the support systems of their communities; and the policy frameworks that affect the trajectories of their individual and collective lives.



In April 2024, as we celebrated the 75th anniversary of the start of a movement for children without parental care or at risk of losing it, we released our **75 Years of Impact** publication. Adding data from five countries to the findings we released in our 2019 report, the publication brings together the outcomes of our social impact assessments over the last two decades but also broadens the discussion to include the results we have contributed to with our advocacy.

The social impact data includes the outcomes of our 2002–2008 Tracking Footprints studies and social impact assessments conducted since 2015 based on a methodology we developed to fit the context of our family-like care and family strengthening services. As part of the assessments, external researchers conduct interviews and focus group discussions with former participants of our family-like care and family strengthening services. Information on their situation before they entered the programme and benchmarking against indicators is applied. The methodology is novel for our sector since we try to locate former participants one to six years after the services have ended to see how they are doing and whether the services have had a sustainable positive impact in their lives. The findings represent the outcomes of research conducted with former programme participants and community stakeholders across 40 countries.

The following pages present results along the three levels of our impact:

- impact in the lives of individuals
- impact in communities
- impact at the systemic level, as well as social return on investment

More Information

For more on our impact, see our **75 Years of Impact** publication. Read the QR code on this card.





Impact at the individual level

We work directly with children, young people and families to ensure that children and young people can grow up in a nurturing environment with strong and trusting relationships – whether in their families of origin or in alternative care.

The figures below represent consolidated findings on the long-term impact in the lives of individuals who received our family strengthening or alternative care services (for more information, see page 8 of *75 Years of Impact*).

External research, including interviews and focus group discussions, was conducted with 4,488 children, young people, and parents and other caregivers. The interviewees, representing 40 countries across all continents, received our services between 1986 and 2019.



Care and relationships

92% of former participants are doing well: they have strong relationships with friends and family, are well cared for (if children), and (if adults) give good care to their own children, passing down the care they have received into the next generation



Self-reliance through education and employment

59% of former participants are doing well in terms of education, skills and the ability to secure their own livelihood



Securing basic needs

72% of former participants are doing well in terms of accommodation, food security and health



Social and emotional well-being

82% of former participants are experiencing social and emotional well-being and are safe from discrimination and other harm



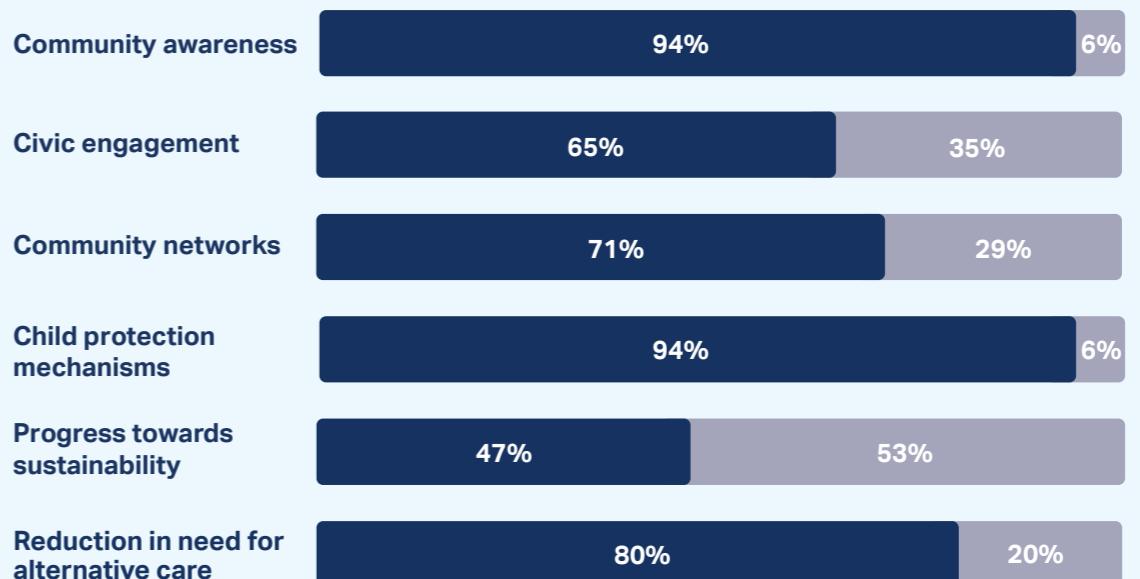
Impact at the community level

Beyond the impact our services and projects have in the lives of individuals, we also work at the community level to improve the situation of children without parental care or at risk of losing it. We design our programmes so that support systems for children and their families are strengthened. Our aim is that communities are strong and can serve as a safety net for children who are on their own or families who are at risk of breaking down.

Our social impact assessments measure the changes in the situation of communities brought about by the programme. The below six dimensions are assessed, such as the community's awareness of and engagement for children in need of protection and families at risk of breaking down. We also measure the ability of communities and partners to sustain activities if the support of SOS Children's Villages were to end and whether the number of children placed in alternative care has reduced since the services started.

The results below represent the findings of assessments conducted from 2015 to 2022 in 17 countries across 18 locations (for more information, see page 25 of *75 Years of Impact*). Researchers carried out interviews with experts in the community and government and assessed against benchmark data.

Average community scores across 18 locations



● Locations doing well

● Locations not doing well



Impact at the systemic level

We advocate for systemic change that improves the situation of children and young people without or at risk of losing parental care. These long-term efforts enable us to have impact beyond the people we work with directly.

SOS Children's Villages has engaged in international advocacy since 2003. Engagement in developing the 2009 [UN Guidelines for the Alternative Care of Children](#) was our first major international advocacy effort, giving rise to valuable partnerships with like-minded organizations. Work to contribute to the dissemination, financing and implementation of this and other fundamental child rights frameworks has continued ever since, at the international, regional and national levels.

For example, in 2018 we worked with UN member states and agencies as well as civil society partners and young people to introduce a [General Assembly resolution](#) on the rights of the child – the first ever to focus on the rights of children without parental care. In 2019, drawing on the resolution, SOS Children's Villages partnered with UNICEF and the African Child Policy Forum and successfully advocated for the addition of children without parental care on the agenda of the African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child. As a result, the Committee conducted a continental baseline [study](#) on children without parental care, which found that over 70% of African countries lack explicit child protection policies to implement key provisions in their constitutions and laws. These findings are being used to develop a General Comment on Children without Parental Care in Africa, which will provide policy guidance within the framework of the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child.

At the national level, we work with governments to address critical gaps in child protection systems and collaborate with partners, networks and coalitions to raise awareness and build momentum for improvement in policy and practice. Our national associations have contributed to laws and guidelines on issues such as foster care, child protection reform, prevention of unnecessary child-family separation, and prevention of violence against children.



Julián Peinado Ramírez

Member of the Colombian House of Representatives and supporter of Law 2089

In 2021, with technical guidance from SOS Children's Villages and specialist Colombian organizations, Colombia introduced Law 2089, which prohibits physical punishment and cruel, humiliating and degrading treatment of children and adolescents.

"When societies improve the ways in which they interact with children, they gain an investment not only in their human capital but in their economic situation."

Photo: Diana Carolina Ruiz

Social return on investment



As part of our assessments, changes brought about by our programmes are quantified in financial terms by comparing the cost of a programme to the financial value of its expected benefits for individuals, the community and society. Assessments from 18 countries show that for every €1 invested into our programmes, society reaped an estimated €4.50 in benefits.



This estimated overall cost–benefit ratio is a weighted average of costs and benefits associated with providing family-like care and family strengthening services. Estimates by each service type and a breakdown of costs and benefits are shown below (for more information, see page 42 of [75 Years of Impact](#)).

Family-like care

1 : 1.50



Family strengthening

1 : 20



● Programme costs

● Individual costs

● Overhead costs

● Next generation

● Caregiver income

● Impact of local expenditures

● Other