

Improvement Analysis

SOS Children's Villages International

September 2015

Relation between SOS federation and Charter
<p><i>For Charter commitments to be fully embedded into the culture, all functions and processes of an organisation it is important to ensure that national entities are involved in this commitment. Against this background the Panel would greatly welcome if Charter Membership was extended to SOS national entities. At a minimum it is important to explain how Charter commitments are upheld at the national level.</i></p> <p><i>Moreover, the Panel would like to know how the new Internal Accountability Standards will relate to the INGO Accountability Charter (see 1.1 and 3.8).</i></p>
<p>The SOS Children's Villages Policy on Good Management and Accountability Quality Standards (GMAQS) sets the quality standards in the areas of management and transparency, integrity of the organisation and protection of assets. The quality standards are mandatory for all entities of the federation and apply to all member associations, specifically to board members and members of management who have a leading role in ensuring good management and accountability. Please refer to our last report for a more detailed explication of the different standards.</p> <p>In 2014, our Good Management and Accountability Quality Standards were continuously implemented across the federation through the published policy support documents and trainings. The GMAQS provide the basic principles regarding to whom we are accountable, how we work, as well as basic standards in selected areas of our accountability approach. The GMAQS are in line with the commitments made under the INGO Accountability Charter, for example with regards to good governance, transparency or professional management. Committing to the INGO Accountability Charter strongly supports our accountability approach, as we provide a comprehensive framework for assessing our work from different angles. At the moment only the General Secretariat reports to the INGO Accountability Charter. However, as laid out, our member associations need to comply with our GMAQS, which are in line with our Charter commitment. Nevertheless, we would of course strongly support the extension of the Charter commitment to our member associations.</p>
Evidence
<p><i>SOS is encouraged to provide more evidence that mentioned practices, procedures and policies work well in practice and inform management decisions in the next report. How did - for instance – restructuring concretely improve SOS' effectiveness and cohesion etc.?</i></p>
<p>Examples and evidence of how the restructuring has improved SOS Children's Villages' effectiveness and cohesion in terms of our cooperation within the federation, federation management, federation governance, federation processes and people and culture are shared in our 2014 report. Please see section 2.9.</p>
SOS' governance structure (4.1)
<p><i>A thorough overview is given on SOS' relatively hierarchical governance structure, relevant committees and roles/responsibilities. The role of the (new) Management Council and the actual Senate's work could be laid out more clearly (e.g. frequency of meetings etc.). Especially more information on whether the rather large Senate (governance body of 22 people) is workable in practice as the main legislative/governance body would be appreciated in the next report.</i></p>
<p>The roles of the Management Council and the International Senate are laid out in section 4.1 of our 2014 report. Generally, the changed governance structure specifically aims at improving the functionality of the International Senate as the main legislative body. Nevertheless, we are still fine-tuning roles and responsibilities of our governance bodies to ensure effective and efficient decision-making (see section 2.9).</p>

Complaints Handling Mechanism (NGO2)

The reports' main weakness is again the lack of a functioning complaints and feedback mechanism. This is currently being developed and it is expected that SOS will have made progress in the next report. The Panel looks furthermore forward to data on the development of a whistle-blower policy, reported cases and the way they are handled.

As described in former reports, we have a comprehensive child protection complaints handling mechanism. 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. The SOS Children's Villages Code of Conduct emphasises that each employee is personally responsible for reporting. In 2014, the organisation focused on further strengthening its child safeguarding work at different levels of the organisation.

In our 2014 report we highlight that one way of submitting feedback, complaints and queries is via the [comment and feedback form](#) on our website. Anyone can provide feedback and bring in complaints and questions via the online form. Feedback, complaints and questions submitted via the web contact centre are collected in the International Office and forwarded to member associations, International Office Regions or to respective departments in the International Office, depending on the information content and responsibilities within our federation. These requests are then followed up and resolved within the respective unit or escalated to the next level, as appropriate. Examples of topics covered in feedback and queries in 2014 include internship and job requests, questions on visits, programme content, donations/sponsorships and also complaints such as breaches of SOS policies or use of funds.

Within the federation feedback and complaints can also always be brought in via the regular reporting lines. Our Code of Conduct contains the commitment that if staff becomes 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. Please see NGO2 for more information.

Monitoring, Learning and Evaluation (NGO3)

SOS states that the scope of the project to develop a Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) system needed to be extended. The new organisation-wide results based management approach system will replace the multitude of currently co-existing processes. The Panel looks forward to evidence that the new impact assessment format will lead to better informed management responses and information to key stakeholders.

Based on the programme monitoring database and our previous work done within the organisation to establish a comprehensive global monitoring, evaluation and learning system (as explained in our 2012 and 2013 reports), in 2014 SOS Children's Villages began work on a comprehensive results-based management approach. To tailor a state-of-the-art results-based management approach for SOS Children's Villages, we began an impact assessment project in 2014. It began with a thorough analysis phase to identify well-functioning elements in the areas of planning, resource alignment, monitoring, evaluation, and reporting and potential gaps and non-functional or redundant processes.

The impact assessment project team developed a new approach for assessing a programme's impact both financially (using the concept of social return on investment) and non-financially (measuring sustainable changes in the lives of former beneficiaries and in the community where the programme is located). The approach was piloted in Ethiopia and Swaziland starting by the end of 2014. Over 80 interviews were conducted with former programme participants from family strengthening and family-based care programmes to evaluate the impact of local programmes. In addition, stakeholder interviews with family strengthening and family-based care programme staff, community-based organisations and the local government were undertaken to understand some of the strengths and weaknesses of the programme as a whole. More information on results of the pilots will be reported next year. In 2015, the pilots will be carried out further and the concept will be finalised by the middle of the year. It is planned to conduct further impact assessments in 4-5 more countries.

Please see NGO3 for more information.