

SOS Children's Villages International

Accountable Now Report 2019



**SOS CHILDREN'S
VILLAGES**

Period covered:
January 2018 to December 2019

SOS Children's Villages is the world's largest non-governmental organization focused on supporting children and young people without parental care or at risk of losing it. It was founded in 1949 by Hermann Gmeiner.

Child neglect, abuse and abandonment is everywhere. Families are at risk of separation. Locally led, we work in more than 130 countries and territories to strengthen families who are under pressure so they can stay together. When this is not in a child or young person's best interests, we provide quality care according to their unique needs.

Together with partners, donors, communities, children, young people and families, we enable children to grow up with the bonds they need to develop and become their strongest selves. We speak up for each child's rights and advocate for change so all children can grow up in a supportive environment.

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For more information or to provide feedback on this report, please contact: federation.communications@sos-kd.org

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Opening statement

On behalf of SOS Children's Villages International, we are pleased to submit our 2019 report to Accountable Now. In fulfilling our mission – building families for children in need, helping them shape their own futures and sharing in the development of their communities – we lean on our values of courage, commitment, trust and accountability. To make a meaningful difference for children and young people, we must understand their needs and respond to the changing environments in which they live. We must cultivate networks and lasting partnerships that are built on trust and transparency. We must be conscious of our unique strengths as well as of our limitations, and we must keep learning from our experience through self-reflection and dialogue.

In 2019, we made progress across several key areas. We initiated a review of our Strategy 2030 to identify our federation's priorities for 2021–2024. As we continued building capacity in the implementation of our results-based management approach, we improved our Programme Database and started work on our programme and project management system. To support the implementation of our main programme document, the SOS Care Promise, we developed detailed guidance on areas such as gatekeeping and youth development. We focused on strengthening youth participation, involving young people in strategy review, advocacy and project delivery, with our Leaving Care project as a notable example. Working with partners, we successfully advocated for the United Nations General Assembly's annual child rights resolution to be focused on children without parental care. To close a gap in our internal policy framework, we initiated the development of a federation-wide sexual misconduct policy. More generally, we have recognized the need to move towards a cross-cutting approach to safeguarding and integrity.

Implementation of proposals that focus on promoting accountability in governance and management is one of our current priorities. We developed concepts for improvements within the governance and financial management work streams of our Federation 2030 project. This includes finalizing a revised version of SOS Children's Villages International Statutes to provide more clarity on the status of SOS Children's Villages International within the federation as well as the rights and obligations of its legal bodies and those of member associations. Among key proposed changes are the establishment of a Compliance Committee in the International Senate, the introduction of an Impact and Investment Board, provisions to hold meetings of our General Assembly more frequently, and an increased number of International Senate members to enable better regional representation.

In 2021, we expect the final report on the outcomes of the Independent Child Safeguarding Review, which we commissioned in 2017. Addressing its findings will be of critical importance for the development of our safeguarding practice. Due to challenges to the working context this year as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, we are currently unable to discuss specific implications from country case studies, as we expected earlier this year.

We will also focus on increasing transparency in the information we share about our organization. For instance, we are planning to revise the content of our website to provide a more complete overview of our structure, staff and offices. These and other accountability objectives will be pursued under the leadership of a now complete Management Team. We are excited to welcome Ingrid Maria Johansen, who will join SOS Children's Villages International as chief executive officer on 4 January 2021.

We look forward to the Independent Review Panel's feedback.



Steffen Braasch
Chief Executive Officer (Interim)
Chief Financial Officer



Michael Pörtl
Chief Operating Officer

Cluster A: What we have achieved

A. The impact we achieve

A1. What are your mission statement and your theory of change? Please provide a brief overview.

Self-assessment: level 3

SOS Children's Villages has defined its mission as follows: "We build families for children in need, we help them shape their own futures and we share in the development of their communities."¹ Our theory of change provides the basis for the SOS Children's Villages Strategy 2030, which guides our members as well as the General Secretariat.² A chart of our theory of change is provided in the [appendix](#).

A2. What are your key strategic indicators for success and how do you involve your stakeholders in developing them?

Self-assessment: level 3

Our Strategy 2030, developed in 2016, includes seven strategic initiatives. We rely on a set of 16 strategic indicators to evaluate progress as well as to develop annual and mid-term plans. Strategic initiative 5, Create a Movement, is de-prioritized at this stage of implementation. Below is an overview of indicators.

Strategic initiative	Indicators
1. Innovate alternative care	The number of children and young people in our care Monthly average running costs
2. Strengthen families	The number of children and young people we work with The percentage of families who are self-reliant when exiting family strengthening Monthly average running costs
3. Empower young people	The percentage of young people who are self-reliant when leaving alternative care The percentage of children and young people in alternative care or family strengthening with at least satisfactory educational performance
4. Advocate for children	Member associations that contribute to improving policies and legal frameworks for children and young people without parental care or at risk of losing it
6. Simplify SOS	Administration costs The percentage of total expenditures spent on administration
7. Invest for funding growth	Fundraising income and expenses (six indicators)

Table 1. Overview of strategic indicators

These overarching indicators are complemented by indicators based on our key programme document, the SOS Care Promise. The SOS Care Promise quality indicators provide crucial context. The strategic indicators are monitored twice a year as part of the organization's planning cycle. In 2019, we initiated a comprehensive review of our Strategy 2030. Our updated priorities and indicators until 2024 will be presented for approval at the General Assembly, which is expected in 2021.

The review of our strategy and strategic indicators included consultations with staff, member associations and youth representatives. Young people and staff submitted their suggestions and concerns via the Inspiration Lab – a dedicated discussion platform set up on the organization's intranet. Strategic priorities were then discussed at the organization's Come Together 2 meeting in June 2019. The meeting included a presentation by the organization's International Youth Coalition – a body of 20 youth representatives from different geographical regions that was also involved in the initial development of Strategy 2030. The Youth Coalition called for steps to mainstream child and youth participation, which includes training adults to support it, as well as to embrace youth-led initiatives. Both aspects will feature prominently in our priorities for 2021–2024.

¹ SOS Children's Villages International, Who We Are (2010), https://www.sos-childrensvillages.org/getmedia/b6966a7a-ac73-4fcd-b3b3-1398476efa72/101206-WhoWeAre-en-WEB_1.pdf

² An overview of our strategy is available in the Strategy 2030 section of our website: <https://www.sos-childrensvillages.org/who-we-are/strategy-2030>

A3. What progress has been achieved and difficulties encountered against these indicators over the reporting period?

Self-assessment: level 3

Within the framework of our Strategy 2030, implementation between 2017 and 2020 has been focused on strengthening quality management and developing internal capacity. The SOS Care Promise has provided a foundation for managing the quality of our programme work.

Innovate alternative care

Implementation of the SOS Care Promise has enabled greater flexibility in how we address the needs of the children and young people we work for. This has meant a greater diversity of alternative care options offered by our members, including family-like care, foster care and small group care. Member associations have continued to promote better integration of children and young people into the community, but local contextualization of global recommendations in this area has so far proven challenging.

Strengthen families

An increasingly important component of our work, family strengthening services are offered in 73% of our programmes. Additional effort is required to strengthen services to support kinship care and work to reintegrate children into their families after a care placement. Family self-reliance after discontinuation of services remains a concern, often due to a confluence of factors; partnerships for economic support are an important consideration.

Empower young people

Young people make up a big proportion of those we support through our programmes, and in the past several years we have made it a priority to strengthen our focus on their specific needs in our policies as well as to find platforms for them to share their views, for example via the International Youth Council and national youth councils. In 2019, we developed a policy support document on youth development, which is to be translated into national guidelines based on local realities in all countries by 2024. Our global partnership for youth employability YouthCan! has grown to include 31 countries; during 2019, it reached 5,700 young people and 1,700 volunteers. The programme offers mentorship and training opportunities supported by our corporate partners and available in person or via the digital platform YouthLinks. Other achievements include our projects Prepare for Leaving Care and Leaving Care (see [C1](#)).

Advocate for children

In 2018 and 2019, in partnership with a coalition of like-minded non-governmental organisations, we led an initiative to advocate for the annual resolution on the rights of the child by UN General Assembly's Third Committee to be devoted to the rights of children without parental care. The resolution, A/RES/74/133, was adopted in late 2019. Reaching consensus on the best paths towards care system reform goals remains challenging, which sometimes hampers shared efforts with partners in this area. Continued engagement in these debates remains crucial both at the national and at the international level, as does the collection and interpretation of evidence and best practices. See also [F1](#). In 2019, local advocacy was being pursued in 92 countries.

Simplify SOS

In 2018 and 2019, we continued rolling out our results-based management (RBM) approach and reviewed the RBM guidance and tools to include feedback from initial participants. Within the broader context of RBM implementation, we worked on the first release of ProDIGI, our programme, project and grant management system. The release included grant management functionality and went live in early 2020; development of other functionality has continued and will eventually include integration with the internal financial management system and the Programme Database.

We worked on a new version of the Programme Database to cover the full spectrum of case management needs, which includes mobile and offline functionality. We also reviewed the indicators and assessment scales to ensure consistency and comparability with external frameworks, for example the standards of the

Washington Group on Disability Statistics. Field tests in nine countries included observing social workers at work and collecting their feedback. The database currently has around 6,000 users in 100 countries and stores the data of approximately one million current and former beneficiaries. In compliance with the EU General Data Protection Regulation, data gathering is based on beneficiaries' consent, who are informed of their rights when it comes to personal data. The system allows pseudonymization for beneficiaries who do not consent to the use of their name. Primarily developed with case management in mind, the database provides a foundation for programme management, impact assessment, and research.

Invest for funding growth

Investment and capacity building in local fundraising helped our member associations achieve promising results in many emerging markets, particularly in Latin America, Central and Eastern Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States. New face-to-face fundraising initiatives have been successful thanks to investments by our promoting and supporting associations. In new as well as established markets, we have been challenged to adapt to changing demographics and donor expectations. Building on their ongoing partnerships with governments towards shared goals for children and young people, many of our members have strengthened their capacity to secure government funding. In some countries, however, the space for such partnerships is limited. Raising sufficient unrestricted funding remains a challenge.

A4. Have there been significant events or changes in your organisation or your sector over the reporting period of relevance to governance and accountability?

Self-assessment: level 2

In the reporting period, we saw increasing regulatory scrutiny of non-governmental organizations' safeguarding practices, with governments putting in place stricter safeguarding requirements and expecting more detailed disclosure on safeguarding measures and responses.³ We continued to strengthen our capacity in child safeguarding but also started moving towards a cross-cutting safeguarding and integrity approach and initiated the development of a binding policy on the prevention and protection from sexual harassment, exploitation and abuse (see [C4](#)).

The General Data Protection Regulation EU 2016/679 (GDPR), which came into effect in May 2018, means that we must be able to prove to those outside of the organization that we are following appropriate steps when it comes to protecting personal data and privacy.

Last year saw changes in the makeup of the General Secretariat's management team. Michael Pörtl joined the organization as chief operating officer, and Steffen Braasch was appointed interim chief executive officer following Norbert Meder's departure from the organization after seven years as chief executive officer.

In 2018 and 2019, the International Senate welcomed several members: Philip van Verschuer, who became the new representative of SOS Children's Villages Netherlands; Doris Albisser, who replaced Robert Amgwerd as representative of SOS Children's Villages Switzerland; and Reem Atalla Habayeb of SOS Children's Villages Jordan, who replaced Yosra Chaibi of SOS Children's Villages Tunisia.

B. Positive results are sustained

B1. What have you done to ensure sustainability of your work beyond the project cycle, as per commitment 4? Is there evidence of success?

Self-assessment: level 3

Measuring long-term impact and evaluating sustainability

As part of the broader global results-based management approach, we have developed a social impact assessment approach and methodology.⁴ Our social impact assessments measure the long-term impact of our alternative care and family strengthening programmes on the lives of former programme participants

³ For more on the issue, see section 3.3 of our Annual Child Safeguarding Report 2019/2020, available at <https://www.sos-childrensvillages.org/getmedia/bc71e9a6-0522-4ff0-980f-4cec4782ea96/CS-Annual-Report-2019-2020-FINAL.pdf>

⁴ See Social Impact Assessment in SOS Children's Villages: Approach and Methodology (2017), available at https://www.sos-childrensvillages.org/getmedia/9afba3cc-06ea-44c9-bc31-68bbdf53490b/SOS-Children-s-Villages-Social-Impact_Methodology_2017.pdf

and their communities. In addition, the assessments provide a financial analysis of social return on investment.

Unlike programme evaluations that must be conducted every three to five years, social impact assessments are carried out in selected locations, providing a representative picture of results. The gaps and improvements identified through impact assessment are addressed by member associations in their planning. The outcomes of national assessments are periodically summarized in our publications. The most recent and comprehensive of such publications is *70 Years of Impact: Improving the Lives of Children without Adequate Parental Care*.⁵ The report is based on the available data on the situation of former programme participants from 37 countries, which includes the findings of social impact assessments recently conducted in 15 countries. The analysis presented in the *70 Years of Impact* report shows the following results at the individual level:

- 90% of former participants have strong family relationships and support networks and care well for their own children.
- 90% generally have adequate accommodation, food security and health.
- 80% are experiencing social and emotional well-being and are safe from discrimination and other harm.
- 60% are doing well in terms of their education and employment situation.

At the level of communities, the analysis found the following:

- Key stakeholders and partners are generally aware of the situation of disadvantaged children and their families and have a clear idea on how to support vulnerable children and families, but community-based support systems are often not strong enough.
- Some communities lack capacity to continue support and service provision for vulnerable children and their families.
- Stakeholders across seven locations observed that the number of children placed in alternative care has stabilized since the family strengthening services started.

Implementing results-based management

Our results-based management guidance provides member associations with a streamlined framework for programme management and quality assurance. According to our RBM approach, conceptualizing a programme starts with a needs assessment, which helps identify the target group, community assets and needs, and local stakeholders. The target group is identified by looking at children's care arrangements in the community and the factors that put their well-being at risk. Assessment of community assets and needs helps identify the organizations, policies, partnerships, welfare provisions and other resources that can contribute to meeting the target group's needs. Stakeholder analysis involves identifying and mapping stakeholders by interest, power and attitude, which helps to determine whether it is SOS Children's Villages or another local actor that is in the best position to meet the needs identified earlier. Needs assessment is complemented by a country-level child rights situation analysis. Development of a programme concept follows the needs assessment and involves planning measures to achieve sustainable benefits for the community, which depending on the context may include collaborating with community-based organizations and building their capacity, reaching partnership agreements, or advocacy with the government for better resource allocation. A viable programme concept is based on assurance of approval and support by the national authorities. It is at the programme concept stage of the RBM cycle that an initial exit strategy is considered.

In 2018 and 2019, we provided RBM training for 23 and 24 member associations respectively.

Developing social support systems

SOS Children's Villages programmes aim to contribute to community-based social support systems. We support communities by bringing facilitation skills, providing tools, helping organizations build their

⁵ Available in three languages on the "Impact" page of our website, <https://www.sos-childrensvillages.org/who-we-are/impact>

functional and financial capacity, or sharing specialist knowledge and practices in child development, child protection, and child safeguarding. For example, an SOS Children's Villages programme in Nicaragua managed to build up community-run support groups focusing on topics such as masculinity, child protection and child safeguarding. These groups are key to addressing gender-based violence, which is unfortunately prevalent in the local context.

As discussed in section D3, in countries with stable social welfare systems our services are delivered in consultation and coordination with the national and local authorities.

B2. What lessons have been learned in this period? How have the lessons been transparently shared among internal and external stakeholders? How do you plan to use these lessons to improve your work in the future?

Self-assessment: level 3

Committed to continuous improvement, we share our learnings externally and internally in our reports as well as in meetings with partners and other stakeholders.

In the social impact assessments analysed in the *70 Years of Impact* report, we found that young people leaving care often find adjustment to independent life difficult, particularly when it comes to finding employment. The need for more employability support has been emphasized by young people with care experience in numerous consultations and discussions. This need is already reflected in the SOS Care Promise, but it was addressed in more specific terms in our policy support document on youth development, developed in consultation with youth representatives. We have put in place measures to encourage children and young people in our care to be more involved in community life. To support employability, we are expanding our YouthCan! programme.

A related conclusion was made during review of our strategy implementation to date: we found that child and youth participation is not sufficiently mainstreamed across our programmes. This issue will be addressed in an upcoming youth participation policy support document, which will translate into updated national policies and practices.

In the area of family strengthening, social impact assessments show that our programmes need to develop local, programme-level partnerships to provide families with economic opportunities and support them in improving their living conditions.

One of the lessons learned from implementation of results-based management was that provision of training for managers and other staff of the General Secretariat has led to increased support and more consultations on how to better align other processes such as financial planning to the RBM approach. When it comes to the development of the Programme Database, we have recognized a need to put more effort in making the data available to the user in a more interactive and meaningful way, for example via integrated reports, dashboards or analyses. We are planning improvements in this area in the next two years.

Analysis of reported child safeguarding incidents over the years suggests that many incidents do not constitute abuse per se but rather represent boundary violations that can occur as part of normal life and therefore call for a different response to that required with incidents of abuse. As a result, we decided to introduce the broader category of boundary violations and to provide guidance on how to distinguish inappropriate and abusive behaviours (in adults), and problematic and abusive behaviours (in children). We will be adapting how we collect child safeguarding statistics in 2021. In addition, as discussed in our Child Safeguarding Annual Report 2019/2020, we also need to refine our approaches to dealing with problematic and inappropriate behaviours.⁶ Other important learnings summarized in the Child Safeguarding Annual

⁶ The report is available at <https://www.sos-childrensvillages.org/getmedia/bc71e9a6-0522-4ff0-980f-4cec4782ea96/CS-Annual-Report-2019-2020-FINAL.pdf>

Report 2019/2020 include but are not limited to the following findings:

- The fact that programme quality and child safeguarding are closely related underscores the need for sufficient oversight and monitoring of programmes.
- We need to improve our safeguarding risk management. Since weak national systems and policies put children, young people and adults at an increased risk of abuse and maltreatment, we must sufficiently take into account the broader child protection risks prevalent in the country or location.
- An authoritarian workplace culture creates unsafe environments. Despite our effort so far, we acknowledge that we still have work to do to create a healthy workplace culture and value-based leadership.
- We need to strengthen our ability to apply a victim/survivor-centred approach. Addressing this issue will include developing guidelines on this topic for member associations.
- Child safeguarding incidents monitored by or escalated to the General Secretariat are often correlated with other serious issues such as corruption, fraud and mismanagement. This calls for alignment of the General Secretariat's procedures, standards and prevention approaches across different types of misconduct.

C. We lead by example

C1. How does your organisation demonstrate excellence on your strategic priorities?

Self-assessment: level 3

The 2019 annual resolution on the rights of the child

As referenced in section [A3](#), the UN General Assembly's 2019 resolution on the rights of the child became a highlight of that year: for the first time, the theme of the resolution was the rights of children without parental care. During 2018 in 2019, we invested significant effort into advocating for the resolution. In collaboration UNICEF and the Better Care Network, in November 2018 we convened the first meeting with other child rights organizations to develop the project of the resolution. Thanks to that meeting, a network was created to advocate for the resolution. The work on the resolution triggered and fostered partnerships and was done in consensus with our peers. Governments valued our efforts and advice and acknowledged the children we work for as a group whose needs are under-represented. Government representatives reported a better understanding of how to improve legal frameworks at the global and national level. The resolution was adopted by consensus. Our plan is to follow up and to help bring the resolution to the national level. Some member associations are already working with national governments on implementing it in national law.

Advocacy initiatives at the EU level

Working with Eurochild, the EU Alliance for Investing in Children, the Opening Doors for Europe's Children campaign, the NGO confederation CONCORD, Lumos, Hope and Homes for Children, UNICEF, and our Joining Forces partners, we advocated for the EU budget for 2021–2027 to cover support for the most vulnerable children.

Improving outcomes for young people transitioning out of care: the Leaving Care project

Building on our 2017–2018 project Prepare for Leaving Care, in 2018 we launched Leaving Care, a two-year follow-up project carried out in cooperation with the child-focused organisations FICE Austria and FONPC. The project aimed at improving outcomes for care leavers by training care professionals, building a support network via the digital platform YouthLinks, and raising awareness of the needs of care leavers at the European level and in the six participating countries. The training workshops, based on the Prepare for Leaving Care training programme, were co-delivered by young people with care experience. On 12–13 June 2019, the conference Be the Change! was held in Bucharest, Romania, bringing together young people with care experience, policymakers, practitioners and child rights experts to discuss key changes needed to improve the situation of care leavers. Around 30 young people participated. A call to action was released based on the outcomes of the conference.⁷ There is considerable interest from our member associations in replicating the Prepare for Leaving Care training programme in additional countries.

⁷ Available at <https://www.sos-childrensvillages.org/getmedia/ca43449e-afec-4e9f-b45a-7a47c8f5767c/leave-no-caregiver-behind-2019.pdf>

C2. What evidence is there that your expertise is recognised and welcomed by your peers, partners and other stakeholders?

Self-assessment: level 3

Joining Forces

We are a member of Joining Forces, an alliance of six largest child-focused agencies – ChildFund Alliance, Plan International, Save the Children International, the Terre des Hommes International Federation, World Vision International, and SOS Children’s Villages International – that came together to be more efficient in making a difference in children’s lives and securing their rights. The majority of Joining Forces actions are taken at the national level by the country teams.

As part of its Child Rights Now! initiative, the alliance published 17 country reports on child rights; based on these reports and analysis of the global context, in 2019 it released the report *A Second Revolution: Thirty Years of Child Rights and the Unfinished Agenda*, which provides the policy foundation for the alliance’s work.⁸ The group presented the report to representatives of the United Nations at an event in New York.⁹ During the event, young people from four countries spoke about the importance of assuring the participation of children and young people in political debates on children’s rights.

We also worked with Joining Forces at the EU level on the Vote for Children campaign. The first stage of the campaign was a call on candidates for members of the European Parliament to sign a pledge to become child rights champions. Once elected, the members of parliament were encouraged to become part of the Integroup on Children’s Rights, a parliamentary group tasked with dealing with child rights issues. Of the 300 candidates who signed the pledge, 110 were elected and 104 joined the parliamentary group.

In 2018–2019, the Ending Violence against Children initiative was primarily focused on setting up collaboration frameworks with the first five participating countries. Other areas of collaboration include fundraising, communications and child safeguarding. In the area of child safeguarding, we have contributed to the development of the alliance’s inter-agency protocol for reporting and responding.

The European Social Services Award

In recognition of the participation of young people as co-trainers, in December 2019 our Prepare for Leaving Care project was awarded the European Social Services Award in the Innovation category.¹⁰

C3. How does your organisation practice being inclusive and protecting human rights, including promoting women’s rights and gender equality, in accordance with commitments 1-2?

Self-assessment: level 2

The primary international frameworks that guide our work are the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Guidelines for the Alternative Care of Children. We work with partners and governments to contribute to the achievement of Sustainable Development Goals through our impact on the lives of disadvantaged children and young people.¹¹ This includes providing alternative care that is appropriate to the needs of individual children, helping families and communities develop their capacities and become more resilient as well as assuring access to education and employment.

Through our advocacy, we take action to improve policies and practices that affect the well-being of children who have lost parental care or are at risk of losing it. We advocate for decision makers to address gaps in data and ensure a level of investment into welfare and child protection systems that is adequate to the needs of our target group. Our advocacy priorities include such issues as inclusion of young people leaving care, training of care professionals, child care system reform, and prevention of violence against children.

⁸ The report is available at <https://joining-forces.org/publications/second-revolution/>

⁹ For more on the event, see our article at <https://www.sos-childrensvillages.org/news/ngos-call-for-action-on-childrens-rights>

¹⁰ See <https://essa-eu.org/winners-2019/>

¹¹ For an overview of how we support the Sustainable Development Goals, see our 2016 paper at <https://www.sos-childrensvillages.org/getmedia/8f005d23-426d-4c35-9401-339d6fd2b7ba/sdgs-FINAL-WEB.pdf>

Our internal policies guiding us in implementing a rights-based approach in our work include the SOS Care Promise, the Programme Policy, the Gender Equality Policy and the Inclusion Policy.¹²

Our Gender Equality Policy was endorsed in 2014. As we reported previously, rollout of the policy started with pilot projects in several member associations and later continued in other associations, which took up gender-focused projects based on their needs and national priorities. While initial rollout projects focused on countries where gender issues were a particularly acute concern, all members and regional offices were to assess their needs to support implementation and take action based on the gaps they identified. The policy is equally applicable to all member associations and offices of the General Secretariat, and they continue to address gender issues that are most relevant to their context as part of their strategies. In the coming years, we will focus on developing our safeguarding and integrity approach, which includes managing gender dynamics.

In 2016, the federation set out to ensure that, by 2020, at least 40% senior management positions are held by women. This target was agreed upon as an achievable intermediate milestone towards equal representation. As at the beginning of 2020, on average across all targeted regions women accounted for 46% of the total number of board members and 39% of the total number of national directors. We recognize that some of the regions need to improve more than others; we will continue our monitoring to improve representation further. At the moment we do not have targets concerning gender balance in the workforce at the regional or member association level.

In family strengthening and alternative care programmes, our associations develop tailored responses to the needs of at-risk groups of children. Examples include programmes to provide care and support for unaccompanied children in response to growing numbers of refugees in Austria or community-based services such as respite care for children with disabilities in Russia, where children with disabilities are at the highest risk of abandonment and institutionalization. Our family strengthening programmes promote women's rights by facilitating access to economic empowerment opportunities and providing specialized services for survivors of domestic violence. In some countries, family strengthening teams implement services focused specifically on fathers: they provide educational programmes or set up support groups to prevent domestic violence and help fathers learn to be more involved in the care of their children.

C4. How do you minimise your organisation's negative impacts on your stakeholders, especially partners and the people you work for? How does your organisation protect those most susceptible to harassment, abuse, exploitation, or any other type of unacceptable conduct?

Self-assessment: level 2

Code of Conduct

The federation-wide Code of Conduct¹³ is designed to uphold and promote the highest standards of ethical and professional conduct among all staff and persons affiliated to the organization. The Code of Conduct is rolled out and monitored throughout the federation. We support the implementation of its provisions by developing training concepts, guidelines and tools.

Child safeguarding

The children and young people we work for are one of the most vulnerable, underserved groups. Many in our programmes are survivors of trauma and extreme adversity, which puts them at a greater risk of violence and abuse. We have a particular obligation to keep the children and young people in contact with our organization safe and protected.

SOS Children's Villages International is a member of the child safeguarding network Keeping Children's Safe and holds Level 1 certification from the network. Our child safeguarding standards and policies are

¹² These policies are available on the "Policies and Guidelines" page of our website, <https://www.sos-childrensvillages.org/publications/policies>

¹³ Available at <https://www.sos-childrensvillages.org/getmedia/fbe9e743-7d05-402d-a4e8-4b5e614242fe/110926-Code-of-Conduct-en.pdf>

based on the Keeping Children Safe International Child Safeguarding Standards.¹⁴ Our main internal child safeguarding frameworks include the SOS Care Promise, the Child Protection Policy (which defines the types of abuse and our responsibilities in the areas of awareness, prevention, reporting and responding)¹⁵ and our Code of Conduct. Implementation of these frameworks by the General Secretariat and all members is based on a set of policy support documents, how-to guides, tools and templates, including the following:

- *Child Safety Is Everybody's Business: Child Safeguarding Reporting and Responding Procedures in Member Associations*
- *Working Together to Protect Children: Roles and Responsibilities of the GSC [General Secretariat] in the Reporting and Responding Process*
- *SOS Children's Villages Child Safeguarding Investigations*
- *How-to Guide on Conducting Safeguarding Investigations*

Tools and templates are provided for all steps and processes. We continuously monitor the implementation of these documents and materials and revise them as we learn from our experience. We offer both face-to-face training and e-learning courses on child safeguarding procedures including child safeguarding investigations. For information on our whistleblowing mechanisms, see section [J3](#).

To prevent abuse, we implement training programmes for care professionals, children and young people on topics such as trauma-informed care, positive discipline and positive parenting, conflict prevention and personal safety. In 2019, we continued rolling out workshops on the Protective Behaviours programme in member associations. This safety awareness programme helps children understand their rights and develop skills to keep safe.

In March 2017, we initiated the Independent Child Safeguarding Review. We commissioned Keeping Children Safe as the independent reviewer to help us understand past safeguarding cases and the circumstances that contributed to abuse. The review will be finalized in 2021.

Gatekeeping

We treat the best interests of each individual child and young person we serve as our primary consideration. It is our responsibility to ensure that the services and care options we provide are both suitable and necessary considering each person's specific circumstances and unique needs. In March 2019, we introduced *Gatekeeping: Ensuring the Most Suitable Care Settings for Children without Adequate Parental Care*, a policy support document that guides member associations in fulfilling their gatekeeping responsibilities within national social welfare systems. This policy support document is accompanied by practical guidance and tools for programme staff. In line with this global framework, each member association is expected to develop national gatekeeping guidelines, which are to be approved by the national board.

Prevention of sexual misconduct

In mid-2019, the International Senate released a statement on prevention and protection against sexual harassment, exploitation and abuse, which reiterated the organization's commitment to safeguarding children or young adults in our care, vulnerable adults in the communities where we work, and our own workforce.¹⁶ We initiated a project to develop a federation-wide policy on sexual misconduct. A cross-functional team with representatives of member associations and the General Secretariat undertook an internal and external analysis and set about developing a proposal in consultation with 15 member associations, regional offices and International Office functions. Implementation of the policy (approved in 2020) is expected in 2021.

¹⁴ For more information, see "The Safeguarding Standards," Keeping Children Safe, <https://www.keepingchildrensafe.global/accountability/>

¹⁵ Available at https://www.sos-childrensvillages.org/getmedia/4e73783b-610a-473b-b40c-d7e6f14797/Child_protection_policy_English_version_2017.pdf

¹⁶ The statement is available at <https://www.sos-childrensvillages.org/getmedia/fb342f26-a902-4707-b5b9-0e149bbd044d/190502-Senate-Statement-PSHEA-final.pdf>

C5. How do you demonstrate responsible stewardship for the environment?

Self-assessment: level 2

In our efforts to minimize the environmental impact of our activities, we are guided by our Environmental Policy, which has been in place since 2018.¹⁷ The policy is based on four tenets: measuring our environmental impact, holding ourselves accountable, choosing environmentally sustainable options, and raising awareness.

Measuring our impact and holding ourselves accountable

Below is an overview of the greenhouse gas emissions of the two General Secretariat locations in Innsbruck and Vienna.

Greenhouse gas emissions (metric tonnes, CO ₂ equivalent)	2017 ¹⁸	2018	2019
Business travel, train	14.60	19.02	22.58
Business travel, air	501	522	449
Business travel, car	15.93	13.46	14.74
Heating oil consumption, Innsbruck	71	81	74
District heating, Vienna	35	26	34
Purchased electricity	50.98	38.00	36.43
Total	687.97	699.06	630.75

Table 2. Greenhouse gas emissions in 2017–2019

The decrease in total emissions in 2019 can be attributed to two main factors:

- Implementation of business travel guidelines: where feasible, staff are encouraged to avoid short-haul flights and travel by train instead. This is particularly relevant for routine business trips between Innsbruck and Vienna. Support in this area includes paid railway discount cards for staff in Austria.
- Implementation of a number of energy-saving measures, the most impactful of which was optimization of air conditioning in server rooms. Smaller measures included the continued use of energy-efficient lightbulbs and reduction of standby power consumption.

As announced in our 2017 report, we are working on replacing oil-based heating at our Innsbruck office with a more environmentally friendly heat pump. We have obtained a cost estimate, and work on the project is expected to start in 2021. As of 2020, all electricity supplied to both the Vienna and the Innsbruck offices comes from renewable sources. We have completed an internal audit and have undergone the first external audit as part of certification under the EU Eco-Management and Audit Scheme (EMAS). For the moment, we have put further efforts under the scheme on hold. As required by law, we periodically evaluate our waste management and identify ways to reduce waste.

Choosing environmentally sustainable options

The General Secretariat procurement guidelines require that contractors hold environmental certification and that, where relevant, the choice of suppliers factor in environmental considerations such as waste management and environmental sustainability. This includes, for example, procurement of Energy Star labelled appliances or locally supplied, eco-labelled cleaning products.

Insofar as that is financially and logistically feasible, the General Secretariat follows green event management principles:

- We prefer venues certified according to a recognized environmental management system.
- We choose venues that separate all waste.

¹⁷ Available at https://www.sos-childrensvillages.org/getmedia/93e1bf64-f664-4fdc-8c4e-f7722a1760dd/SOS-Children-s-Villages-International_Environmental-Policy.pdf. Visitors to our website can find the policy on the "Our Organisation" page, <https://www.sos-childrensvillages.org/organisation>

¹⁸ The 2017 figures for business travel (train) and purchased electricity are inconsistent with what we reported in our 2017 report. A recent review of the figures has found calculation errors, which were rectified.

- We choose local caterers and local products.
- We rely on eco-friendly transport including shuttle busses.
- We keep printed materials to a minimum.
- We minimize giveaways and opt for non-disposable items such as reusable water bottles.

When SOS Children's Villages members or the General Secretariat consider constructing, renovating or purchasing premises, environmental assessment is part of the planning (for more details, see section 5.11 of our 2017 report).

Raising awareness

Providing environmental education is part of our members' day-to-day work with children and young people. In addition to helping children and young people learn and develop mindful habits, we encourage them to make the change they want to see. One example is the Go Green initiative, developed and run by young people in Lebanon. The initiative seeks to promote waste separation. Raising awareness of environmental topics among staff is key to our achieving meaningful progress in minimizing the organization's environmental impact. We conduct surveys among staff to facilitate discussion of environmental topics, encourage suggestions for improvement and identify areas where support is required. Awareness-raising measures include environmental information boards as well as advice and clear signage on appropriate waste separation, eco-friendly printing practices, and energy conservation, particularly when it comes to heating and cooling. In the future, the General Secretariat is also planning to hold half-yearly Environmental Day events.

Cluster B: Our approach to change

D. Key stakeholders are identified with great care

D1. Please list your key stakeholders. What process do you use to identify them?

Self-assessment: level 3

Our stakeholders include the following groups:

- Governments, national and international institutions, and intergovernmental organizations
- Academic institutions as well as non-governmental and community-based organizations that work with us or that support our work, for example by contributing to the implementation of our projects and programmes
- The networks and coalitions in which we participate
- Our donors, sponsors and corporate partners
- Our staff and volunteers
- Our member associations

As described in our 2017 report, the processes and methodologies to identify stakeholders depend on the context. Stakeholder analysis is done individually for each project or programme.

In planning and revising their programmes, our member associations carry out country-level child rights situation analyses and local needs assessments or equivalent studies (see [B1](#)). Needs assessments include stakeholder mapping and analysis, which is typically based on standard tools such as power-interest matrices. Stakeholder analysis includes identifying and prioritizing the specific groups of children and young people who will benefit from our support and having a clear target group definition and participant selection criteria. When we design programmes in partnership with community-based organizations, we listen to their suggestions as to who else might be involved in programme implementation.

Our child safeguarding procedures require that member associations conduct a local mapping exercise every three to five years. The mapping includes an overview of the national child protection context and a process to identify the authorities in charge of responding to criminal child safeguarding incidents as well

as agencies and organizations that work to prevent child abuse and neglect or that provide services for survivors of abuse.

In other areas, stakeholder analysis is similarly integrated into project planning and design.

D2. How do you ensure you reach out to those who are impacted or concerned by your work?

Self-assessment: level 3

We consult and coordinate with local authorities and organizations while designing and implementing our programmes. We also reach out to other organizations working in the sector via child rights and alternative care networks and alliances (see [D3](#)).

While conducting social impact assessments, we involve former programme participants, key community actors (such as local government, community leaders, community-based organizations, local experts and NGOs) and staff in a participatory way, through interviews and focus group discussions. Such group discussions are used to validate and deepen findings.

We place a particular emphasis on child and youth participation. Since 2016, when youth empowerment was anchored in our Strategy 2030, youth councils, youth parliaments, youth advisory boards, youth networks and other similar structures to bring young people's perspectives into our work have been developed across the federation. However, there is still room for improvement in ensuring youth participation is a continuous process rather than a series of stand-alone events. Our upcoming youth participation policy support document will provide in-depth guidance on assuring children's and young people's right to express their views and to have their views given due weight.

D3. How, specifically, do you maximise coordination with others operating in the same sectoral and geographic space with special reference to national and local actors?

Self-assessment: level 3

In implementing their programmes, our member associations work with partners including government agencies and local authorities, NGOs, local service providers and community-based organizations such as savings and loan cooperatives. The nature and scope of such partnerships will depend on the local context. Direct provision of social care services is premised on coordination and agreements with the government in virtually all locations, except where government structures are particularly fragile. In some countries, SOS Children's Villages associations are commissioned by the government to provide services. In others, government involvement may be limited due to lack of resources or capacity, and member associations may focus on working with community-based groups. It is often through partnerships that we can assure access to essential supporting services such as education, healthcare and economic support; this may include advocating with local duty bearers for better access, pooling resources or providing training and advice.

Potential partners, similar initiatives and existing service providers are identified at the planning stage, during needs assessment according to our results-based management approach (see [B1](#)) or equivalent planning steps. As discussed above, a key outcome of such assessment is a determination whether the programme or project will add value in the community.

At the level of an individual programme or project, management of partnerships is based on federation-wide programme planning and results-based management guidelines as well as overarching policies. Frameworks for collaboration with key implementation partners are defined in a memorandum of understanding.

Our member associations are active in national child rights and alternative care networks, coalitions and movements. Some of our associations partner with, or help establish, networks of care leavers. The General Secretariat works to strengthen member associations' capacities in developing advocacy partnerships and supports them in their efforts to reach out to key policy actors. The General Secretariat and member associations collaborate and coordinate through joint advocacy action plans based on shared objectives.

The General Secretariat's advocacy team manages bilateral and multilateral global partnerships and coalitions. International partnerships are typically created at the global level, but we also ensure that they are replicated at the national level where relevant, with an agenda pertinent to the local context. The networks and coalitions in which we participate range from ad-hoc alliances for a particular cause to formal partnerships that have governance structures, terms of reference, joint action plans and budget commitments. Among our global and regional partnerships are the Generation Unlimited Global Partnership, Joining Forces, Child Rights Connect, Eurochild, the Better Care Network, the Global Partnership to Eradicate Violence against Children, FICE International, the EU Alliance for Investing in Children, the African Child Policy Forum, and the Latin American alliance Movimiento Mundial por la Infancia de Latinoamérica y El Caribe. For examples of how partnerships work in practice, see sections [C2](#) and [F1](#).

Partnerships in advocacy are guided by strategic goals and priorities as well as documented internal processes and good practices. The staff of the General Secretariat and our member associations are briefed and trained on how to work and advocate with partners.

E. We listen to, involve and empower stakeholders

E1. What avenues do you provide your stakeholders to provide feedback to you? What evidence demonstrates that key stakeholder groups acknowledge your organisation is good at listening and acting upon what you heard?

Self-assessment: level 2

We welcome any feedback on our services, activities and policies, regardless of the channel through which such feedback reaches us.

All our stakeholders can submit their feedback by filling out our Feedback and Complaints form on our website.¹⁹ Our donors, partners, suppliers and service providers can reach out to their contact person at the organization. The children, young people and adults who participate in our programmes can contact the staff of our programmes or the national office of the SOS Children's Villages association in their country. Feedback from our partners, community members and programme participants may be sought during project planning and design, through consultations, but more commonly during evaluation, such as at the end of a project cycle or training course. For example, during an evaluation round table at the end of the Prepare for Leaving Care project in late 2018, young people reported, among other things, that meetings with young expert groups needed to be less formal; that group calls should have been more frequent; and that young people needed to be more involved in planning. Their suggestions were implemented in the follow-up Leaving Care project: the international project team maintained regular communication with the International Young Expert Group, the team made an effort to make meetings more fun, and young people were more involved in national trainings, advocacy events and drafting of policy recommendations.

It has to be acknowledged that not all evaluations are designed to adequately capture feeling and not just fact. In general, proactive feedback collection is quite challenging and remains an area for improvement.

As discussed in our earlier reports, in 2016 we introduced and piloted a working document on our feedback and complaints procedures. We did not manage to follow through with the rollout of a revised version of the document but rather decided to take this issue up as part of the Federation 2030 project. Proposals on clarifying the rights and obligations of member associations and the General Secretariat within the federation have since been developed but are still to be translated into an amended version of our statutes, which will require approval by the General Assembly. It is from that foundation that we believe we should proceed with the implementation of federation-wide feedback and complaint requirements. Our internal stakeholders including our staff and member associations provide their feedback through routine communication. We actively seek their feedback while planning major organizational transformations and developing internal policies and guidelines. Usually this is accomplished through

¹⁹ Accessible at <https://www.sos-childrensvillages.org/who-we-are/contact-us/feedback-and-complaints>

surveys, interviews and discussion sessions at major events such as our 2019 federation-wide meeting Come Together 2. For instance, during our Federation 2030 and strategy review projects, we undertook the following feedback-gathering activities:

- Structured interviews and web-based surveys to evaluate the organizational culture
- An interview-style survey of member associations as part of our brand development project
- An online Inspiration Lab to gather input to review our Strategy 2030

For our complaints management procedures, see section [J3](#).

E2. What evidence confirms a high level of stakeholder engagement in your activities and decisions from beginning to end?

Self-assessment: level 3

Our member associations make an effort to engage and consult their key stakeholders, including programme participants and community representatives, throughout the programme cycle.

As discussed in section [D1](#), we place a particular emphasis on engaging children and young people. National examples of youth engagement include SOS Children's Villages Peru, which developed a methodology to hold annual national youth meetings where young people develop recommendations for programme improvement. Programme directors make commitments to include the recommendations in their plans; young people participate in implementing their plans; and during the next meeting the directors briefly report to young people on their progress. At SOS Children's Villages Belarus, young people have a self-governing council, which meets regularly and submits proposals to their youth workers.

At the General Secretariat, the International Youth Coalition represents young people from ten countries. It participated in the development of Strategy 2030 and has since been involved in strategy review as well as in the development of a number of policy documents, including the SOS Care Promise. In 2019, the Coalition and a youth advisory group participated in the drafting of our policy support document on youth development. The young people contributed via phone calls, group online conferences and face-to-face meetings, depending on individual participants' preferences. Their contributions were taken up by the members of the core team, who incorporated their feedback and explained which items could not be included. An associated e-learning course is being developed through a similarly participative approach.

Youth participation was a key component of the Prepare for Leaving Care and Leaving Care projects (see [C1](#)). In both projects, young people who have experienced living in care and transitioning from care participated in national young expert groups. In Prepare for Leaving Care, 169 young people contributed. Nineteen members of the young expert groups co-delivered the training in part or in full, and two were members of the project steering group. The young people participated in evaluation and provided their feedback (see [E3](#)). The follow-up project Leaving Care used a similar set-up and incorporated young people's feedback to strengthen their participation and put them on a more equal footing with master trainers.

During the *I See You* campaign we ran in 2019, we developed a child-friendly booklet on the Guidelines for the Alternative Care of Children, *You Have the Right to Care and Protection!*²⁰ It was the first experiment developing a child-friendly tool with children and young people from the beginning of the project. The very decision on the format of the eventual product – a booklet, a video, a mobile app, a poster or something else entirely – was taken with the children and young people. We asked 495 children and young people from 23 countries whether they needed information on children's rights and if so, how detailed it needed to be. They opted for a booklet because that enabled them to be very detailed in terms of the subject matter. The young participants helped us determine how to make sure the booklet would reach its target audience. As we started developing the text, another consultation was held with the original group and some new participants. They helped us review the language so that it is understandable for 10-year-olds

20 Available at <https://www.sos-childrensvillages.org/our-work/information-for-children>

as well as 18-year-olds. They also helped us decide on illustrations, which had to suit the needs of widely diverse groups of readers from different cultures and of different ages. In online surveys and workshops, the children and young people helped us identify language to avoid, so that the material is not upsetting for children who went through difficult experiences. The children and young people were also involved in disseminating the final product, which has been translated into several languages and is used to educate children on their rights.

E3. What are the main likes/dislikes you have received from key stakeholders? How, specifically, have you reacted to their feedback?

Self-assessment: level 2

Our global advocacy team has received good feedback from permanent representations to the European Union: the policy makers have turned to SOS Children's Villages International for advice, acknowledging the organization as an important actor in the child rights sector at the EU level.

The children and young people who have participated in advocacy events have also provided very good feedback. They are usually eager to participate, and some young people have volunteered to participate in multiple events.

AkzoNobel, our partner in the youth employability initiative YouthCan!, ran a survey of youth participants and its staff volunteers to evaluate activities carried out in 2019. The survey indicated that young people from family strengthening, education and health programmes tend to rate the value of the support higher than young people in alternative care programmes. This observation will be used in subsequent planning of the initiative.

In a culture survey that was conducted as part of the Federation 2030 project, respondents appreciated the organization's commitment to its values, expressed their support for its strategy and reported they felt a sense of belonging. However, they also felt that the organization's change management needs to improve, which includes improving communication, streamlining decision-making processes, eliminating excessive bureaucratization and providing more clarity on tasks and priorities. They also reported a lack of clarity on the organization's identity. These learnings were acknowledged by the organization's leadership. The issue of organizational identity was addressed with further developments in the area of brand. We have been working in consultation with member associations to hone the organization's brand positioning, and it is planned that updates in this area will be approved by the General Assembly in 2021.

E4. How do you know that people and partners you worked with have gained capacities, means, self-esteem or institutional strengths that last beyond your immediate intervention? (You may skip this question if you have addressed it in your response to B. 1)

See [B1](#).

F. Our advocacy work addresses the root causes of problems

F1. How do you identify and gather evidence regarding the root causes of the problems you address and use this to support your advocacy positions?

Self-assessment: level 3

The General Secretariat's Research and Learning team is a central hub for research and programme learning across the federation. Its mission is to promote and facilitate evidence-based programme development, which includes supporting our global advocacy team. The Research and Learning team manages the organization's global research agenda and maintains a centralized overview of any research conducted by SOS Children's Villages members. The team is planning to launch a new research and learning platform and a global research network for exchange.

Based on a 2019 survey of key evidence gaps, the Research and Learning team has identified the following issues, among others:

- The root causes of child-family separation in different parts of the world, the factors that contribute to effective preventive services, and good practices in building family resilience
- The impact of care reforms on children and young people
- Quality in alternative care: defining quality across alternative care options and applying the principles of necessity and suitability

In achieving our research goals, we combine internal research initiatives with collaboration with NGO and academic partners. In 2019, we initiated two literature review projects. We have partnered with researchers at Brown University's Population Studies and Training Center to conduct what is believed to be the first global literature review on child-family separation. The researchers' objective is to analyse immediate drivers and fundamental causes of separation in different parts of the world and to identify what we still do not know. Another literature review has been conducted by the Centre for Excellence for Children's Care and Protection (CELCIS) at the University of Strathclyde in Glasgow. The review, completed in mid-2020, focuses on existing research on residential care within a range of alternative care options, including quality in residential care and outcomes for children.

Other achievements in collecting knowledge to guide our advocacy include our contributions to *The United Nations Global Study on Children Deprived of Liberty* (2019)²¹ and to *Child Poverty Measurement and Monitoring: The Missing Children* (2019),²² a briefing paper by the Global Coalition to End Child Poverty.

The United Nations Global Study on Children Deprived of Liberty was commissioned and endorsed by the United Nations General Assembly. As one of the main contributors to both the study and its summary report, our global advocacy team was part of an international expert group that developed the chapter on children deprived of liberty in institutions (pp. 496–563 of the study). The team brought the organization's policy expertise as well as knowledge gleaned by our members on the ground and summarized by our regional offices. The study serves as an important advocacy tool for our members as well as the General Secretariat, as it provides global statistics and children's testimonies; evidence of child rights violations from countries around the world; regional and national good practices; the most up-to-date global attempt to define institutional care and distinguish positive and harmful practices in facility-based care settings; and policy recommendations.

In *Child Poverty Measurement and Monitoring: the Missing Children*, the authors explored the groups of children living in poverty that are not reflected in poverty statistics, which includes children living in care institutions, and how these data gaps affect poverty reduction policy and practice as well as target setting within the Sustainable Development Goals.

Using internal monitoring and evaluation data

Our global presence and experience working with children and young people who have lost parental care or are at risk of losing it makes our programme data essential for evidence-based advocacy.

As our Programme Database evolves, we recognize that there is still untapped potential in using the wealth of disaggregated programme data it provides in our advocacy and communications. There has been more collaboration between our advocacy and monitoring and evaluation teams, and our plans include adapting the Programme Database to better fit our advocacy teams' needs, for example by developing reports and data visualizations so that the data is more accessible and easier to interpret. Over the coming years, we will need to ensure that advocacy teams are sufficiently briefed on internal data sources such as the Programme Database so that it is easier for them to stay up to date on country and programme facts.

While there still is room for improvement, over the past several years we have seen inspiring national examples of Programme Database data contributing to improvement of national law and partnership with

21 Available at https://childrendeprivedofliberty.info/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/Full-Global-Study_Revised-Version.pdf

22 Available at <http://www.endchildhoodpoverty.org/publications-feed/2019/7/8/child-poverty-measurement-and-monitoring-the-missing-children>

national authorities. In 2015, SOS Children's Villages Benin used statistical analysis of Programme Database data to demonstrate to lawmakers that the use of corporal punishment worsens children's outcomes in the areas of livelihood, protection and social inclusion, and social and emotional well-being, which contributed to a provision against corporal punishment being adopted by the National Assembly. In 2018, Programme Database evidence also helped SOS Children's Villages Benin support its advocacy positions in consultations on foster care guidelines. These guidelines led to a project to introduce foster care in Benin for the first time.

Working with national advocacy teams

The members of our global advocacy team regularly interface and consult with their national counterparts not only to manage campaigns, initiatives and publications but also to align the global advocacy agenda. For example, at the end of 2019 and beginning of 2020, we ran a survey with our member associations to ask them about their national regulatory frameworks and their roles in delivering programmes and lobbying for children's rights.

F2. How do you ensure that the people you work for support your advocacy work and value the changes achieved by this advocacy?

Self-assessment: level 4

Advocating for changes in the lives of children and young people that are truly meaningful to them means working with our member associations to cultivate a deep understanding of national child rights and child protection contexts; consulting young people on our positions and priorities; making sure children and young people participate in our advocacy projects and events to express their views; providing information in a child- and youth-friendly format; and encouraging the development of independent initiatives so that young people who grew up in care can advocate for change based on their own experiences.

Opening spaces

One of our main advocacy goals is to open spaces so that children and young people can raise their voices. We reach out to them to tell them about opportunities to participate and let them set their own agenda. In preparation for consultations on the United Nations General Assembly's 2019 resolution on the rights of the child, we invited a diverse group of young people who grew up in care to participate. We held webinars to help them navigate the complexities of UN processes, but otherwise the group managed their work independently and ran their own blog, *For the Children We Used to Be*.²³ Drawing on their own experiences, they wrote about what child rights mean to them and those who are still in care. One of their key messages was the importance of child and youth participation: in the words of the blog's authors, "No one is better equipped to understand the best interests of a person than the concerned person." A representative of the group participated in bilateral meetings with UN member states, and we supported the group's engagement with the UN's Youth Delegate Programme.

In January 2019, we involved a delegation of four young people from Albania, Algeria, Benin and Uganda in a round table event with policy makers at the European Commission. The event presented a valuable opportunity for the young people to brief officials on the issues that matter to them. At the European Parliament's High-Level Conference to celebrate the 30th Anniversary of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which took place in late 2019, we worked with partner child rights organizations to enable the participation of young people. SOS Children's Villages International and World Vision were the two organizations that involved young people from outside the EU.

Supporting networks

Networks of young people who grew up in care provide a source of support but also enable young people to work together to fix the problems they know first hand. For example, one such network in Zimbabwe has advocated for access to loans, and another in Sri Lanka has advocated for provisional birth certificates to be issued for those who grew up in care.

²³ <https://forthechildrenweusedtobe.home.blog>

G. We are transparent, invite dialogue and protect stakeholders' safety

G1. Are your annual budgets, policies (especially regarding complaints, governance, staffing/salaries and operations), evaluations, top executive remuneration and vital statistics about the organisation (including number of offices and number of staff/volunteers/partners) easily available on your website in languages accessible by your key stakeholders? Please provide links, highlight membership in initiatives such as IATI and outline offline efforts to promote transparency.

Self-assessment: level 2

Below is an overview of the information available on our website.

Page title	Description of content
Our Organisation	Overview of our governance structure Links to the list of members of the International Senate and the Management Team Link to the Environmental Policy
Strategy 2030	Information on our strategy with downloadable brochures
Our Impact	Overview of the findings of the 70 Years of Impact report Link to download the report in three languages; links to download an earlier social impact assessment report and a paper on the our social impact methodology
Reports and Brochures	Annual reports with federation-wide data on income and expenditures General Secretariat audit reports for 2018 and 2019 Reports to Accountable Now Facts and figures
Transparency	Key policies and guidelines in various languages: the Good Management and Accountability Quality Standards; the Anti-Fraud and Anti-Corruption Guideline; the Programme Policy; the Code of Conduct; the SOS Children's Villages International Statutes
Integrity and Compliance	Guidance on reporting corrupt conduct with links to a secure whistleblowing system Links to relevant policies and guidelines, annual corruption case reports, and the SOS Children's Villages statement on prevention and protection against sexual harassment, exploitation and abuse
Safeguard Children	Overview of our child safeguarding approach with links to the Code of Conduct and the Child Protection Policy as well as annual child safeguarding reports

SOS Children's Villages International is registered in the EU transparency register.²⁴ Our federation is starting to report in IATI; three of our member associations are registered so far.

G2. What policies do you have in place to ensure a fair pay scale? Do you measure the gender pay gap in your organisation, and if so what is it? What are the salaries of the five most senior positions in the organisation, and what is the ratio between the top and bottom salaries? If this information cannot be provided or is confidential, please explain why.

Self-assessment: level 2

Measures to ensure equal pay

The International Senate has approved the following four principles of General Secretariat conditions of salary and service to ensure equal pay for work of equal value, according to the local context and without discrimination based on age, gender, ethnicity or other characteristics:

- Fairness. This includes comparison of jobs based on consistent criteria including the level of responsibility; verification of parity with member associations; external equity; and income comparison and cost-of-living adjustments for expatriates and international hires.

²⁴ See <https://ec.europa.eu/transparencyregister/public/consultation/displaylobbyist.do?id=75014529893-97>

- Transparency. This includes transparency towards the authorities, employees and member associations.
- Sustainability. This includes managing salary budgets that are aligned with organizational strategy and building the necessary financial reserves for future payments.
- Rewards for performance and outstanding results.

We ensure that the pay structures of both member associations and General Secretariat offices are informed by consistent compensation and benefits benchmarking. We have a global contract with the provider Birches Group for their NGO Local Pay Survey in 93 countries. Furthermore, we provide tools and capacity-building workshops to member associations. Although the gender pay gap is not measured, the General Secretariat undertakes all efforts to establish an aligned grading structure with consistent criteria (Know-How, Interaction, Impact, and Efforts & Working Conditions), where salary bands, benefits and perquisites are free of gender bias.

The salaries of the five most senior positions

The role of President is a full-time, non-executive commitment for which the office holder receives full compensation. The position of Vice-President is a part-time, non-executive commitment, compensated via expense allowance. Compensation for both roles is defined by the Senate's Leadership Selection Committee. The compensation packages of the Management Team (executive positions) are recommended by the Leadership Selection Committee according to the General Secretariat's conditions of salary as well as benchmarking with other NGOs and the local labour market. In 2019, the five most senior positions in terms of compensation were the President, the CEO, CFO and COO, and the Special Representative for External Affairs and Resources, with gross salaries ranging between €180,000 and €220,000.

G3. How do you ensure privacy rights and protect personal data?

Self-assessment: level 3

Our data security and privacy policy regarding the collection of personal information on our website is available at <https://www.sos-childrensvillages.org/website-security-and-privacy>. This policy was drafted in coordination with SOS Children's Villages International's external data protection officer, whose contact details are listed on the website for further information and questions.

In 2018, we established a data processing agreement that allows for the secure exchange and processing of personal data by the General Secretariat and member associations. This agreement was set up as a standard agreement in which the terms and conditions could not be changed, so that personal data could be protected across the federation in a uniform manner. To date, almost all member associations have signed the data processing agreement.

In parallel, as part of our responsibilities as the processor of personal data which member associations are in control of, we have set up internal processes and mechanisms to make our databases and ICT systems more secure and compliant with applicable data protection laws, notably with the GDPR. We have established a number of internal processes, including processes for handling data security breaches, managing consent forms, and managing the internal data processing register.

The above data protection efforts will continue in 2021. In particular, we will establish a comprehensive data protection policy.

G4. Who are the five largest single donors and what is the monetary value of their contribution? Where private individual donors cannot be named due to requested anonymity, please explain what safeguards are in place to ensure that anonymous contributions do not have unfair influence on organisational activities.

Self-assessment: level 4

The total income of the SOS Children's Villages federation reached more than €1.3 billion in 2018 and almost €1.4 billion in 2019. Sporadic donations, sponsorships and committed giving represented almost half of our

total income in 2019. Governmental subsidies for domestic programmes continue to be a large portion of our revenue and represent 32% of our income, reaching more than €420 million in 2018 and €444 million in 2019.

The five largest single donors that funded the work of the SOS Children’s Villages federation all over the world as at the end of 2019 were the following institutional donors:²⁵

- The Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs: €14.5 million
- European Union agencies: €3.7 million
- The Danish Civil Society Fund (CISU): €2.4 million
- The German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ): € 2.3 million
- The Austrian Development Agency (ADA): €1.5 million

These funds were raised by our member associations. The budget of the General Secretariat is funded through membership fees. The associations contributing the most funding to the international work of the federation are Hermann-Gmeiner-Fonds Deutschland e.V. (Germany), Stiftelsen SOS-barnebyer Norge (Norway), SOS-Kinderdorf e.V. (Germany), SOS Barnbyar Sverige (Sweden) and SOS Børnebyerne Danmark (Denmark).

Cluster C: What we do internally

H. Staff and volunteers are enabled to do their best

H1. Provide evidence that recruitment and employment is fair and transparent.

Self-assessment: level 3

In our recruitment practices, we strive to be transparent and inclusive. We welcome internal and external candidates to secure the highest level of competence, and we carefully vet all candidates. Our Human Resources Manual sets high-level organizational recruitment standards for member associations. In the upcoming strategic period between 2021 and 2024, we are planning to update these standards and adapt them as necessary to a changing social environment. This includes revising our recruitment standards to provide detailed recruitment guidelines and tools, in particular when it comes to safeguarding ethical standards.

Our job classification system was implemented at the International Office in 2018 and has since been rolled out in all our regional offices except our two offices in Latin America and two branch offices in CEE and CIS. Further calibration of the system is planned for 2021.

The tables below describe the composition of the General Secretariat’s workforce in 2019.

General Secretariat	Headcount	%
International Office	316	51%
International Office for Africa and the Middle East	23	4%
International Office for Asia	43	7%
International Office for CEE and CIS	62	10%
International Office for Eastern and Southern Africa	74	11%
International Office for Latin America and the Caribbean	50	8%
International Office for West and Central Africa	57	9%
Grand total	625	100%

Table 3. Headcount distribution at the General Secretariat

25 Please note that the figures are rounded.

Employment type	Headcount	%
Part-time	121	19%
Full-time	504	81%
Contract duration	Headcount	%
Unlimited	542	87%
Limited	72	11%
Internship	11	2%

Table 4. Breakdown of General Secretariat staff by type of employment and contract duration

Seniority	Headcount	%
< 1 year	104	16%
1–3 years	170	27%
4–6 years	111	18%
7–9 years	68	11%
10–14 years	66	11%
15–20 years	55	9%
> 20 years	51	8%
Grand total	625	100%

Table 5. Breakdown of General Secretariat staff by seniority

General Secretariat employees	Female	Male	Grand total	Female, %	Male, %
Management	35	50	85	41%	59%
Non-management	328	212	540	61%	39%
Global	363	262	625	58%	42%

Table 6. Breakdown of General Secretariat staff by gender

Age cluster	Female	Male
Unknown		2
15–19	0	0
20–29	45	11
30–39	132	82
40–49	115	94
50–59	69	61
60–	1	13

Table 7. Breakdown of General Secretariat staff by age and gender

H2. What are you doing to invest in staff development? What indicators demonstrate your progress? What are your plans to improve?

Self-assessment: level 2

We encourage our staff to take responsibility, develop their skills according to the organization's priorities as well as their own interests and strengths, and share their expertise via peer exchanges and internal trainings.

At the end of 2018, we launched a global leadership development project. The target group is national directors and regional management teams. The development programme comprises three core leadership modules ("Leading Change for Higher Impact, Relevance and Quality of Care", "Developing and Retaining High-Performing Teams", "Multi-Stakeholder Management and Influential Leadership") and several functional modules, for example on the SOS Care Promise. The programme uses a combination of methods including self-assessment, exercises, action learning based on real-world leadership challenges, and

peer exchange. By the end of 2019, around 150 leaders had participated. As part of the programme, we implemented 360° leadership appraisal as a development tool to provide leaders with feedback on their leadership skills.

In our annual Harvesting workshops, which are based on the principles of positive psychology, staff from all over the world come together to share their work experiences, develop their strengths and work on future projects. With storytelling and appreciative inquiry, the workshop enables participants to identify what works well and what might be improved. In a creative process, they “dream” of what an ideal future might look like and collaboratively plan the implementation of their future projects. In 2019, the first regional Harvesting workshop was organized in Western and Central Africa. Twenty-six employees from six countries participated. We are currently developing an online train-the-trainer workshop for multipliers of this development approach in the regions.

In 2019, three sessions of our Introduction Days onboarding programme were held at our Innsbruck office, with 84 participants from 17 countries. The three-day programme is designed to introduce new staff to core areas of work and their own roles. The participants’ feedback was very positive, but since participation is limited due to the face-to-face setup, it is planned to develop a virtual programme so that it can be offered to new employees across the federation.

The SOSvirtual platform, maintained by our office in Latin America, provides digital learning opportunities for users across the federation. In 2019, 21 courses were offered to member associations in Latin America on topics such as child protection, integrity and compliance, leadership, gender and childhood, and more; 29 virtual tutors facilitated the courses and provided feedback to participants. In 2019, four SOSvirtual-hosted courses were available to employees worldwide: *SOS Care Promise*, *Information Security*, *Child Safeguarding* and *Child Safeguarding Investigations*, with all but one of the courses available in multiple languages. The worldwide courses garnered over 11,000 registrations from 125 countries and over 9500 certificates of completion. The development of digital learning at the global level is a clear priority for the future.

Another digital learning initiative is the Care Webinar Series, which is primarily focused on care professionals but is also open for other employees. The webinars help share good practices and highlight developments and projects. Eight care webinars were organized in 2019, with an average of 40 participants; examples of topics include child safeguarding, youth employability, and youth care and development experiences from Nicaragua and Peru.

To establish a systematic approach to talent identification and succession planning at the General Secretariat’s International Office, a company agreement on talent management was signed in late 2018. The company agreement defined a framework for conducting talent conferences where all leaders within a certain function discuss the performance and potential of their employees along with the available or desired development options. The first piloting of the talent conferences took place in October 2019 in one functional area of the International Office. Overall, the process was seen as a positive starting point, but the supervisors suggested that the approach should be leaner and that more concrete development actions should be available. A mentoring programme is being considered as one of the follow-up measures.

Through annual performance appraisal talks, we identify individual development needs and ensure that our staff can see how they are contributing to our mission. Performance appraisal talks are held at the beginning of the year. In the talks, performance of the previous year is assessed, feedback is exchanged, and work and development objectives for the next year are agreed upon, including a medium-term outlook on career development. A mid-point review is conducted after six months.

H3. How does your organisation ensure a safe working environment for everybody, including one free of sexual harassment, abuse, exploitation or any other unacceptable conduct? What indicators demonstrate your progress? What are your plans to improve?

Self-assessment: level 2

We aim to ensure that our programme participants and partners as well as our staff and volunteers are free from sexual harassment, exploitation and abuse arising from the misconduct of staff or any other person acting on behalf of the organization. We have a zero-tolerance policy for sexual harassment, exploitation and abuse. Zero tolerance means that all allegations found to be true will be followed by clear disciplinary action, which must be proportional to the severity of the violation.

As discussed in section [C4](#), in addition to our existing frameworks such as the Code of Conduct, we are preparing to implement a federation-wide policy on sexual misconduct. It will define our focus on prevention so that we can create and maintain a safe environment for all involved in the work of the federation. It will also outline our response mechanism to cases of suspected sexual misconduct.

In 2019, we introduced a policy support document on safety and security. It sets out the principles and implications of safety and security management, including the duty of care, risk management and informed consent, which is particularly relevant in the context of emergency response.

We define our health and safety standards in compliance with the applicable laws and regulations. In our Austrian offices this includes, for example, designated first aid and fire prevention officers; annual inspections of fire alarms and extinguishing equipment as well as heating and air conditioning systems; workspace inspections by a company doctor to prevent ergonomic injuries; vaccinations and health advice; and other measures.

Breaches of the Code of Conduct are to be reported to the Human Resources department, to the employee's immediate supervisor or via the organization-wide whistleblowing and complaints channels (see section [J3](#)), or by means any other systems and channels established in member associations.

The staff of the Austrian offices of the General Secretariat can also raise their grievances with the Staff Council, which is elected according to Austrian labour law as a representative body of staff employed by SOS Children's Villages International. In 2019, 22 enquiries were formally filed with the Staff Council, but more consultations were held informally. Six company agreements were signed in 2018 and 2019, on issues such as flexitime, internal information systems, talent management and visual access control. For more on the Staff Council's role, see section 5.17 of our 2017 report.

I. Resources are handled effectively for the public good

I1. How do you acquire resources in line with your values and globally-accepted standards and without compromising your independence?

Self-assessment: level 3

SOS Children's Villages is committed to adhering to national fundraising law and respecting the rights of the children and young people we serve and those of our staff and donors.

In our fundraising operations, we adhere to the principles set forth in our Fundraising Manual, including the following:

- Respecting children's right to privacy, for example when it comes to portrayal in photos and stories
- Being truthful and accurate in communication, without sensationalism or exaggeration
- Transparent reporting on the use of donations, which includes publishing data on income and expenditures and lists of our partners in our annual reports²⁶
- Minimizing fundraising costs
- Protecting personal data

- Treating peer organizations with respect
- Complying with relevant national law and industry standards

Our fundraising policy framework includes the Fundraising Manual, the Child Protection Policy and the following policy support documents:

- *Providing Quality Sponsorship Services: A Joint Effort of the International Sponsorship Network*, complemented by two guides for fundraising and implementing associations
- *Protecting Children's Privacy*
- *Guidelines for Cross-Border Fundraising Cooperation*
- *Guidelines for Partnerships with Companies, Foundations and Major Donors*
- *The Institutional Funding Practical Guide*

The recently introduced document *Protecting Children's Privacy* is consistent with the *Code of Conduct on Images and Messages* developed by CONCORD. SOS Children's Villages has been a member of CONCORD since 2014. *Protecting Children's Privacy* defines our commitments: treating data carefully, preventing unauthorized publicity materials, involving children in the decisions about publicity material that includes them, preventing the portrayal of children as "objects of pity," and acting with caution when it comes to sensitive information. The issues of privacy and appropriate consent are also covered in *Providing Quality Sponsorship Services*.

The *Guidelines for Partnerships with Companies, Foundations and Major Donors* have been updated to include the changes outlined in section 5.21 of our 2017 report. Prior to entering a partnership, all member associations must conduct a due diligence process based on the screening criteria defined in these *Guidelines*: we do not accept donations (including silent or one-off donations) from, or partner with, companies, foundations and major donors associated with activities that contradict the best interests of children. The due diligence process is repeated every three years. To safeguard the integrity and independence of our organization, we refrain from granting national exclusivity to any company, and we do not endorse companies, foundations or major donors and their products or services.

The Institutional Funding Practical Guide and associated tools define standards, methodology and tools with regard to applying for and managing grant-funded projects.

I2. How is progress continually monitored against strategic objectives, and resources re-allocated to optimise impact?

Self-assessment: level 3

Our federation-wide approach to planning our activities and monitoring progress, which is described in section 5.7 of our 2017 report, remained unchanged in 2018–2019.

Based on our Strategy 2030 as well as their national strategies, all member associations develop mid-term plans, which cover the next three years and have more of a strategic focus, and the more detailed annual plans, which are the basis of annual budgets.²⁷ They define their focus areas, prioritize their actions and set targets according to standardized global Strategy 2030 indicators as well as KPIs specific to national realities or individual functional areas. In their plans, member associations may also include the support they will require from the General Secretariat. The General Secretariat's own plans are based on members' support needs as well as its global projects, overarching tasks and operational needs. The annual planning process and format defined by the General Secretariat are iteratively updated and improved based on difficulties from the previous planning cycle and member associations' feedback.

Member associations are encouraged to track their performance as often as possible; at a minimum, they review their performance twice a year. The review data is tracked at the regional and global level and is used, for example, for financial forecasting. There are analytical tools and business intelligence reports to monitor

27 It is not mandatory for financially self-sufficient member associations to submit annual plans and budgets.

financial and statistical data as well as strategic indicators and KPIs. Our Power BI–based business analytics system enables users across the federation to build and share their own reports and dashboards to suit their needs. To track actual figures against budgeted amounts as part of their reviews, member associations use the Analysis and Management tool, which helps identify and interpret deviations. Budgeting and accounting data is based on the annually updated International Chart of Accounts.

The mid-term and annual planning cycles serve as the primary mechanism for resource allocation and re-allocation. Flexibility in re-allocation may be limited by factors such as the running costs associated with operating our longer-term alternative care programmes, restrictions on the use of funding as agreed upon with donors, and agreements between member associations that provide international funding and those that receive it.

In allocating our international funding, particularly when it comes to new programmes, we prioritize the countries with the highest scores in terms of child vulnerability (as determined through a combination of external data sources) and the least potential for local fundraising. To ensure a better balance between needs and available funding, many of our members are implementing self-sufficiency strategies enabled by international fundraising investments via a dedicated fund. A review of progress of these strategies indicates a good return on investment but also, crucially, significant value in terms of organizational capacity, accountability, positioning and ownership over results.

In 2019, the financial management work stream of our Federation 2030 project provided the following overall recommendations, partly subject to approval by the General Assembly:

- Set up an Impact and Investment Board as part of the federation’s governance structure with a mandate to oversee international programme and fundraising investments
- Set up a mechanism to better manage portfolio imbalances
- Set up an updated cluster logic for member associations, and build on the lessons learned from members’ self-sufficiency strategies
- Update planning and steering processes with a particular focus on results and the coordination of international financial flows
- Strengthen fundraising capacity and provide more support to member associations in securing government funding

We have plans in place to replace our current financial management systems with a Microsoft Dynamics 365–based solution with expanded functionality as well as to work towards integration between our systems for programme and project management, case management and financial management.

13. How do you minimise the risk of corruption, bribery or misuse of funds? Which financial controls do you have in place? What do you do when controls fail? Describe relevant situations that occurred in this reporting period. What are your plans to improve?

Self-assessment: level 3

The SOS Children’s Villages anti-corruption framework comprises the following policies, which are legally binding for SOS Children’s Villages International and all member associations, including the members of their legal bodies, all employees, and all persons working for or on behalf of SOS Children’s Villages International in a legal relationship other than employment.

- The [Good Management and Accountability Quality Standards](#). This policy sets our quality standards in the areas of management and transparency, integrity of the organization and protection of assets. It also establishes that we follow a zero tolerance approach. Our zero-tolerance approach means that corruption always results in a response. This response varies according to the situation and ranges from criminal prosecution in serious cases to training and individual development measures for minor offences.
- The [Code of Conduct](#). This policy sets the standards of ethical and professional conduct. It is signed by all board members and staff.

- The [Anti-Fraud and Anti-Corruption Guideline](#). This policy establishes the responsibilities for all employees and managerial levels within SOS Children's Villages International and member associations to prevent corruption, and in the event a suspected case of corruption occurs, to address and to respond to it in an appropriate manner. The Guideline also contains the obligation for the management of SOS Children's Villages International and all member associations to set up and maintain a whistleblowing mechanism and to provide whistle-blower protection. In addition, the Guideline sets out the procedure for reporting, investigating and responding to suspected cases of corruption.

The Integrity, Compliance and Legal unit at the General Secretariat is the federation's focal point that actively promotes corruption prevention and advises on the application and interpretation of the *Anti-Fraud and Anti-Corruption Guideline*. It also advises on integrity matters and operates the online whistleblowing system, one of the channels through which individuals within and external to SOS Children's Villages International can report suspected corrupt conduct (see [J3](#)). The Integrity, Compliance and Legal unit comprises the central legal service of SOS Children's Villages International, providing advice and guidance on legal and governance matters to internal stakeholders and the federation's governing bodies.

The Integrity, Compliance and Legal unit maintains a formal, anonymised record of all incoming allegations and tracks the progress of investigation, including outcomes and possible remediation steps. Data collected from reported alleged corrupt conduct is summarised in the Annual Corruption Case Report with an analysis of cases. A version of the Annual Corruption Case Report for external audiences is published on the ["Integrity & compliance" page](#) of our website.

In 2019, 36 new cases of alleged corrupt conduct were reported to the Integrity, Compliance and Legal unit. The cases fell into following categories: bribery (6), embezzlement (16), fraud (14), and theft (4).²⁸ The cases were reported by staff, external parties and anonymous whistle-blowers, and seven were identified through internal audit. Examples of corruption cases are provided in section 3 of the 2019 Annual Corruption Case Report.²⁹ See also "Alleged Corrupt Conduct" in section [J3](#). Since 2010, the number of corruption cases reported annually has steadily grown, which indicates growing confidence in our reporting channels.

The General Secretariat's Internal Audit unit is an independent unit that supervises the federation's risk management, internal controls and governance processes. Internal Audit serves as a third line of defence in that it complements operational management, risk management and compliance procedures by evaluating the effectiveness of processes and controls. The Internal Audit unit performs scheduled internal audits as well as incident-driven audits and investigations of fraud cases that have been reported to and assessed by the Integrity, Compliance and Legal unit. In 2019 Internal Audit extended its capacity, welcoming new internal auditors at the regional offices in West and Central Africa, Latin America, and Eastern and Southern Africa. Internal Audit pursues a cross-functional internal audit approach, which means the audits cover not only finance but also other functional areas of member associations.

According to the SOS Children's Villages International Statutes and the *Good Management and Accountability Quality Standards*, SOS Children's Villages International and member associations must present their annual audited financial statements that provide a true and fair view of their financial position. The deadlines, standards and procedures are defined in our policy support document on annual external financial audits; compliance with these standards is monitored by the General Secretariat's Finance and Controlling competence centre.

²⁸ Some cases fall into more than one category.

²⁹ The 2019 report is available at <https://www.sos-childrensvillages.org/getmedia/b2e42bef-c3e3-474d-b87a-2c4e16c9269c/200519-Annual-Corruption-Case-Report-2019.pdf>

J. Governance processes maximise accountability

J1. What is your governance structure and what policies/practices guide replacing and recruiting new trustees/board members?

Self-assessment: level 3

The governance structure described in section 4.1 of our 2017 report remains valid.

The highest decision-making body of the SOS Children's Villages federation is the General Assembly. It approves the federation's basic policies, decides on any amendments to the SOS Children's Villages International Statutes and elects the members of the International Senate, including the president and vice-president. It comprises ordinary members, each of which is represented by one delegate, and honorary members. Ordinary meetings of the General Assembly are convened every four years. The meeting that was scheduled to take place in 2020 has had to be postponed to 2021 due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The International Senate is our policy and supervisory body. It consists of 20 members as well as the president and the vice-president. Their term of office starts with the General Assembly during which they are elected and ends with the next ordinary General Assembly. Re-election is permitted for up to two additional terms of office. International Senate meetings are convened at least twice a year. The members of the Management Team are ex officio non-voting members of the International Senate. The Senate currently comprises three standing committees: the Programme Audit Committee, the Leadership Selection Committee and the Finance and Audit Committee. In the run-up to an ordinary meeting of the General Assembly the president recommends the set up of an election committee to the Senate for approval. The election committee tasked to manage the upcoming election was appointed in May 2019.

The Management Team is the executive body of the federation and consists of the CEO, the COO and the CFO. The Management Team is responsible for the General Secretariat's day-to-day operations.

The Management Council is an operational body established by the International Senate. It has neither a supervisory nor an executive function; rather, its role is to facilitate decision making and perform other functions as determined by the Senate. The Management Council is chaired by the president (as an ex officio member) and comprises the members of the Management Team and eight representatives of member associations, with four representing those members that fund international programme work and the other four, the members that implement programmes. Following the Federation 2030 project, it is envisioned that the Council will evolve into the Impact and Investment Board (see also [12](#)). This change will need to be included in the revised statutes, subject to approval by the General Assembly.

The Special Representative for External Affairs and Resources at the General Secretariat is mandated by the International Senate to manage liaison with global organizations and partners.

Election of members of the International Senate

Members of the Senate including the president and vice-president are elected by the General Assembly by a simple majority. Only members of governing bodies of ordinary members can be elected as members of the Senate, except for the president and vice president. Those eligible for election as president and vice-president are individuals that have the support of at least ten ordinary members.

Elections of members of the International Senate are governed by the SOS Children's Villages International Statutes and Annex B to the *Rules of Procedure for the International Senate, Senate Committees, Management Council, Management Team and the General Secretariat* ("Procedures for Election of the International Senate by the General Assembly").

All nominations are validated by the election committee based on procedural requirements and qualification criteria. Qualification criteria include, but are not limited to, high standards of personal and professional integrity, language proficiency, intercultural sensitivity and governance expertise. The election committee presents all valid nominations in alphabetical order to the General Assembly and gives a recommendation

on how to achieve a balanced composition in terms of gender representation (each gender should be represented by at least eight members of the Senate) and representation of four major regions (Africa and the Middle East, Asia, CEE and CIS, and Latin America and the Caribbean).

Seats in the Senate are allocated as follows:

- One seat is reserved for the Austrian SOS Children's Villages association, SOS-Kinderdorf Österreich – the first SOS Children's Villages association to be founded
- Eight seats are allocated to ordinary members that have made the largest financial contribution to the international activities of the federation.
- Nine seats are allocated to representatives from other ordinary members in a way that ensures balanced representation of geography, gender and age. Nominees for these seats are pre-elected by representatives of member associations in the four designated regions.
- Two seats are allocated to representatives of ordinary members as nominated by the president-elect.

The General Assembly holds separate votes on the office of the president, on the office of the vice-president, on the list of nominee for the nine fixed seats, on the list of nominees for the nine seats allocated to representatives from other ordinary members, and individually on each of the two candidates nominated by the president. If a member of the International Senate is unable to fulfil his or her duties, the federation member he or she is representing is entitled to nominate a replacement.

J2. How does your board oversee the adherence to policies, resource allocation, potential risks and processes for complaints and grievances?

Self-assessment: level 2

According to the SOS Children's Villages International Statutes, the International Senate provides overall direction and approves the federation's strategic plan and binding policies. It also approves the annual budget and audited financial statements of the General Secretariat. Before its scheduled meetings, the Senate receives a report from the Management Team, which makes the Senate aware of incidents and provides an overview of the General Secretariat's activities since the last meeting.

The Senate's Programme Audit Committee, chaired by the vice-president, oversees matters related to programme quality, including programme audit and quality assurance processes. For its meetings, it receives reports on child safeguarding incidents where the General Secretariat is involved in incident management. It informs the Senate as appropriate. The committee also receives annual child safeguarding reports, which provide aggregated information on all incidents across the federation.

The Senate's Finance and Audit Committee, chaired by a senior senator, oversees matters relevant to financial planning and management, including compliance, risk management, financial planning and budgeting, internal control, and annual financial audits of the General Secretariat. It receives quarterly corruption case reports, which summarize data on incoming allegations, progress of investigations and possible remediation steps.

The Leadership Selection Committee, chaired by the president, reviews policies relating to human resources, organization development and compensation. It identifies and selects candidates for members of the Management Team and the Management Council and recommends them for Senate confirmation.

The SOS Children's Villages International Statutes stipulate that membership may be suspended and subsequently terminated in case of violations of binding rules and standards of SOS Children's Villages International. There is currently, however, no specific escalation mechanism under which SOS Children's Villages International and its members are being held accountable for such violations.

With a special focus on the responsibilities and accountability of members, one of the working groups of the Federation 2030 project was set up to elaborate the responsibilities of member associations and an escalation mechanism in case of violations of these responsibilities. Building upon these ideas, it was

proposed to establish a Compliance Committee in the International Senate. A draft mandate is being considered. The proposal sets out the possible claimants and defendants; a procedure for handling reports of alleged gross violations; a list of possible recommendations by the Compliance Committee to the International Senate for decisions; the Compliance Committee's composition; and the criteria for the Compliance Committee to consider when establishing a "gross violation" as stipulated by the Statutes.

J3 and J4. What processes and mechanisms does your organisation have in place to handle external complaints including those relating to unacceptable conduct of your staff, volunteers, or partner organisations? How are internal complaints handled?

Self-assessment: level 2

Since our external-facing complaints channels are also used by internal stakeholders and our complaints statistics do not differentiate between complaints submitted by those within the organization as opposed to those external to it, this section covers handling of both external and internal complaints.

As described in section 5.2 of our 2017 report, guidance on how to submit feedback or report a concern is available on the "Feedback and Complaints" page of our website at <https://www.sos-childrensvillages.org/who-we-are/contact-us/feedback-and-complaints>. The page includes separate guidance on child safety concerns; suspected corrupt conduct; feedback and concerns about child and village sponsorships; and any other messages that do not fall into the above categories.

The guidance for staff on reporting corrupt conduct that is provided on our website includes a reference to an internal paper. The link originally pointed to our intranet; we have since published the paper so that it is accessible to all visitors.³⁰

One of the channels we offer for reports on child safety concerns and suspected corrupt conduct is BKMS, a secure web-based whistleblowing system. We offer separate BKMS reporting sections for adults and children: the children's versions are adapted in language and presentation, which includes child-friendly definitions of inappropriate conduct. Upon clicking a BKMS link, whistle-blowers can consult guidance on what types of conduct they can report via the system and where to turn with other concerns, how to use the system, how to stay anonymous and securely keep in touch with SOS Children's Villages, and how their data is processed and protected. This whistleblowing channel is currently being brought into conformity with the European Directive 2019/1937 on the protection of persons who report breaches of EU law.

Most child safeguarding concerns are reported at the national and local level rather than via the General Secretariat's whistleblowing system. SOS Children's Villages member associations are required to make sure that at least the following reporting channels are in place: face-to-face reporting to teams authorized to deal with child safeguarding issues, a dedicated email address or a hotline, and reporting boxes placed in discreet locations.

In addition to the reporting channels that exist within SOS Children's Villages member associations and the General Secretariat's online whistleblowing channel, it is also possible to report corrupt conduct and child safety concerns by contacting the designated members of staff responsible for handling such complaints at the regional or international level.

In the future we will focus on establishing a joint, cross-functional approach to integrity and safeguarding to increase capacity and facilitate a reporting and responding process for all forms of misconduct.

Child safeguarding incidents

All SOS Children's Villages staff are required to report any child safeguarding concerns that have come to their knowledge. All incidents are registered and monitored in a child safeguarding incident register. The member association or office of the General Secretariat to which the incident was reported carries out

30 Available at <https://www.sos-childrensvillages.org/getmedia/501df4c6-7b3d-4721-822f-9a05dd512f0a/Situation-and-Solution-Reporting-Channels.pdf>

initial incident assessment to identify immediate safety risks, conflicts of interest, and the need for the General Secretariat's involvement in incident management. If the incident was reported to the General Secretariat, based on the outcomes of the initial incident assessment it is decided whether the incident can be referred to the respective member association or escalated to the General Secretariat for direct incident management due to a conflict of interest. In the next step, the member association or the office of the General Secretariat responsible for incident management conducts full incident assessment and decides on any subsequent steps such as internal investigations or reporting to the appropriate authorities. Incident handling is regularly monitored. The incident is closed by the responsible line manager once all appropriate actions have been taken. The reporter is notified of the outcome in an age-appropriate manner. The reporter can choose to appeal against the outcomes of incident management.

Every year, we publish an annual child safeguarding report with key statistics, incident analysis and developments since the previous year. The learnings described in these reports are used to improve child safeguarding efforts and minimize risks.

In 2019, 617 child safeguarding incidents of abusive behaviours were reported and later confirmed in SOS Children's Villages programmes globally.³¹ Twenty-six incidents were reported to the General Secretariat. Nine of the 26 incidents were directly reported to the General Secretariat by whistle-blowers. Of the remaining 17 incidents, 16 were initially reported to member associations and one, to the authorities; these incidents were notified to the General Secretariat either because the nature of the incident required monitoring by the General Secretariat or because incident management had to be temporarily taken over by the General Secretariat due to a conflict of interest. Of the 26 incidents, 25 were investigated either by the appropriate authorities or internally, with three incidents subject to both external and internal enquiries; the remaining incident was confirmed but did not involve an investigation. Of the incidents that were investigated, nine incidents were upheld, seven were partly upheld, three were found unsubstantiated, and six are still pending. Examples of measures taken in response to investigation findings include the following:

- New reporting channels for child safety concerns
- Workshops and discussions with children and young people on how to keep safe or why certain behaviours are considered abusive and should be avoided
- Workshops and trainings with staff on child safeguarding procedures
- Steps to strengthen cooperation with child welfare and law enforcement authorities

Analysis of incidents underscores the importance of prevention.³² For example, analysis found a higher ratio of incidents of sexual coercion and abuse among staff whose jobs do not involve direct and close contact with children, which confirms the importance background checks and reference checks for all categories of staff. Similarly, an overall increase in the number of confirmed incidents where children and young people displayed abusive behaviour towards other children shows the need for additional preventative efforts such as educating children and young people on safety and personal boundaries and training care professionals so that they are able to prevent, identify and respond appropriately to such behaviour.

As our own experience as well as that of other organizations suggests, under-reporting remains a persistent concern. To help mitigate the risk of under-reporting, in 2021 we are planning to introduce a new online training curriculum for different target audiences (line managers, board members, child and youth care professionals, and other staff).

Messages received via the Feedback and Complaints form

Via the Feedback and Complaints form on our international website, we received 27 messages in 2019: nine on fundraising, eight on programmes, six on staff, and four related to other issues including, for example, the naming of countries used in our communications. Most of the messages concerned issues such as change of address or termination of sponsorships. All the submissions were forwarded to the appropriate office or

³¹ For more information, see our Child Safeguarding Annual Report 2019/2020.

³² See the Child Safeguarding Annual Report 2019/2020.

member association and resolved. Examples of fundraising issues that were reported included a complaint concerning impolite conduct of face-to-face fundraising staff; the complaint was forwarded to the member association concerned, which apologized to the donor and implemented measures to strengthen the training of fundraisers.

Alleged corrupt conduct

In 2019, 36 new cases of alleged corrupt conduct were reported to our Integrity, Compliance and Legal unit. In 20 out of the 36 reported corruption cases from 2019, where the investigation was finalized by 31 December 2019, allegations were found to be fully or partly confirmed (56%). In five cases, the allegations could not be confirmed, either because they were proven unsubstantiated or because not enough evidence was found in order to pursue the allegation. In another 11 cases the investigations continued into 2020. In addition, the Integrity, Compliance and Legal unit processed an estimated 60 non-corruption related complaints (for example, relevant to human resources, programme quality or child safeguarding) that were reported to it and, where required, handed them over to the appropriate units of the General Secretariat. Before a reported case of alleged corruption is taken up for an investigation, the Integrity, Compliance and Legal unit establishes whether or not the allegation contains sufficient information to justify an investigation. Should the reported allegation not contain concrete details, including geographic locations, dates or time ranges, acts and the people involved, or if it is evident that the allegation was raised in a malicious manner, no investigation is started. The threshold for such concrete details, however, is kept low in order to preserve the organization's interest and protect its assets.

Sponsorship enquiries and complaints

The General Secretariat serves as the sponsorship office for a small number of sponsors (slightly more than 400) who do not have a sponsorship office available to them in their country. In 2019, these sponsors submitted ten complaints and enquiries directly to the General Secretariat, all of which were successfully resolved within two weeks. With regard to international sponsorships registered with member associations, the General Secretariat provides a centralized service for processing information from the national office where the child or village is located and sharing it with the association where the sponsorship is registered. In 2019, the General Secretariat processed and closed enquiries and complaints totalling less than 1% of our international sponsorships. As in the previous years, the vast majority of these cases are for general issues, such as timely receipt of sponsorship information, sponsorship information lost in the mail, questions regarding content or pictures provided to sponsors, and contact details.

We listen to our sponsors' feedback. For example, one of our member associations sent a small plastic item as a token of appreciation with the welcome letter to their new sponsors and received negative feedback due to the use of disposable plastic. We have amended our guidelines to advise against single-use plastic.

J5. How do you make decisions about the need for confidentiality and protecting the anonymity of those involved?

Self-assessment: level 3

In accordance with SOS Children's Villages International policies, the identities of whistle-blowers as well as investigation subjects are equally protected. All allegations are assessed and, if applicable, investigated, under equal standards, regardless of the reporting channel, whistle-blower identity, or alleged corrupt activity.

We encourage whistle-blowers to identify themselves in their report. This facilitates review and follow-up. Either way, all information provided is handled in a confidential manner. Information about allegations, pre-assessments or investigation reports is disclosed to the minimum extent and on a strict need-to-know basis only. Confidentiality extends equally to investigators, management, co-workers and other personnel, investigation subjects and witnesses.

K. Leadership is dedicated to fulfilling the 12 Commitments

K1. How is the governing body and management held accountable for fulfilling their strategic promises including on accountability?

Self-assessment: level 1

According to the *Rules of Procedure for the International Senate, Senate Committees, Management Council, Management Team and the General Secretariat*, the president, based on recommendations by the Leadership Selection Committee, sets annual objectives for the CEO, COO and CFO and conducts annual appraisals of their performance. The president informs the Leadership Selection Committee of the outcome of the performance appraisals. While in 2019 annual objective setting and performance appraisals did not occur, each Management Team member is fully accountable for his or her respective area of work, consulting with the chairs of Senate committees in their planning. The Management Team regularly updates the president and vice-president on progress and developments within the federation and the General Secretariat.

The International Senate currently does not have a structured, formal performance appraisal or self-assessment procedure. It evaluates its progress and activities by means of informal reflection and review. After its meetings, the Senate releases communications summarizing its main decisions and plans and shares them with the General Secretariat and the leadership of member associations.

According to the SOS Children's Villages International Statutes (section 5.3), the General Assembly is presented with a report on the federation's activities and annual financial statements. It decides on formal approval (*Entlastung*) of the actions of the International Senate.

K2. What steps have you taken to ensure that staff are included in discussing progress toward commitments to organisational accountability?

Self-assessment: level 1

During projects focused on accountability topics, our staff are invited to make suggestions and provide feedback, for example via surveys and discussion platforms. The Management Team holds meetings, such as the Management Team Coffee Connect, where it updates the General Secretariat staff on developments and potential changes and where staff can voice their concerns and ask questions, which are addressed by the management during the meeting or in a follow-up communication. The president and the management also hold interactive online Federation Town Hall meetings to update member associations on decisions and plans.

Our staff are involved in gathering and analysing data for the Accountable Now report, for example by means of interviews, which helps identify strengths and weaknesses. The report and the Review Panel's feedback are published on the organization's intranet. However, more needs to be done to make all staff, including that of member associations, aware of the Accountable Now reporting process and to facilitate their feedback.

K3. What is your accountability report's scope of coverage? Are you reporting for the whole organisation or just the international secretariat? For secretariats of international federations, on which issues of accountability (or relating to Accountable Now's 12 commitments) do your members report to you on, and with what frequency? Where there is no routine reporting, how do you use your coordinating functions to elevate attention to accountability issues throughout your federation?

Self-assessment: level 2

This report primarily focuses on the structure, governance and activities of SOS Children's Villages International, a registered association under Austrian law, which serves as the umbrella organization of SOS Children's Villages. The Management Team of SOS Children's Villages International fulfils its executive responsibilities with the support of the General Secretariat. SOS Children's Villages International operates in Austria and through its regional offices located in other countries. Since the federation of SOS Children's Villages fulfils its purpose and mission mainly through the programmatic work of its members, some sections of the report also concern the activities of SOS Children's Villages members.

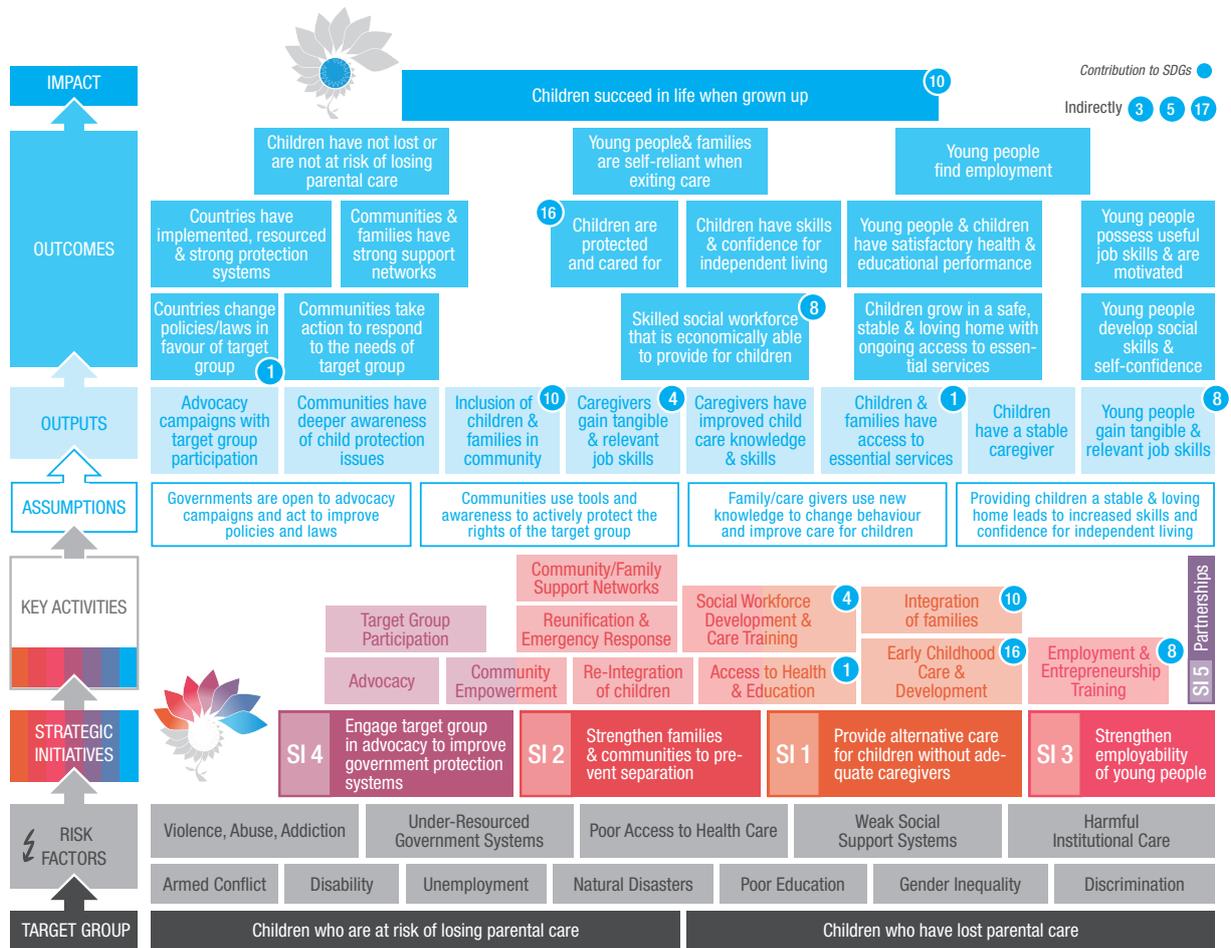
Our member associations submit audited financial statements and annual reports on their activities. Among other reports, member associations are requested to fill out the child safeguarding annual survey, which is a self-assessment of compliance with the SOS Children's Villages Child Protection Policy, related procedures and international child safeguarding standards.³³

Our members commit to acting according to the mission and objectives of the federation, as outlined in the SOS Children's Villages International Statutes, and implement the binding policies approved by the General Assembly or the International Senate. The statutes of member associations must be compatible with the statutes of SOS Children's Villages International, and all new statutes or amendments are subject to confirmation by the CEO of SOS Children's Villages International. The project to revise members' statutes against federation-wide standards and national model statutes, which we reported on previously, continued until July 2019, by when the statutes of 32 member associations had been revised and approved. The review process had to be paused due to a potential update of the SOS Children's Villages International Statutes as part of the Federation 2030 project. The changes proposed within the Federation 2030 project do not yet include a system for cross-federation reporting to Accountable Now.

33 For more information, see the Child Safeguarding Annual Report 2019/2020.

Appendix

Theory of change





**SOS CHILDREN'S
VILLAGES**