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# **SOS Children's Villages International Secretariat** Independent Review Panel Feedback

Accountability Report 2018  
Review Round February 2020



# SOS Children's Villages International Secretariat

## Feedback from the Independent Review Panel

Review Round February 2020

20 February 2020

Dear Steffen Braasch,

Thank you for submitting your accountability report. We, the Independent Review Panel of Accountable Now, appreciate your efforts to strengthen accountability to communities, local partners, supporters, staff, donors, or other key constituencies. Our key focus is on accountability to those you serve. It is against this background that we critically discussed your report and came to the individual assessment below.

The Panel would like to begin by congratulating SOS Children's Villages on their 70th anniversary in 2019. SOS Children's Villages International's General Secretariat's ('GSC') seventh report is a concise and informative interim report, highlighting key accountability related developments over the reporting period. The report indicates SOS' continued commitment to accountability.

The Panel had found SOS' last full report to be very strong, and had only requested further information on one issue (conflicts of interest), which is addressed in this interim report. As no significant areas for improvement had been identified, SOS had suggested in the follow-up call with the Panel the other key points they would like to focus on in this report, namely feedback and complaints mechanisms, advocacy positions and public awareness campaigns, and resource allocation. SOS' approach to feedback and complaints, particularly their comprehensive reporting on child safeguarding incidents, remains a **good practice**.

Although this interim report is still based on the old reporting questions (as the last full report, from which the points for improvement are drawn, also used the old questions), the Panel has included the closest corresponding questions from the new framework, and included numerical assessments as in the new framework. This will serve to begin bringing this report in line with the new framework, and SOS' next full report will use the new reporting questions.

If you have any other feedback or comments on our work, please share them with us by sending them to the Accountable Now Secretariat.

Yours sincerely,

Accountable Now's Independent Review Panel



# SOS Children's Villages International Secretariat's Accountability Report 2018

Review Round February 2020

## Opening Statement from the Head of Organisation

The opening statement is written by SOS' interim CEO Steffen Braasch and supported by COO Michael Poeltl. It explains why the reporting process is useful to SOS, and includes a good overview of key accountability related efforts over the past year as well as upcoming plans. The section on key organisational updates is therefore effectively covered here.

Of particular note are the convening of international meetings of the federation to exchange knowledge and learnings, progress on the "Federation 2030 - Accountable and Together" project which promotes better cooperation between the Secretariat and Member Associations (MAs), and an update of the Strategy 2030. Given, within this, there is a particular workstream on Governance and Management we hope that this will enable more holistic, cross-federation reporting to AN in the future and would like to know whether this is indeed SOS's expectation.

The opening statement explains how SOS continues to progress on safeguarding, including implementation of the [Care Promise](#), continuing with an Independent Child Safeguarding Review, and publishing their second [Child Safeguarding Annual Report](#).

Other key developments are progress in embedding a Results Based Management approach throughout the federation, creating a [70 Years of Impact](#) report for the organisation's 70th anniversary in 2019, and continuing to work in partnership with other child-focused NGOs to strengthen efficiency, effectiveness and impact.

The Panel finds this to be a strong opening statement, and appreciates SOS' continued dedication to accountability throughout a busy time of leadership change.

## PROFILE DISCLOSURES

### I. Strategy and Analysis

4.6

#### **Conflicts of interest**

In its last feedback letter, the Panel had asked about guidance on general conflicts of interest (in addition to existing guidance on conflicts of interest in business relationships). This report provides more detail about SOS' efforts to address conflict of interest situations.



Internal audits focus on potential conflict of interest situations, and some incidents were detected in the reporting period - these were investigated and addressed in internal audit reports. This practice will continue in future, including checking whether suppliers have any connections to staff, management, or board members.

In addition, national management and board members are briefed on conflicts of interest, compliance trainings have been held in national associations, and the issue has been addressed in a meeting of the Integrity and Compliance Network meeting in Africa.

Management of conflicts of interest will be expanded upon in an updated procurement guideline, which will be implemented in 2020.

The Panel finds SOS' approach to be sound.

## PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

### I. Programme Effectiveness

NGO2 (J3)	<p><b>Collecting and analysing feedback and complaints (question J3 in the new framework)</b></p> <p>In its last feedback letter, the Panel identified SOS' approach to feedback and complaints mechanisms as a good practice, due to the availability of several mechanisms, including child-friendly mechanisms, which are easily accessible on SOS' <a href="#">website</a>, and a comprehensive overview of incidents in the reporting period.</p> <p>In this interim report, SOS reaffirms the significant emphasis they continue to place on improvement safeguarding policies and practices. There is a focus on transparency, and the Panel commends SOS for the publication of their second <a href="#">Child Safeguarding Annual Report</a>, which provides a comprehensive overview of incidents in 2018-19, as well as SOS' approach to safeguarding, and learnings. This remains a <b>good practice</b> which the Secretariat will share with other AN members. However, as the report acknowledges, further efforts are needed to strengthen reporting and response procedures across the federation and to ensure that all member associations are implementing appropriate measures and committing adequate resources.</p>	<b>3</b>
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	<p>The response highlights key learnings and actions for improvement, as extracted from the Child Safeguarding Annual Report. The Panel notes positively that learnings from the Independent Child Safeguarding Review will inform an update of SOS' child safeguarding policy, planned to be completed in 2021.</p> <p>The rollout of SOS' feedback and complaints procedures to MAs across the federation was expected to be addressed through the Federation 2030 - Accountable and Together project. The Panel looks forward to an update on this in the next full report.</p>	
NGO5 (F2)	<p><b>Advocacy positions and public awareness campaigns (question F2 in the new framework)</b></p> <p>The report provides an update on SOS' <a href="#">I See You</a> campaign which was launched in 2019. It explains how learnings from past campaigns influenced the design and implementation of this campaign - the Panel welcomes this, having enquired about this point in its last feedback letter.</p> <p>Prior learnings led to the <i>I See You</i> campaign being a cross-functional effort of the Advocacy, Brand, and Communications teams to ensure consistency in external messaging and outreach. A cross-functional global campaign team was established, as well as a network with experts from all six SOS regional offices, with representatives from all three functions. This allowed a better understanding of how the campaign could be adapted to regional and national contexts, objectives, and capacities.</p> <p>The Panel also notes positively that children and young people without parental care or at risk of losing it (the theme of the campaign) were included in the planning of campaign events and materials, ensuring that the campaign had a positive, child-rights based foundation representing the views of the key stakeholder group. Some more details on this, and how young people and the communities SOS works in are involved in shaping campaigns overall, are requested in the next report.</p>	3
<b>II. Financial Management</b>		
NGO7 (G1 and I3)	<p><b>Resource allocation (questions G1 and I3 in the new framework)</b></p> <p>The Panel had not had any concerns regarding this point, but had suggested in its last feedback letter that the audit report be more easily locatable on the SOS website. In the previous report, an audit report covering the Secretariat and Austrian entities was linked, but was not easy to find on the website.</p>	4



The Panel is pleased to see that the 2018 audit report is now easily located on the ["reports" section](#) of the SOS website, and hopes this will also be the case for future audit reports.

The interim report also explains that the [2018 audit report](#) covers all General Secretariat offices globally (14 branches plus the Austrian offices), whereas in the past it only covered the Austrian entities. The Panel commends this development, which has led to increased transparency.

The Panel would also like to flag that under the new reporting questions, under question G2, we ask for the salaries of the five most senior positions in the organisation - we encourage SOS to share this information in the next full report.