

# ACCOUNTABLE NOW INTERIM REPORT 2016



SOS CHILDREN'S  
VILLAGES  
INTERNATIONAL



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# 1 STRATEGIC COMMITMENT TO ACCOUNTABILITY

## 1.1 Statement from the Chief Executive Officer

While this is the fifth year that SOS Children's Villages International has submitted a report to Accountable Now, this interim report is my first one as Chief Executive Officer (CEO), with this being my fifth year as a Management Team member. I was appointed to the position of CEO in October 2016 by our organisation's International Senate (for more information on our governance structure see the [organisation page](#) on our website).

Accountability remains one of our key values, and as CEO, I have continued to take this forward.

Across the General Secretariat (GSC), and the federation as a whole, we have focused on making ourselves more accountable – to children, donors, colleagues, and the international community. We see changing needs in the communities where we work, and we are taking concrete action to respond appropriately. To put this accountability into action, we began a proactive, programme review process in more than 80 member associations in 2016. Programmes are evaluated for their quality, impact, efficiency, and relevance to the children in our target group – children who have lost their parents and children who are not receiving the care they need, particularly those who are most vulnerable and at-risk. The programme review aims to maximise the impact of our programmes as well as to improve their efficiency. This process is aligned with our Strategy 2030 (adopted by the SOS Children's Villages International General Assembly in June 2016) and reflects our commitment to results-based management, our global management concept that was approved by the SOS Children's Villages International Management Council (advisory body) in 2016. This concept and the programme review, along with our progressive social impact assessments, demonstrate our commitment to organisational learning and management based on measurable impact and relevance to our stakeholders. The first seven impact assessments – two pilots in 2015, and five further assessments in 2016 – provide evidence that SOS Children's Villages is indeed making a lasting difference in children's lives and helping to make the communities in which they live sustainable.

Five of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are at the core of our Strategy 2030. This strategy explicitly addresses the SDGs that directly relate to SOS Children's Villages on the topics of poverty, reduced inequalities, quality education, decent work and economic growth, and strong institutions. Our strategy also outlines how we will continue to make a strong contribution to the implementation of the UN Guidelines for the Alternative Care of Children, and how our work supports the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. It also reflects our accountability to the children and young people supported by SOS Children's Villages: as leaders in advocating on behalf of children and young people in vulnerable circumstances, we recognise our responsibility to amplify their voices and to uphold their rights.

We continue to build upon and expand our previous experiences with involving stakeholders across the federation in the decision-making process. One example of this is a draft umbrella policy document articulating our commitments to quality care which was developed with input from 20 member associations, young people, the federation leadership team and the Management Council. The document will be updated based on input from member associations and our governance bodies. We see this as an opportunity to listen to and learn from each other.

Compliance, child safeguarding and feedback and complaints handling continued to be strengthened in 2016.

In March 2016, the Management Council approved additional policy support documents to further support the implementation of strong and reliable child safeguarding reporting and responding procedures across the whole federation.

In addition the feedback and complaints handling working document was piloted in the GSC and six member associations in 2016 (see section 2.1 Collecting and analysing feedback and complaints for more information).

The SOS Children's Villages International Integrity, Compliance and Legal unit continued to maintain a formal, anonymised record of all incoming allegations concerning corrupt conduct that are reported to the GSC. Relevant stakeholders are informed ad hoc, on a quarterly basis, and in an Annual Corruption Case Report. The data also serves to support the ongoing risk assessment and training/prioritisation of complementary corruption prevention measures. Further details are summarised in section 2.2 Identifying and tracking incidents of corruption).

Another example and the next logical step of our demonstration of accountability to each other came in July 2017, when nearly all national and managing directors from our 135 national organisations met with senior representatives from the GSC for the *2030 Come Together* meeting. This was an opportunity for us to share the national strategies and how each of them support our federation Strategy 2030. Together we took a look at where we are as a federation, as well as where we need to adapt, strengthen and innovate in order to reach our strategic goals and initiatives. We also examined what is needed to successfully implement our mid-term strategies through 2020. This was more than simply a workshop, but rather the start of a new approach in engaging all of our federation's stakeholders to take ownership of – and be accountable for – our federation-wide strategy.

These processes are crucial for ensuring that accountability is central in not just our strategy development, but also strategy *implementation*. As we take the first steps on our journey to 2030, accountability remains our guide, accompanying us every step of the way.



**Norbert Meder**  
**Chief Executive Officer**

## 2 IMPROVEMENT ANALYSIS

### 2.1 Collecting and analysing feedback and complaints (NGO2)

SOS Children's Villages always strives to provide highest quality care and support. In this regard, we recognise the importance of learning from the people, communities and partners we work with, so that we can constantly improve the quality of our work. Thus, we welcome feedback and complaints regarding our work and use them to foster organisational learning.

As explained in our 2015 accountability report, we have independent processes defined in the particular areas mentioned below, as feedback and complaints in these areas require very specific attention and procedures. This is also explained on the [feedback and complaints page on our website](#).

- Child safeguarding concerns and allegations: [Our website](#) contains a child safeguarding page including a [reporting form](#) where any child safeguarding concern or incident can be submitted. For more information please refer to the Child Protection Policy available on [the international website](#).
- Fraud and corruption allegations: Steps to be taken concerning reporting, investigation and responding are stated within our Anti-Fraud and Anti-Corruption Guideline [available on our website](#).
- Complaints related to international child and village sponsorships: Most feedback and complaints related to international child and village sponsorships are best dealt with by the SOS Children's Villages association where the sponsorship is registered. In support of SOS Children's Villages associations, there are two levels defined within a standard process: the International Office level and the member association level. When a member association cannot answer a question or address a complaint, the topic is escalated to the International Office. We have specific service levels in place to define the process and timing. You can find a link to the national websites [here](#) under "Choose a country". However, any concern related to international child and village sponsorships can of course also be directed to the International Office using the reporting form on the website or sent to [donor.services@sos-kd.org](mailto:donor.services@sos-kd.org). This e-mail address is provided in the [sponsorship section on the international website](#). Furthermore, all international sponsors receive a sponsorship handbook that guides them regarding where to submit potential inquiries.

In addition to these processes, we have a formalised feedback and complaints handling mechanism that gives all external stakeholders an easy-to-use format to register their feedback and complaints at any time on all other topics not covered by the above-mentioned processes (for example, this mechanism is for feedback and complaints concerning overall programme quality and advocacy, fundraising practices, or concerns related to staff). The feedback and complaints working document, approved by the Management Team, defines the principles, standards and procedures that enable external stakeholders to submit their feedback and complaints and outlines how SOS Children's Villages responds to these.

On a **federation level**, feedback and complaints can be addressed through the SOS Children's Villages International [website](#) and through the e-mail address [feedback@sos-kd.org](mailto:feedback@sos-kd.org). The responsibility for receiving, recording, acknowledging receipt, and monitoring feedback and complaints coming in via the federation website/e-mail address lies with a responsible focal person/unit in the International Office.

When implementing the feedback and complaints handling mechanism, each **member association** is required to define relevant contact points for stakeholders to provide feedback or raise complaints and to ensure proper communication of their channels to their stakeholders. As a minimum requirement, member associations are required to establish a dedicated e-mail address. The national director assigns the responsibility for receiving feedback and complaints coming in via the e-mail address and

other channels and for the sequential steps of recording, acknowledging receipt, forwarding and responding to a specific unit in the national office.

Starting in July 2016, the [feedback and complaints handling working document](#) was piloted in the GSC and six member associations: SOS Children's Villages Philippines, SOS Children's Villages Bosnia and Herzegovina, SOS Children's Villages Zambia, SOS Children's Villages The Gambia, SOS Children's Villages Jordan and SOS Children's Villages Brazil. During the piloting phase, we received 14 feedback and complaints in the GSC and the six pilot countries. Out of the 14 feedback and complaints cases, five cases were related to staff, three to fundraising, two to programme quality and four related to other topics. The majority of cases were raised via the feedback and complaints handling e-mail address at federation or national level. All cases were resolved and closed.

#### Good practice example – SOS Children's Villages Zambia

As one of the member associations implementing the feedback and complaints handling mechanism as a pilot country, SOS Children's Villages Zambia strongly involved the communities with whom they are working in setting up the process. An important step included holding community meetings to inform programme participants and communities about the feedback and complaints handling mechanism, and specifically asking them which channels would be best suited for the respective community to bring in their feedback or complaints. In short, the feedback channels were defined together with the communities to best address their needs according to their respective local context. Based on the stakeholder feedback, SOS Children's Villages Zambia for example also established feedback boxes or feedback forms in addition to the national feedback e-mail address. Additionally, a specific complaints and feedback letter was developed and shared with the various stakeholders to inform them of the feedback and complaints handling mechanism.

Based on the learnings from the piloting phase, the working document will be updated and further improved in 2017. After the approval of the updated feedback and complaints handling policy support document, roll-out to further member associations is planned.

In addition to the mentioned mechanisms, we have self-evaluation processes and other mechanisms to solicit feedback from programme participants, which we consider part of a broader feedback and complaints handling system within our organisation. One example are village committees, which consist of a number of children in the programme who directly contribute to the programme management, give feedback to the programme leaders and bring in their ideas (please see section NGO1 in our 2015 report for further information).

As noted in previous reports, our [SOS Children's Villages Code of Conduct](#) contains the commitment that if staff members and board members become aware of any breaches of the Code of Conduct, the colleagues are duty bound to report these to their respective manager or to the next level if applicable. For more information on the Code of Conduct roll-out, please refer to the section below.

#### Child safeguarding

SOS Children's Villages is unique among child-focused NGOs in that we are child care practitioners with guardianship and/or daily responsibility for the direct care (including housing, education and healthcare) of some 84,500 children and young people.

Through the SOS Children's Villages Child Protection Policy, all employees and associates of SOS Children's Villages are obliged to report any concerns, suspicions or allegations of any child abuse. Types of child abuse are described in the [SOS Children's Villages Child Protection Policy](#), along with the mandatory steps to be taken by the employee if a case of abuse is suspected. The [SOS Children's Villages Code of Conduct](#) emphasises that each employee is personally responsible for reporting. In

any case of suspected abuse, the very first priority is to immediately secure the safety and well-being of the alleged victim.

The particular steps for dealing with the reported incidents vary depending on the type of abuse, the individual context and the local laws, but every concern or incident reported is taken seriously. Reported allegations of child abuse are assessed, managed and documented by the child safeguarding team within the framework defined in our child safeguarding reporting and responding procedures. The national director of the member association is ultimately responsible for any decisions and action taken.

If the reported allegations include a possible criminal offence, the incident is reported to the appropriate national authorities. Reports on child safeguarding incidents are shared with the Management Team (executive body) regularly and with the Programme Audit Committee of the International Senate (supervisory body) bi-annually.

The Child Protection Policy introduced in May 2008 is a binding document for all member associations and the General Secretariat. The implementation of the Child Protection Policy is reviewed on an annual basis through our child safeguarding survey. The survey is based on the assessment tool developed by the Keeping Children Safe coalition, of which SOS Children's Villages is a member. With the survey, we review five critical areas of our work in regard to child safeguarding:

- Putting the Child Protection Policy into practice  
Translating and promoting the policy, creating a safe environment for children and young people in the SOS programmes.
- Organising staff  
Capacity building, roles and responsibilities of different co-workers for child safeguarding.
- Planning  
Local mapping and risk assessment, planning child safeguarding measures.
- Implementing  
Resources available for child safeguarding activities, reporting and responding procedures.
- Monitoring and review  
Monitoring progress in the area of child safeguarding including reported child safeguarding incidents and learning from practical experiences.

In March 2016, the Management Council approved the policy support documents "Child safety is everybody's business: Child safeguarding reporting and responding procedures in member associations" and "SOS Children's Villages child safeguarding investigations". These policy support documents further support implementation of strong and reliable child safeguarding reporting and responding procedures across the whole federation, where all relevant stakeholders are clear about their role and able to fulfil their responsibilities. To support further capacity building of co-workers in different parts of the organisation it was decided to launch e-learning courses on child safeguarding. As the first one a course on child safeguarding reporting and responding procedures in member associations was introduced in 2017. The course is be available to all co-workers worldwide. The implementation of the child safeguarding reporting procedures is planned to be completed by June 2018 and includes several phases. In the first phase, all regional offices were requested to organise training for national child safeguarding focal persons by the end of December 2016. This was completed within the given timeframe by all regions except West and Central Africa where due to existing challenges the training was postponed until 2017.

The implementation of the procedures related to child safeguarding investigations was organised through regional trainings for selected co-workers from member associations. The trainings were organised in cooperation with Keeping Children Safe.

In 2016 it was decided to proceed with Level 1 Certification by Keeping Children Safe to validate whether existing child safeguarding procedures within the federation are in line with international child safeguarding standards. This process was carried out in 2017 and SOS Children's Villages International was recently awarded Level 1 Certification.

In order to provide more opportunities for both internal and external persons to report child safeguarding concerns and incidents, [a child safeguarding page on the international website](#) was launched in 2015. Besides information on child safeguarding policies and procedures of SOS Children's Villages, there is also a [reporting form](#) where any child safeguarding concern or incident can be submitted. It is also possible to submit an anonymous report there.

### **Allegations of corrupt conduct**

Regarding the handling of allegations of corrupt conduct and breaches of the [Anti-Fraud and Anti-Corruption Guideline](#) and other corruption-relevant policies, please see 2.2 Identifying and tracking incidents of corruption (SO4).

### **Code of Conduct roll-out**

The Code of Conduct was approved by the Secretary General in September 2011 as part of the implementation of the Child Protection Policy and at the end of 2016 the Code of Conduct was rolled-out by 83% of member associations. Within the remaining member associations, a local Code of Ethics exists, which is based on our global Code of Conduct standards.

We are reviewing options to further improve roll-out initiatives, such as implementing e-learning platforms with the intention to reach out and facilitate the roll-out with a wider scope for the upcoming years.

Within the GSC, by the end of 2016, 90% of co-workers had signed the Code of Conduct and 61% of GSC co-workers had attended the Code of Conduct workshop. From 2014 onwards, each co-worker signs the Code of Conduct together with the employment contract when joining the organisation. This applies to co-workers in the GSC and in member associations.

## **2.2 Identifying and tracking incidents of corruption (SO4)**

SOS Children's Villages International's approach to identifying and tracking incidents of corruption continues to be steered by the Integrity, Compliance and Legal (ICL) unit. ICL maintains a formal, anonymised record of all incoming allegations concerning corrupt conduct that are reported to the General Secretariat (GSC) directly or through the regions/member associations through the formal federation-wide reporting process outlined in the [Anti-Fraud and Anti-Corruption Guideline](#). Furthermore, the progress of the investigation, including outcomes and possible remediation steps, is tracked.

Corruption Incident Papers serve to inform relevant stakeholders within the federation about the reasonable possibility of corruption incidents and major developments within their investigation and, where applicable, remediation on an ad-hoc basis in summary and anonymised form. Additionally, all data is summarised in 'Quarterly Corruption Case Reports,' and distributed to the Finance and Audit Committee as a specialist sub-committee of the International Senate (supervisory body) as well as the Management Team, and further consolidated for the Management Council (advisory body). Data collected from reported alleged corrupt conduct in 2016 has also been summarised in the 2016 Annual Corruption Case Report, compiled by the ICL unit. This includes an analysis of the reports from 2016, such as details on the number of cases per region, country, category (type of misconduct), type of programme affected and source (of the suspicion), amongst others. In addition, the 2016 report includes selected multi-year statistics of the figures from 2010-2016 (covering the period starting with the roll-out of the Anti-Fraud and Anti-Corruption Guideline to the year under review), as well as an



elaborated Questions and Answers section and selected, anonymised case examples. Additionally, this data is included in the ongoing risk assessment and training/prioritisation of complementary corruption prevention measures. The 2016 Annual Corruption Case Report was publicised internally in March 2017. SOS Children's Villages intends to make a version of the Annual Corruption Case Reports available in the future for external audiences, in a format suitable to such readers.

In 2016, there were no confirmed reports of corrupt conduct in relation to the GSC. Potential corruption cases in the SOS Children's Villages federation were reported anonymously by SOS co-workers or external third parties, as well as identified through internal audits.

### 2.3 Ethical fundraising and communications (PR6)

SOS Children's Villages International continues to promote a responsible approach to fundraising in our member associations through strong policies and guidelines that ensure children's rights are respected and that advertising and promotion are accurate and truthful. Our policies in this area – which have not changed significantly since the last report – are based around firm principles, respecting a child's right to privacy as well as a commitment to transparency and accountability. Our fundraising manual states that the way we raise funds reflects our desire to improve children's lives. We act in accordance with our vision, mission and values, as well as society's ethical standards as reflected in local culture, religion and law. We perform our fundraising activities with transparency and integrity, building long-term confidence in our work among the children and families we serve, our donors, and the general public.

We also have fundraising policies that ensure consistency in the application of an ethical approach to developing corporate partnerships at international and national levels. These include that:

- We only accept donations from or partner with companies, major donors or foundations that do not act in contradiction to the interests of children.
- We only work with partners who share our values.
- We do not endorse nor give exclusivity to any partner.
- Our partnerships are always governed by a written agreement.
- Decisions regarding direct interaction of our partners with children and families are guided by the best interest of the children.
- We work together in securing and managing partnerships with multinational corporates, global citizens and international foundations.

We recognise that, in fundraising, what we share and how we share it makes all the difference between doing well for children and doing harm. This is why in 2016 we began developing a new policy support document on children's privacy, which will be presented for management approval in late 2017 and rolled out afterwards.

This document reflects that we, in our fundraising communications, strive to lead by example, demonstrating to our supporters, partners, communities, governments, and to our own beneficiaries how to safeguard children's rights, dignity and privacy while raising awareness about their situations.

During the piloting phase of the feedback and complaints handling process from July to December 2016, we received two complaints related to fundraising practices. Both cases were resolved and closed (see 2.1 for more information). Also all additional sponsorship complaints were investigated thoroughly when received. Most feedback and complaints related to international child and village sponsorships are handled by the SOS Children's Villages association where the sponsorship is registered, but the GSC also directly receives a number of reported feedback and complaints. We see feedback and complaints as a crucial part of our own accountability and thus welcome feedback and complaints related to the services, actions and policies the organisation is responsible for or which are within our sphere of influence. These are used as ways for us to address any issues and improve the quality of our work.

## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CEO	Chief Executive Officer
GSC	General Secretariat
ICL	Integrity, Compliance and Legal
IO	International Office
SDGs	United Nations Sustainable Development Goals

# A LOVING HOME FOR EVERY CHILD



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Cover picture: Photographer: Svorte Kristin