

SOS CHILDREN'S VILLAGE PROGRAMME POLICY



SOS CHILDREN'S
VILLAGES
INTERNATIONAL

PUTTING
THE CHILD
FIRST!



CORE POLICY

THIS POLICY EXPRESSES THE ORGANISATION'S STAND ON HOW TO BEST APPROACH THE SITUATION OF CHILDREN IN OUR WORK AND SETS AN ACTION FRAMEWORK FOR THE SOS CHILDREN'S VILLAGES ORGANISATION. IT IS IMPLEMENTED BY CO-WORKERS AND OTHER RELEVANT STAKEHOLDERS WITHIN THE ORGANISATION, AND HAS AN IMPACT ON ALL ASPECTS OF THE ORGANISATION'S WORK.

IT HAS BEEN ELABORATED IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE ROOTS, VISION, MISSION AND VALUES OF THE SOS CHILDREN'S VILLAGES ORGANISATION ("WHO WE ARE") AND THE UNITED NATIONS CONVENTION ON THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD (UNCRC).

IT HAS FOLLOWED A CONSULTATIVE DEVELOPMENT PROCESS WITH PARTICIPATION AND FEEDBACK FROM NATIONAL ASSOCIATIONS, AND WITH CONSIDERATION OF THE VIEWS OF YOUNG PEOPLE.

May 8, 2009

WHAT WE STAND FOR: POLICY STATEMENT

Focus on child's development

SOS Children's Villages focuses on the child's development into a self-supporting and contributing member of society. A child's development to his or her full potential is best realised in a caring family environment. Recognising the role of the child in his/her own development, as well as the role of his/her family, community, state and other service providers, we work together with all relevant stakeholders to find the most appropriate response to the situation of children at risk of losing parental care and those without parental care. Based on the specific situation and best interests of the child, programme interventions are developed and actions taken. Together with other stakeholders, we build on the foundation of existing resources, initiatives and capacities, strengthening these where required. In this way, we respond with relevant interventions, making best use of available resources, and so have a greater impact on the situation of the children within our target group.

INTRODUCTION

A global welfare network like SOS Children's Villages can only remain alive and dynamic if a continuous effort is made to respond to changing conditions in the society involved and to accept new challenges in the interest of the welfare of the children. With this ongoing process of adaptation to the various social realities of the world, the work of SOS Children's Villages will continue to lead to targeted developments in the facilities and services offered

- Hermann Gmeiner -

A. BACKGROUND AND SCOPE

A child's healthy development is best realised in a caring family environment. This position is the starting point for our vision that "every child belongs to a family and grows with love, respect and security". This is echoed in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), which recognises the family as "the fundamental group of society and natural environment for the growth and well-being of... ..children"; and that "the child, for the full and harmonious development of his or her personality, should grow up in a family environment, in an atmosphere of happiness, love and understanding" (preamble, UNCRC).

Every child belongs to a family and grows with love, respect and security

Enabling the child's healthy development within a caring family environment has been, and continues to be, the driving force for development of the SOS Children's Village idea. This idea is built on the strong commitment to finding the most appropriate response to the situation of each child within our target group.

From our roots, we pioneered family-based childcare for children who have already lost the care of their family of origin, through the development of the SOS family childcare model.

"Our family approach in the SOS Children's Village is based on four principles: Each child needs a mother, and grows up most naturally with brothers and sisters, in their own house, within a supportive village environment" (Who we are; Our Mission).

Based on these principles, for many years we have focused on providing professional support to SOS families, organised within the SOS Children's Village.

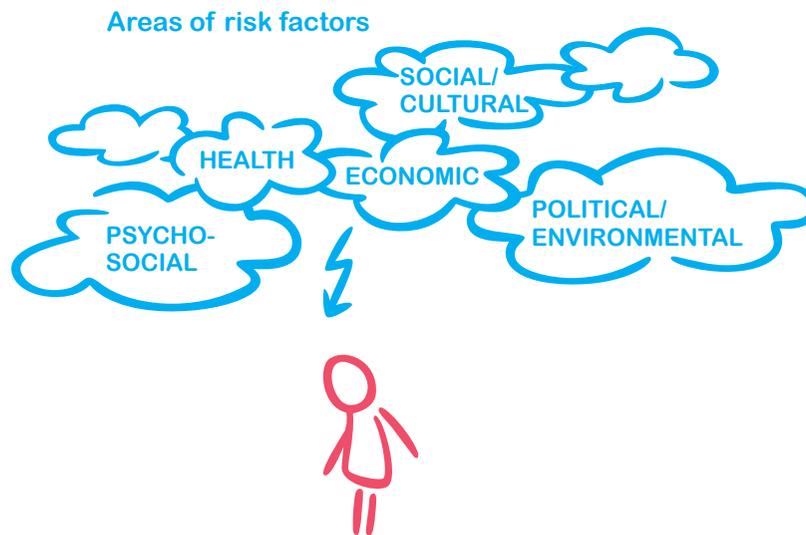
Building on our strong foundation of experience in the field of family-based care, we have more recently been able to also respond to the situation of children who are at risk of losing parental care with the aim of preventing separation from the family, through appropriate support. By expanding our programme for SOS families also to families of origin, and exploring other family-based care options, we are able to reach more vulnerable children.

While for many years the programme structure was defined from a facility-based perspective (SOS family houses, SOS youth facilities, SOS schools, SOS social centres, SOS medical centres), the SOS Children's Village programme policy stresses a programme-oriented approach putting the child's development needs and rights in the centre of the programme structure.

From now on, an SOS Children's Village is a child development programme, with interventions that respond to the situation of children within our target group. These interventions focus on enabling children to develop to their full potential within a caring family environment (whether their family of origin or an SOS family), so that they are able to become self-supporting and contributing members of society. The SOS Children's Village programme is developed and implemented together with other stakeholders in the community.

B. TARGET GROUP

**SOS CHILDREN'S
VILLAGE
PROGRAMME-
Look at the
situation of the
children**



Millions of children around the world face the reality of being deprived of a caring family environment. Against this background SOS Children's Villages responds to the situation of:

- **Children who are at risk of losing parental care**, when their basic material, emotional, health and educational needs are being neglected or they are abused, because their care-givers lack the capacity or commitment to adequately care for their children.
- **Children who have lost parental care**, when they are not living with a parental care-giver for whatever reason and under whatever circumstances.

DEFINITIONS / TERMINOLOGY

Child development

Child development refers to the child's growth, learning and development from birth to adulthood. A child's development occurs in different areas, such as physical, emotional, intellectual, social, cultural and spiritual.

Parental care

Primary responsibility for the upbringing and development of the child lies with the child's care-giver(s). This may be the biological parent(s), a member of the extended family, an SOS mother/parent or another person who takes on the parental role. This role may be shared, according to family composition and culturally appropriate practices.

Caring family environment:

Within a caring family environment, the child can form reliable, supportive and lasting relationships with his/her parents (or other care-giver) and siblings. Here, the child's emotional and physical well-being is secured; he/she can live his/her childhood to the full; and prepare

for a future where his/her potential is fulfilled. The role of the child in his/her own development is recognised and he/she is involved in decision-making affecting his/her life, according to his/her age, maturity and abilities. The holistic development of the child is promoted and supported. Within a caring family environment young people find a secure base from which they can take steps to become self-supporting and contributing members of society.

Family of origin refers to the child's biological family, including family members to whom the child is biologically related. The family may be headed by the child's birth parents, other adult relatives (such as grandparents, aunts or uncles), or sometimes even siblings.

Families of origin

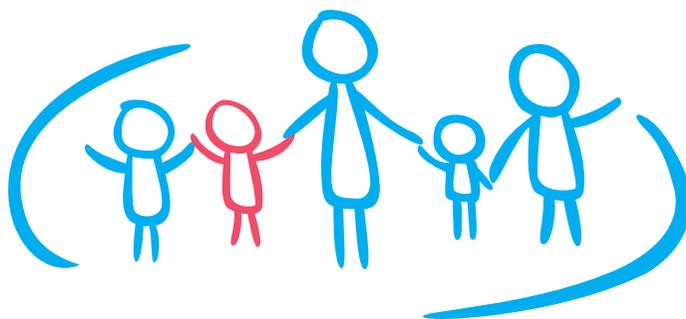
SOS families are substitute families for children who have lost parental care and cannot live in their families of origin, and for whom a long-term placement is in their best interest. SOS families are headed by an SOS mother/parent and are organised and supported by the SOS Children's Village.

SOS families

Out-of-home care (other than SOS families) which provides the child with a substitute family environment, such as foster families. These care options may be organised by the SOS Children's Village or another stakeholder.

Other forms of family-based care

PRINCIPLES [The principles for our work with children, families & communities]



SOS CHILDREN'S
VILLAGE
PROGRAMME-
child development
in a caring family
environment

We believe that children's development is best realised

...in a caring family environment

...supported by strong social networks

...basing all our decisions & actions on the best interests of the child

...involving children in finding solutions to challenges they face in their lives

As a child development programme, the SOS Children's Village builds on the foundation of the four principles of our SOS family child care model. They provide the basis for our work with families and are developed further in realising the SOS Children's Village programme.

As such, the principles of our programme are that:

Child development within a caring family environment

1. OUR FOCUS IS ON CHILD DEVELOPMENT WITHIN A CARING FAMILY ENVIRONMENT

The goal of our programme is child development within a caring family environment. In particular, we strive to promote and protect the "caring" element of a family environment, so that each child has a caring parent (or alternative parental care-giver) who can guide and support his/her development. We also strive for siblings to be able to stay together, unless this is not in their best interests. Within a caring family environment, the family creates a "home" where children enjoy a real sense of security and belonging. This is anchored in...

- The Mother: Each child has a caring parent
- Brothers and Sisters: Family ties grow naturally
- The House: Each family creates its own home

Strengthening social support systems for children

2. SOCIAL SUPPORT NETWORKS FOR CHILDREN & THEIR FAMILIES ARE STRENGTHENED

Children and their families are part of the community. Recognising the role, capacity, resources and existing initiatives of all relevant stakeholders within the community, we work together with these stakeholders to develop strong social support systems for children and their families. Through cooperation with government, community and other duty bearers, we support them to meet their obligations towards children. By working together with other stakeholders, comprehensive social 'safety nets' and alliances for the protection and promotion of child rights are developed. This is anchored in...

- The Village: The SOS family is a part of the community

Best interests of the child are the starting point

3. THE BEST INTERESTS OF THE CHILD FORM THE BASIS FOR ALL DECISIONS & ACTIONS

An analysis of the situation of the child, considering what shall be in the best interests of the child, is the starting point for finding the right response to his/her situation. Based on this analysis and available resources, we develop our programme and make 'tailored' responses to the situation of the children in our target group.

Child participation

4. CHILDREN ARE INVOLVED IN FINDING SOLUTIONS TO THE CHALLENGES THEY FACE IN THEIR LIVES

We recognise that children have a role to play in addressing their own development needs and standing for their rights. Children are informed and consulted in decision-making processes affecting their lives, with due consideration being given to their expressed views, depending on their age, maturity and abilities. Children are given opportunities to express their views and to learn important life skills such as communication, cooperation and problem solving. Children are encouraged to take on responsibility and to respect the rights of others.

IMPLICATIONS [Following from the principles]

In putting the child first, there are certain implications for our work, in terms of how we approach the development and management of our programme, as well as how we approach our work with children and their families within our programme.

Our work with children

The conceptual framework for action of the SOS Children's Village is as follows:

WHAT WE BELIEVE

- Child development is best realised within a caring family environment.
- A child's parents have the primary responsibility for the upbringing and development of the child (Article 18, UNCRC).
- The state is the principal duty bearer in promoting and protecting child rights.
- The child has a right to receive special protection and assistance from the state when deprived of his/her family environment and to be provided with alternative care (Article 20, UNCRC).
- Civil society organisations, such as the SOS Children's Villages organisation, have obligations with regard to children's rights. Working with governments we can support the state in fulfilling its responsibilities with regard to children's rights.

WHAT WE DO

- Focus on a clear target group; namely children at risk of losing parental care and those who have lost parental care.
- One integrated programme, as a platform to develop a package of supportive responses to the situation of the child.
 - The best interests of the child form the basis for all decisions and actions. A tailored response is made to the situation of each child, depending on available resources.
 - Build on existing capacities and initiatives within the community.
 - Support the family, community and state to strengthen their capacity to provide assistance to children and families.
 - Recognise the role of the child, as well as duty bearers and other service providers, in addressing the child's development needs and standing for his/her rights.
- Organise support packages for families of origin, where children are at risk of losing the care of their family, and so prevent the separation of children from the care of their family.
- Provide quality alternative family-based care services, mainly through SOS families, to ensure special protection and assistance for children without adequate parental care.
- Advocate for the rights of children without parental care or at risk of losing parental care. Make duty bearers aware of their obligations towards these children and work to bring about changes in policies and practices that undermine their rights.

One integrated programme

WHAT OUTCOME WE EXPECT

- Increased capacity of a child's family to provide protection and care for the child, and so prevent separation of children from the care of their family of origin.
- Increased special protection and assistance for children temporarily or permanently deprived of the care of their family of origin.
- Development needs of the child are met.
- Effectiveness in our work, through relevant, flexible and quality interventions.
- Efficiency in our work, through best use of available resources.
- A greater impact on the situation of the children within our target group.

OVERVIEW OF THE SOS CHILDREN'S VILLAGE CHILD DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME

SOS CHILDREN'S
VILLAGE
PROGRAMME-
What we do



CHILD DEVELOPMENT IN A CARING FAMILY ENVIRONMENT
building on child participation, cooperation with other stakeholders and existing capacities & initiatives

Developing responses to the situation of the child

The SOS Children's Village programme develops responses to the situation of the children within our target group, together with other stakeholders. These responses support families to become strong, so that they can provide a caring family environment for their children's development.

CHILD DEVELOPMENT

The child's development within a caring family environment is supported by addressing the following survival and development rights:



CARE: Direct care, protection, food and nutrition, and shelter.



EDUCATION: Formal, non-formal and informal education.



HEALTH: Preventive and curative health care and psycho-social support.

FAMILIES WE WORK WITH

The SOS Children's Village works with different forms of family, including:

- **Families of origin:** Where the child who is at risk of losing parental care can stay with his/her family, which is supported to be able to effectively protect and care for him/her.
- **SOS families:** Where the child who has lost parental care can develop in a caring family environment, which is organised by the SOS Children's Village. The SOS mother/parent leads the SOS family and is directly responsible for the care and development of each child.
- **Other forms of family-based care:** Where the child who has lost parental care can develop in a caring family environment, other than in an SOS family. This may be organised by the SOS Children's Village or another stakeholder.

PROGRAMME INTERVENTIONS



DIRECT ESSENTIAL SERVICES - support the child

CAPACITY BUILDING - support families and communities

ADVOCACY - improve policy and practice

SOS CHILDREN'S
VILLAGE
PROGRAMME-
How we respond

Within the programme, concrete responses are made through three types of intervention:

- I. **Direct essential services** which are made available to fulfil the child's survival, protection, development and participation rights.

This always includes education, ensuring that strong support is given for the child to develop the knowledge and skills required to become a self-supporting adult. Our educational interventions also target other children from the community whose rights to education are being violated.

Direct essential
services

- II. **Capacity-building** to support care-givers, families, communities, and other duty bearers and service providers to develop the attitudes, knowledge, skills, resources, systems and structures to protect and care for the child.

By providing training for and sharing knowledge with care-givers, families, other duty bearers and service providers, we support them to strengthen their capacity to make appropriate responses to the situation of individual children. This includes support given to duty bearers and other alternative childcare service providers to promote and secure child development within a caring family environment. Also, educational service providers are supported to develop the capacity to provide relevant services.

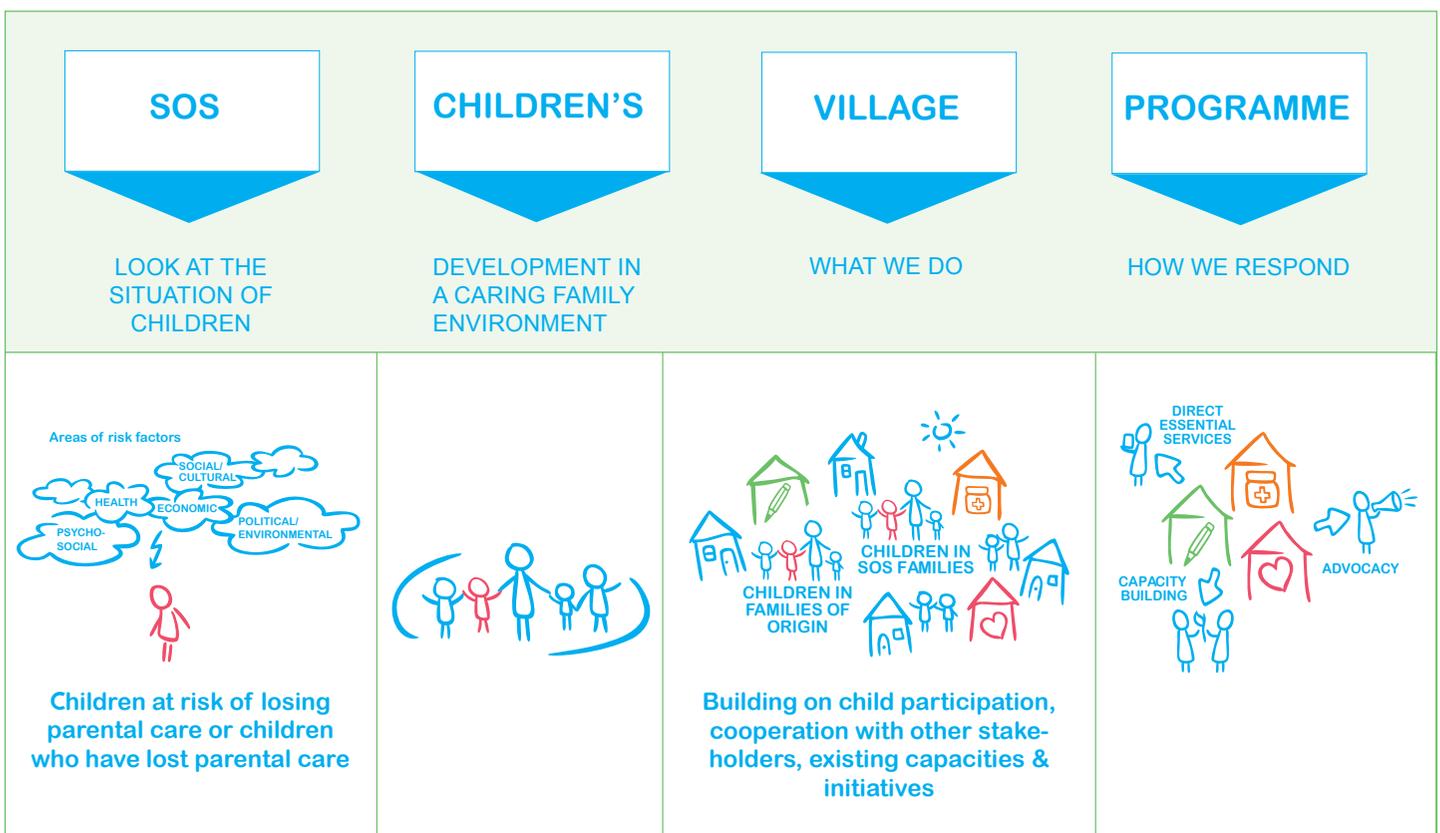
Capacity building

Advocacy

III. **Advocacy** actions aim to improve the overall framework conditions for the children of our target group, by bringing about changes in policies and practices that undermine their rights. We make duty bearers aware of their responsibilities, particularly government as the principal duty bearer. We promote quality family-based care with other alternative childcare service providers. As active participants in civil society, we initiate and support movements that can lead to sustainable social change for the benefit of children in our target group.

Responsibilities for providing specific services

Specific services and activities within these interventions are provided by those individuals, organisations or other service providers that have a duty to do so and/or are in the best position to do so. Sometimes this is the SOS Children's Village and sometimes other stakeholders. Responsibility for providing specific services is clearly allocated during the design of the programme on a location level and is reviewed during programme evaluations. We build formal and/or informal partnerships with other stakeholders, combining our efforts to ensure that the children from our target group have access to a comprehensive range of relevant services and that alliances are formed for the protection of child rights.



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IMPRINT

PUBLISHER AND EDITORIAL OFFICE SOS-Kinderdorf International,
Hermann-Gmeiner-Str. 51, P.O. Box 209, A-6010 Innsbruck, Austria

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TRANSLATION SOS-Kinderdorf International, Language Services

PRINTING Lamprecht, Innsbruck

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SOS CHILDREN'S VILLAGES ON THE INTERNET www.sos-childrensvillages.org

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