Annual Report

2022



SOS CHILDREN'S VILLAGES USA

As a child, you need someone who truly sees you – who stands by you no matter what. But today, **1 in 10** children and young people are separated from their families, abandoned, neglected or forced to live in an abusive environment, growing up without the support they need to prepare themselves for their future.
It happens in every country, rich and poor – in every city and in every community. For the child, the effects often last a lifetime, which can create a harmful cycle that repeats itself from one generation to the next.

We exist to change this.

Truly
bonding
with a **child** has the
power
*to change the **world.***

Year in **review 2022**

In 2022, the COVID-19 pandemic started to abate, but its longer-term impact remained. Even more worrying, new global crises emerged. How did this affect children and young people growing up alone or in families at risk of breakdown? What can we do to support them to cope with the pressures and build resilience?

On October 28 last year, the Financial Times published an opinion piece by the historian Adam Tooze under the headline "Welcome to the World of the Polycrisis." A few days later, Collins dictionary announced its 2022 word of the year: permacrisis.

A year of crisis

Both terms convey the barrage of compounding crises the world contended with in 2022: the human cost of the COVID-19 pandemic and its deepening psychological, social and economic fallout; the devastating war in Ukraine and its knock-on effects on food, energy and fertilizer supply; rising inflation and poverty levels; and the alarming pattern of record-breaking droughts, heatwaves and floods. Not to mention continuing conflicts in countries such as Syria, and growing inequality. As these shocks reverse years of progress in implementing the UN's 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which was already lagging behind, children and young people today face an increasingly unstable, unjust and insecure future. In 2022, for example, the number of children in need of humanitarian assistance rose by 20%.[1]



increase in number of children needing humanitarian assistance

But for children without or at risk of losing parental care, crisis unfortunately is nothing new. Losing a caregiver or growing up in a family on the verge of breakdown are uniquely disturbing experiences that can pose a serious threat to a child's development and well-being. The trauma associated with such experiences can last well into adulthood,[2] and when combined with external stressors – such as conflict or natural disaster – that risk is increased manifold.

When it comes to finding a way through crisis, grief or hardship, the importance of secure relationships and a support network cannot be overstated. Having a trusted person to lean on is crucial to maintaining good mental health and to nurturing learning, growth and development. As the world continues to be rocked by emergencies and more children and young people are deprived of a stable environment and family, it is vital that other sources of support are made available, especially those that foster trusting relationships.

[1] https://www.savethechildren.net/news/new-analysis-afghanistan-tops-list-7-countries-where-children-were-most-need-2022

[2] Ceccarelli C et al. (2022), Adverse childhood experiences and global mental health: Avenues to reduce the burden of child and adolescent mental disorders.



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153,000



unaccompanied and separated children worldwide

More children on their own

According to data from the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), 324.3 million people were in need of humanitarian assistance in 2022. This number is estimated to rise. Climate change, violent conflict and worsening economic conditions are major factors causing destruction and forcing people to leave their homes. Globally, more than 450 million children (or one in six) are living in a conflict zone[3] and, of the 108.4 million people forcibly displaced worldwide, 43.3 million are children.[4] And many of them are on their own.

In Europe, for example, as many as 71% of all refugee and migrant children who arrived in 2021 were unaccompanied or separated from their families.[5] United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) estimates that the global figure is 153,000. These children are at risk of violence and exploitation. Additionally, being separated from their caregivers can have a detrimental impact on their emotional and psychological health. But the same holds true vice versa. A recent study on the mental health of unaccompanied minors on the move recorded that regular contact with family and the prospect of being reunified is a crucial factor for mental well-being.[6]

The legacy of COVID-19

In addition to the onslaught of crises seen last year, the effects of the pandemic are still being felt. According to Imperial College London's COVID-19 Orphanhood calculator, by the end of 2022, 10.7 million children globally had lost primary or secondary caregivers to COVID-19. Of these children, around 7.7 million lost one or both parents. Many are now at higher risk of multiple adverse factors including lack of quality care, mental health issues, poverty and worse quality of life in adulthood.

10.7
million children



lost primary or secondary caregivers to COVID-19

The COVID-19 lockdowns and restrictions resulted in a decline in the development of early childhood skills and significant learning losses among older children. Among young people, employment and wage losses measured early on have still not recovered in some countries. When it comes to mental health, the distress caused by the pandemic was felt all over the world, with young people and women among the worst affected groups.[7]

The events of 2022 shaped the focus of our work with children and young people without parental care or who risk losing it. We intensified, for example, our work in humanitarian action, responding to crises such as conflict in Ethiopia, drought in the Horn of Africa, war in Ukraine and mass flooding in Pakistan; increased entrepreneurship activities with young people; and made mental health a priority across the board. This included establishing a Global Program Expert Group on Mental Health and Psychosocial Support, which researches and publishes on the topic, among other efforts.

[3] https://www.ohchr.org/en/speeches/2022/07/children-affected-armed-conflict-and-violence.
[4] https://www.unhcr.org/refugee-statistics/.
[5] UNHCR (2022), Refugee and Migrant Children in Europe - Accompanied, Unaccompanied and Separated.
[6] Derluyn I et al. (2022), Impact of Flight Experiences on the Mental Health of Unaccompanied Minors on the Move. The ChildMove Project.
[7] World Health Organization (2022), World mental health report: transforming mental health for all.

The insidious effects of stress

The damage that extreme, prolonged and repeated stress does to any human being's physiology and psychology is well documented. But it is particularly dangerous to a child. Research indicates that childhood adversity causes a cascade of biological changes that are linked to serious health and social problems well into adulthood, such as anxiety, depression, post-traumatic stress, problematic substance use, aggression, difficulties in forming social attachments, cardiovascular disease or obesity.[8] In fact, in a study conducted in 21 countries, it was found that childhood adversities account for 29.8% of all mental health disorders.[9]

29.8%



of mental health disorders can be attributed to childhood adversities

The likelihood that a child or young person in alternative care has gone through such experiences is far higher than the average. Making sure the care they receive is trauma-informed is crucial to their positive development. Through initiatives such as our EU-funded project, "Safe Places, Thriving Children – Embedding Trauma-Informed Practices into Alternative Care Settings," care practitioners can be equipped with the tools and knowledge required to understand trauma and address the needs of children and young people affected by it.



Intergenerational trauma

Unsurprisingly, the impact of childhood stress is often intergenerational. It can contribute to harmful parenting attitudes. Parents' or caregivers' mental health difficulties can become a source of stressful experiences for their children, perpetuating the cycle of adversity. What is more, a parent's traumatic experiences may cause changes in a child's gene activity before the child is born.[10] Therefore, working with children and young people to mitigate the impact of adverse childhood experiences helps not only this generation of children, but the next generation, as well.

Mental health support during crises

By March 2022, the war in Ukraine displaced 6.5 million people internally and caused 3.5 million refugees to flee to neighboring countries. According to UNICEF, 1.5 million of them were children. One of the key focuses of our response was mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS). Mobile teams of psychologists provided MHPSS services to 17,000 people in Ukraine – both children and parents.

In Poland, we added "TeamUp" to the range of activities offered. Developed by WarChild Holland, this psychosocial initiative is designed for working with unaccompanied minors in emergency situations, encouraging them to process emotions through play and other movement-based activities. It has already been used successfully by SOS Children's Villages in Greece, Italy and Sweden and this year was adapted in the context of the war, providing structure and a social network to displaced children and young people and thus reducing stress on caregivers.

[8] Anda R F et al. (2006), The enduring effects of abuse and related adverse experiences in childhood.
[9] Kessler R C et al. (2010), Childhood adversities and adult psychopathology in the WHO World Mental Health Surveys.
[10] Yehuda R and Lehrner A (2018), Intergenerational transmission of trauma effects: putative role of epigenetic mechanisms. World Psychiatry 17.



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Supporting the mental health of parents

What is undeniable is that the more emotionally and mentally healthy the parent, the higher the likelihood the child will have a safe and nurturing environment to grow up in. As Aleksandra Sikorska, SOS Children's Villages psychologist in Poland, explains: "When caregivers are scared or worried, children are scared and worried even more." Every day, we see this in action in our programs – the better equipped the parents are to navigate stressors, the less stress and negative experience the children take on.

Building resilience

Protective childhood experiences can have just as much cumulative impact over time as adverse ones. Experiencing unconditional love, having friends, being part of a community and being able to learn in an enriching environment are all examples of factors that can help mitigate the harm of childhood adversity. According to an article published in ChildTrends,[11] "research shows the strongest protective factor linked with resilience to childhood trauma is the reliable presence of a sensitive, nurturing, and responsive adult." This is why it is so vital to restore the systems of protection – relationships and resources – that will help both children and adults develop their resilience in the face of trauma.

This holds as true in large-scale disasters as it does in crises occurring at the level of a single person or family. For children and adults who are forced to flee their home, this means providing them with timely access to mental health support and stress-relieving activities and restoring children's access to education and social interactions as soon as possible. For parents who are finding it difficult to provide the care and support their children need, this means access to counseling for unresolved trauma, parenting skills development or economic supports. For children who can't live with their parents, this means providing supportive, enriching environments where they can form attachments and build trust.

While governments and policymakers can and should address social programs and other systemic solutions, we can all contribute to restoring and nurturing the relationships that protect the futures of children and young people growing up alone.

> **The strongest protective factor linked with resilience to childhood trauma is the reliable presence of a sensitive, nurturing, and responsive adult.**

[11] Bartlett J and Steber K (2019), How to Implement Trauma-informed Care to Build Resilience to Childhood Trauma.

Together in **purpose**

Children and young people across the globe are being confronted with multiple and interconnected calamities. From a myriad of armed conflicts to the lingering effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, the shocking impact of climate change and dire cost-of-living hardships – the world is living through an unprecedented polycrisis. But this harsh reality affects children the most – especially those who are growing up alone, in fragile family situations or without adequate care. In this context, SOS Children's Villages continues its unwavering commitment to reach as many children and young people as possible, so they can grow in a safe and nurturing environment that supports their holistic development.

In 2022, we worked in 138 countries and territories – with a collective annual revenue of 1.6 billion euros invested in the care and support of children and young people without parental care or at risk of losing it. We continued to support communities and families living under stress, provide direct care to children and young people, work to reunify families, support young people as they transition into independent life and provide services in the context of humanitarian catastrophes. Our approach is simple: we strive to ensure suitable care environments that serve the best interest of each child, whether in their own families, in alternative care or when they are forcibly displaced from their homes.

Responding to polycrises requires strong partnerships, building on each other's comparative advantages, committed to a shared purpose. That is why we continued strengthening our alliances with like-minded organizations and governments, reaching out to partners in the private sector and enhancing our advocacy on behalf of and together with children and young people.

Internally, 2022 remained a year of continued growth and transformation for SOS Children's Villages as we advanced the implementation of policies and actions to enhance safeguarding. The Independent Special Commission, appointed by the International Senate, gave us findings of our past failures with valuable recommendations. We welcome the report, will hold individuals to account and will take measures to strengthen accountability and compliance to ensure a safe environment across our organization. We especially acknowledge the individuals who came forward with concerns and provided feedback on our work or otherwise contributed to its improvement.

The progress in this annual report could not have been possible without the commitment of our 40,000 employees around the world, our volunteers, partners, advisers, donors and supporters – and most importantly, the children and young people themselves. They are making our programs stronger, more pertinent and impactful. We owe it to all our stakeholders to continue on this path of growth, and to rigorously address the challenges ahead. We are deeply grateful for your trust and your faith in our mission: to ensure that each child and young person grows up with the support and relationships they need to become their strongest self.

Dereje Wordofa
President
SOS Children's Villages International

Ingrid Maria Johansen
Chief Executive Officer
SOS Children's Villages International



Brazil
Dereje paints with children in Rio Bonito during a visit to Latin America and the Caribbean.

© Alex Deitas



India
Ingrid spends time with women's groups at one of our family strengthening programs.

© Mohammad Ahmed Usmani



Three **pillars of action**

SOS Children's Villages is dedicated to improving the lives of **children and young people without parental care or at risk of losing it**. Our work evolves in response to the specific issues this unique group faces, and as society and our understanding of child and youth development evolve. In recent years, for example, we have expanded our work to include "young people" (ages 15-24) because we have learned how important it is for this age group to have someone by their side as they transition into adulthood.

By "children and young people without parental care," we mean those who are temporarily or permanently growing up without the care of their families: children in residential care, in foster care, children who are living on the street. By "those at risk of losing parental care," we mean children and young people in families that are struggling to stay together and where parents are having difficulty providing the care, stability and connection their children need.

We are passionate about ensuring that children and young people have the support they need to become their strongest selves. We were founded as a practitioner organization in 1949. Today, we leverage our experience for the greatest possible impact. Our efforts are geared toward working directly with individuals, partnering with others to extend our reach and working to change things for the future. We follow three main pillars of action.

Prevention

Keeping families together and preventing child-family separation

If possible, the best place for children to grow up is within their family. Our activities range from working directly with families and communities, to research on the reasons for family breakdown, to developing and sharing training materials related to parenting and mental health.

Protection

Ensuring care and protection when there is no family or it is not in a child or young person's best interest to stay in the family

Our activities involve directly caring for children and young people, including in emergencies; working with partners to train foster parents and with governments to implement care standards; supporting young people to become self-reliant; and much more.

Advocacy

Changing policy and practice to improve the situation of children and young people without parental care or at risk of losing it

This pillar of action focuses on systemic change. Among other activities, we work with partners to create platforms for children and young people to bring the issues they face into discussions at the local, national and global level.

Activities
2022

Children have the right to grow up in a supportive family environment. Everything we do is aimed at making this a reality.

The following section presents the challenges faced by the children and young people we work for, as well as activity highlights and individual stories. Our work is guided by the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Guidelines for the Alternative Care of Children, and contributes to the Sustainable Development Goals.



Prevention

The problem

For the vast majority of children and youth who are placed in alternative care, one or both parents are living. By investing in strengthening families before they break down, the number of children in need of out-of-home care can be significantly reduced and families better prepared to support children through childhood and as they transition into adulthood. Reducing rates of child-family separation also decreases costs for governments and minimizes strain on public services, ultimately creating an enormous return on investment and stronger society for the future.

Understanding the root causes for family breakdown is crucial for developing solutions that keep families together and for creating long-term change. What we are learning is that the reasons for family breakdown are complex and often interlinked. They vary from country to country and from family to family. It is often a combination of factors.

The reasons for family breakdown include:



Violence, abuse and neglect



Death of a caregiver



Poverty



Forced migration



Poor physical or mental health of a caregiver



Lack of access to social services



Child marriage and teen pregnancy



© Joost Bastmeijer | Ethiopia

Prevention
Highlights 2022

Our response

If possible, the best place for a child to grow up is in their own family, or extended family where the bonds are strong and when this is in their best interest. We work at the individual, community, national and international level to ensure that families have the support they need to stay together, and that children and young people are cared for and protected.

In our direct work with families and extended families, we offer a range of services, such as livelihood support, parenting workshops, support in accessing social services and counseling. The aim is always to foster the family's own resilience. Livelihood support may include entrepreneurship and vocational training; seed funding or equipment to start their own business; and direct financial, food or housing support. Parenting workshops are tailored to local needs and include topics such as preventing violence in the family, improving communication with children and positive discipline. Some parents who have gone through difficult experiences themselves also take advantage of mental health support. Additionally, we work with communities to strengthen existing social networks and structures.

In situations where temporary child-family separation is unavoidable – for example, in emergencies – we work with a view to ultimately reintegrate the child into their family of origin wherever possible and in the child's best interests.

Our overarching goal is to raise awareness about the need for family support services in every country, and we partner with local and national governments to achieve this.

During this year of polycrisis, we made particular efforts to avoid this problem by, for example, providing cash assistance to families affected by war or natural disaster, thus reducing the need for caregivers to leave their children and go in search of other income. Overall in 2022, we reached 512,500 people through our family strengthening services, compared to 455,400 in 2021. This increase is due in part to the lifting of COVID-19 restrictions, allowing social workers to resume home visits, but it also reflects the growing need for support services as families cope with the ongoing after-effects of the pandemic.

Key data

- 108.4 million people have been forcibly displaced from their homes.[1]
- 12 million girls are married before the age of 18.[2]
- A 1% increase in child poverty was found to be associated with an additional five per 100,000 children entering care in the same year.[3]

[1] https://www.unhcr.org/refugee-statistics/.
[2] UNICEF, Is an End to Child Marriage within Reach? Latest trends and future prospects, 2023.
[3] Bennett D L et al. (2022), "Child poverty and children entering care in England, 2015-20," The Lancet: Public Health.

512,500
people reached through family strengthening

13%
increase in number of families reached directly

116
countries with family strengthening programs

1,386,400
people reached through emergency response

Evidence-based briefing paper
This paper outlines the need to invest in family strengthening across Central and Eastern Europe and Central Asia. We developed it as a tool for policymakers, practitioners and others working in child protection services.

Discussing migration policy to keep families together
As part of the Conference on the Future of Europe, children and young people exchanged directly with policymakers in Germany. One focus topic was changing migration policy to keep families together who are stuck at the EU's border.

Active fatherhood
In Peru, a workshop aimed at developing protection and caring skills in men to help prevent violence in the home reached 1,316 caregivers in 2022. It promotes a more active and conscious fatherhood and addresses gender equality issues.

Livelihood development
In India, we support families to increase their abilities to sustain themselves financially. In 2022, 14,114 caregivers received trainings in areas such as animal husbandry, bookkeeping and entrepreneurship.

Accessing health services
In the Philippines, we assisted 49% of children in our family strengthening programs with registering for health insurance and connected them with community health care services. As a result, 87% are officially in good physical health.

Prevention
Personal Story



© Chilie Hvild Orloff | Kenya

When parents do not have the resources they need to work through their own trauma, it threatens their ability to care for their children. We offer various services to provide support and strengthen parenting capacities. For Pamela, this included financial aid to secure her children's basic needs and education, as well as counseling and different parenting courses.

99,300

families in our family strengthening programs

"There is some kind of peace in our home."

Strengthening families

Pamela, Kenya

"I grew up without a mother and a father and then I married an older man. When he passed away, his family kicked me out. That made me bitter. My life was filled with bitterness. When SOS Children's Villages became aware of my situation – that I didn't have anything – that day I cried, and I was so moved that SOS Children's Villages found me.

I'm really happy and grateful for having had access to different classes. When I returned from the class, I asked my children how they were feeling and what their day had been like. The very first day my son came to me and asked: 'Is it really you that has come home? You seem different.' They laughed at me and said: 'You are not acting like you usually do.' 'No, I'm not,' I said.

Sometimes we need to be happy. Being angry and constantly arguing is no good for anybody. If I misbehave in front of my children, they tell me what I do wrong, and then we live in better harmony. That is a very positive change. Because of that, my daughter and I have become much closer. Now, she shares her problems and concerns with me. Before, I would start beating her for no reason because I was frustrated. I have left the hard times behind and now I always feel happy in my heart. There is some kind of peace in our home. SOS Children's Villages has done a lot for my mental well-being. If someone in my network needs help, I have learned many things that I can pass on."

Protection

Alternative Care

All children have the right to care and protection, even when their own family cannot care for them. Our concern is to make sure this care is of the highest possible quality, and to ensure that all children and young people grow up with supportive relationships, a sense of security and belonging and the same access to opportunities as their peers.

Crucial to high quality care are services that are tailored to the needs of each individual – especially those who have gone through adverse childhood experiences – and ensuring that children and young people have a say in the decisions that affect their lives. It includes the rights of those in care being championed and extends to the legal protections and support that are in place for young people after they officially "age out" of care.

We care for children directly through a range of programs, also conducting research to inform policymakers and developing materials and trainings to help others improve their care services. Each child and young person who is placed in our care programs has an individual development plan and we make sure biological siblings are kept together unless it is not in their best interest. We continuously assess the child's situation, always with an eye toward reintegration with the child's family. Even when there are no living relatives, we work towards family- and community-based approaches.

We provide temporary care for children while we work with parents to strengthen their capacities – or, in the case of humanitarian emergencies, until families can be reunified. In fact, in response to a worldwide increase in the need for humanitarian action this year, we expanded our emergency services, providing temporary shelter and psychosocial support to unaccompanied minors. Overall, we reached 792,700 children in crisis (see more in "Humanitarian action"). Whatever the timeframe and circumstances, we endeavor to build trust with each child and support them on their path to independence, encouraging contact with their family of origin wherever possible.

Key data

- 7.7 million children had lost one or both parents to COVID-19 by the end of 2022.[1]
- 449 million children are growing up in a conflict zone (2021).[2]
- GOOD NEWS: In 2022, two more countries prohibited all forms of corporal punishment, including in the home, bringing the total to 65.[3]

[1] Hillis S et al. (2022), "Orphanhood and Caregiver Loss Among Children Based on New Global Excess COVID-19 Death Estimates," JAMA Pediatrics.
[2] https://www.prio.org/news/2994.
[3] https://endcorporalpunishment.org/countdown/.

Highlights 2022

69,200
children and young people cared for in a range of care options

44%
have regular contact with their families

84%
are doing well in education

25 emergencies responded to with child protection activities: tackling abuse, neglect, exploitation and violence against children

Tackling peer-on-peer violence
As part of the EU-funded Safe Behaviours project, 572 professionals and 455 children and young people were trained on how adults, children and young people can prevent, identify and better respond to peer-on-peer violence.

TeamUp for children in migration
This psychosocial intervention helps those who have experienced conflict and displacement to process their emotions through physical activity. This year, it was adapted to address the specific needs of war-affected Ukrainian children.

Sexual and reproductive health awareness-raising
Expert-led sessions provided information on sexual and reproductive health and rights, family planning, menstrual hygiene and sexually transmitted diseases to more than 600 children and young people in alternative care in Nepal.

New learning and development approach
SOS Children's Villages in Tunisia has partnered with Léducanet, a school management system, to create a digital platform for trainee care practitioners. It will provide easy access to all learning materials via computer or smartphone.

Official recognition of foster families
In Bolivia, we work with municipal governments to further child rights under the *Accionando el Derecho a Vivir en Familia* project. A key success this year was the government's endorsement of the first four foster families in the country's history.

Alternative Care

Personal Story



© Martin Hanebeck | Jordan

When COVID-19 started and lockdowns were implemented across the world, children had to find new ways to entertain themselves and cope with the stress caused by the pandemic. Thirteen-year-old Malak discovered a talent for puppeteering. With the help of Najwa, her caregiver, she uses her talent to sensitize other children to difficult topics and encourage them to talk about their mental health.

260

children and young people cared for in Jordan in 2022

"When I grow up, I want to help children who have problems."

Talking about mental health

Malak and Najwa, Jordan

Malak

"When Corona started, we just wanted to spend our time with something, so I switched on my camera and started playing with the puppets. I showed it to my mother; she told me I have a talent and started helping me with the puppets. We do activities for children in the village, and I perform puppet shows for them. When I talk to a little child, he or she might get parts of the information, but when I make a story with the puppets, they take on the idea as if watching a cartoon on TV. As I discovered this talent, I knew when I grow up, I want to help children who have problems. For example, those who don't listen or have family issues. I want to help them through puppets."

Najwa

"She has the ability to deal with adults and with children, she sits with them, guides them in her way, in a way they can really understand. Children accept guidance from each other. She sometimes helps me at home, when I have a problem, to communicate about complex topics. So she plays and they actually listen. Through playing, the message can be understood very easily."

Protection
Self-reliance

The transition to adulthood can be a daunting process for any young person. Becoming self-reliant means adapting to the loss of support networks and structures; learning how to cope alone with everyday challenges; entering the world of work; and becoming financially independent. This can be particularly challenging for those leaving alternative care (at age 18 or even earlier) and for those in families struggling to stay together, who lack adequate support at home. In both scenarios, it is likely that the young person has experienced a childhood trauma.

We work directly with youth to prepare them for this transition, offering psychosocial support and vocational and social skills training; with partners to set up employability and entrepreneurship initiatives; and with governments to improve aftercare provisions worldwide. We also focus on digital access and learning for young people, helping them to stay connected, build skills for employability and entrepreneurship purposes and navigate the internet responsibly.

Most importantly, we connect them with mentors and wider support networks to guide them on their unique path. For young people in our programs, the risk of being out of employment, education or training (NEET rate) remains significantly lower than the global average.

After the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, prospects for young people were worryingly low. Jobs were harder to come by and the mental health of many suffered, resulting in the need for extended support. This year, we were pleased to see the rate of self-reliance of people exiting our alternative care improve by 12% (77% compared to 65% at the end of 2021).

Key data

- 1.3 billion people aged between 10 and 19 worldwide; the largest generation of adolescents in history.[1]
- 15 years of progress in reducing the number of young people who are not in employment, education or training reversed by the COVID-19 pandemic.[2]
- One in seven 10-19-year-olds experiences a mental disorder.[3]

[1] https://data.unicef.org/topic/adolescents/overview/.
[2] International Labour Organization, Global Employment Trends for Youth 2022: Investing in transforming futures for young people, 2022.
[3] https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/adolescent-mental-health.

Highlights 2022

86

SOS Children's Villages member associations implement employability initiatives

12%

increase in self-reliance rate of young people leaving care

29,800

young people & adults in employment & entrepreneurship training

69

SOS Children's Villages member associations have included specific mental health actions in their national plans

Internet safety tool
In Latin America, the KOMIK SOS initiative uses comic art to promote internet safety. Young people have created a digital fantasy world, crafting characters who teach their peers about staying safe online. 2,600 users were reached in 2022.

YouthLinks Community platform
Our central digital space for young people celebrated its first birthday in 2022. The platform connects young people on the road to independence with each other, mentors and opportunities. At the end of the year, 1,370 users were registered.

Youth employability event
In Senegal, young people presented decision makers with a manifesto on solutions to the crisis of youth employability in Africa. Sixty-two people from our programs took part, also attending workshops and exchanging with stakeholders.

Digital Villages
This project equips children, young people and parents with digital access, training and cyber-safeguarding knowledge to develop their employability and entrepreneurship skills. In 2022, it reached more than 30,000 people.

NetHope Global Summit
Young people from our programs advocated for more meaningful opportunities for youth in the digital arena at this virtual summit. They urged listeners to recognize young people as creative innovators rather than just users of technology.

Self-reliance

Employability initiative



Bridging the gap between school and work

YouthCan! partnership

According to the International Labour Organization (ILO), more than 280 million young people worldwide are not in employment, education or training. For those without or at risk of losing parental care, the chances of falling into this group are particularly high; without the support network often provided by a family, it can be difficult to even begin bridging the gap between school and work.

YouthCan! is our global program for youth employability and entrepreneurship. We work together with partners to provide individualized support to young people preparing to enter the labor market. Employees of our private sector partners share their time, skills and expertise, both online and face to face. These volunteers offer trainings and mentorship sessions and are beside young people as they take their first steps into the world of work. YouthLinks Community, YouthCan!'s online platform, makes all this possible in one centralized digital space and has been growing rapidly since its launch in 2021.

YouthCan!'s reach in 2022

14,300
young people

1,900
volunteers

47
countries

YouthCan! partner spotlight Latin America: Bank Davivienda

Bank Davivienda partners with SOS Children's Villages through YouthCan! in Costa Rica, El Salvador and Honduras, supporting young people from vulnerable backgounds to make the transition to independence.

In Honduras, where the youth unemployment rate is at 17.6% according to the World Bank's latest estimates, almost 300 young people took part in YouthCan! activities in 2022. Of those, 10% received support directly from Davivienda. The support consisted of a training process in four stages: developing self-care skills, building self-awareness, knowing the workplace and creating an individual Occupational Training Plan.

Subsequently, the trainees had access to a range of opportunities, including mentoring, internships, visits to companies and universities and participation in entrepreneurship fairs.

Advocacy
Introduction

All children have equal rights to care and protection, including the right to grow up in a supportive family environment that fosters their well-being and full development. Along with partners, we defend and promote these rights on a global, regional, national and community level. Our work is designed to change policy and practice to improve national child and social protection systems, including provisions for those who have been displaced from their country of origin.

One of our main objectives is to help decision makers understand that investing in strengthening families can prevent unnecessary separation of children from their parents, other forms of harm and additional alternative care placements. When it is not possible or in a child's best interest to stay in their family, we advocate for a range of high-quality alternative care options. At a minimum, "high-quality" means, for example, employing highly trained care practitioners, maintaining appropriate staffing levels, keeping siblings together and giving sufficient support to young people after they age out of care.

To achieve this, we work to raise awareness about children and young people without parental care or at risk of losing it and to ensure their needs are reflected in high-level conversations. We speak up at national and international political forums and events; contribute to research and reports; generate and share knowledge; and provide technical guidance and recommendations to governments and policymakers to promote child-centered and rights-based approaches.

Children and young people are key voices in our advocacy work. Their meaningful participation brings to light for policymakers the real issues they are facing and that need to be prioritized. When children and young people are involved in advocacy, the result is programs, practices and policies that are more accurately tailored to their needs.

This year, we continued to advocate for the recognition of the specific needs of our target group in international policy and law. In Europe, we engaged at the national level to ensure their prioritization in the implementation of the EU Child Guarantee, and in Africa we provided technical and financial support to, and were part of the validation of, the groundbreaking Continental Study on Children without Parental Care. On the policy change front, we are extremely pleased that France joined the list of countries that keep siblings together when they are placed in alternative care.

105 countries where we worked towards positive change in policy and practice

Highlights 2022

International Migration Review Forum
SOS Children's Villages brought attention to the needs of migrant children separated from their families in Latin America at this forum attended by representatives from governments, civil society, academia and the private sector.

#SafeSchools campaign
Spearheaded by Joining Forces, of which we are a member, and UNICEF, a digital campaign in West and Central Africa called on governments to adopt policy change that would better prevent and respond to attacks on schools in the Sahel region.

Pan-African Children's Parliament
Children from our programs in Zambia and Kenya discussed the issues affecting their lives and futures at the 2022 session. The outcome statement was shared with the African Union Commission for presenting to heads of state in 2023.

Policymaking in Guatemala
In several municipalities in Guatemala, the Municipal Public Policy for the Protection of Children and Adolescents was for the first time drafted with the involvement of young people, including those from our programs.

Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) Youth Forum
More than 100 young people from our programs spoke up at the ECOSOC Youth Forum, a platform for young people to contribute to policy conversations at the UN and discuss solutions to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals.

Examples of policy change achievements

Philippines: Law on range of care passed
Working with partners, we advocated for the passage of The Alternative Care Bill, which became a law in January 2022. The new law recognizes a child's right to a range of care options, including family-like care.

France: Keeping siblings together
Along with partners, we successfully advocated for children not to be separated from their siblings when they are placed in alternative care. A major achievement was the passage of the "Taquet Law," which enshrines this in law.

Ukraine: Simplifying regulations on guardianship
In Ukraine, we raised awareness about the unique situation of children who have lost or been separated from their parents due to war. In response, the government introduced changes making it easier for people who are not close relatives – for example, friends of the child's parents – to become guardians.

Advocacy
Personal Story



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SOS Children's Villages runs workshops in the community where Vanessa lives, aiming to raise awareness about and confront xenophobia. Having taken part herself, Vanessa is now a community youth leader, sharing what she learned with younger children and advocating for equality.

Tackling xenophobia

Vanessa, Colombia

"Emigrating to an unknown country is something completely overwhelming for any child, even for some adults, because it is about leaving behind friends, acquaintances, family and what we all knew as a community.

We were going through a very deep crisis in our home. We did not have enough food; we did not have the resources that we really needed. So, we decided to go back to Colombia, where we had family, to look for a better future. It was a very difficult change for our family, but the hardest thing was not so much packing up and coming here. The most difficult part was how they received us. Since we came from Venezuela and even though we have our families here, we had other habits, and people told us, 'here come the Venezuelans,' even to my younger brothers and sisters. As soon as they started going to school, they suffered a lot of xenophobia.

Being a community agent means you are the voice of the community. We can have our local protection committee in which we learn about violence against children and the violation of their rights. As community agents, we are the voice of those children who have no voice.

I always enjoy working with children and young people. We are never alone. There is always a helping hand that will be there. Sometimes people forget this, but there will always be someone to show them the right path, telling them that they should not be guided by what is wrong in the world; that vices are bad; that they should never drop out of school; and that, if they have problems with education, there is always something in which they can excel."

All children have the right to live free from discrimination. But for many children who are migrants or refugees, this is not their experience.

43

million children worldwide forcibly displaced by the end of 2022

Humanitarian **action**

We respond to the urgent needs of children and families in times of conflict, natural disaster or mass displacement. As in all our programs, our focus is on caring for children, protecting their rights and keeping families together – but in a crisis context.

In any humanitarian crisis, children are at increased risk of exposure to violence and exploitation, face separation from adult caregivers and suffer from the absence of social structures and protections. Often, they must navigate emergencies entirely alone. For those who spend their childhood in conflict zones or go through distressing experiences at a young age, the chances of long-term trauma and subsequent mental health difficulties are high.

Our interventions cover all phases of the disaster cycle – preparedness, emergency relief and post-disaster recovery – and are tailored to the unique needs of local communities. Intended to support both physical and emotional health, activities can be short- or long-term and range from the provision of cash transfers and hygiene kits to child protection training for communities after displacement and the establishment of child-friendly spaces. For unaccompanied minors, we provide interim alternative care, ensure that their basic needs are met and facilitate reunification with family members wherever possible.

In 2022, the number of children in need of humanitarian assistance worldwide rose by 20%.[1] We responded to a total of 25 crises in 31 countries, including: conflict in Ethiopia, drought in the Horn of Africa, war in Ukraine and mass flooding in Pakistan. Of the 1,386,400 people we reached through humanitarian action, 792,700 (57%) were children under the age of 18.

In Ukraine, we expanded our programs into neighboring countries to address the urgent needs of families affected by war. The focus has been on cash assistance, providing shelter to displaced foster families, mental health support and emergency medical aid. In Ethiopia, where severe drought has exacerbated ongoing conflict, meeting essential health and nutrition needs for families with young children is the initial focus. Our response also includes cash assistance for households who have lost their income; the rehabilitation of water points, health and school facilities; and targeted information dissemination on identifying and reporting child protection risks. Such interventions make it less likely that parents will need to go in search of other sources of income or of water, thus decreasing the chances of family breakdown.

SOS Children's Villages collaborates with partners to increase our reach and effectiveness in emergencies. We are a member of the inter-agency Alliance for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action as well as the CHS Alliance, which means we commit to quality and accountability in our projects as per the Core Humanitarian Standard.

[1] https://www.savethechildren.net/news/new-analysis-afghanistan-tops-list-7-countries-where-children-were-most-need-2022.



© SOS Children's Villages Pakistan | Pakistan



© Anne Kahura | Ethiopia



Safeguarding

Everything we do is guided by our commitment to provide a safe, secure and empowering environment for all. Our concept of safeguarding extends not only to the children and young people in our programs but to everyone who engages with us – including our staff, community members and partners.

Throughout 2022, we continued implementing our 24-point, holistic Safeguarding Action Plan. The most recent report on our progress is available on our website (www.sos-usa.org/safeguarding-children). The plan includes direct support for those who have been affected by abuse, and we continue to urge anyone with information about wrongdoing to come forward.

We also continued developing an independent mechanism for supporting children and young people who are dissatisfied with how the organization handles their concerns. A global ombuds board is now in place, national ombuds have been hired in three countries so far and recruitment at the global and regional levels is under way. The project brings in full participation of children and young people in establishing the system.

The Independent Special Commission, set up under the Safeguarding Action Plan to address past cases and make recommendations to strengthen governance and accountability, has concluded its work. Its final report was published in June 2023. Its findings and recommendations will help revise the Safeguarding Action Plan and serve as crucial input to improving compliance, internal oversight and risk management frameworks.

We have invested considerable effort in reviewing and strengthening other internal policies and processes to keep everyone who is in contact with us safe. We introduced regulations on misconduct incident management and on investigations which set international standards for handling complaints. We have also adopted a revised Child and Youth Safeguarding Policy and updated our code of conduct. To ensure consistent monitoring and oversight, we are setting up a cross-functional safeguarding unit reporting directly to the CEO of SOS Children's Villages International.

In line with a holistic view of safeguarding, we have also continued improving systems designed to protect adults – for example, through the roll-out of our regulation on the prevention of sexual harassment, exploitation and abuse. Because safeguarding failures often go hand in hand with other types of misconduct such as corruption, a comprehensive asset protection plan is in progress, as well. For more on our efforts, please visit the Safeguarding Info Hub on SOS Children's Villages International's website.

Financial report

Revenue

All amounts in USD

	2020	2021	2022
Total Contributions	8,353,744	7,404,604	13,276,749
Other income	502,236	473,876	271,081
TOTAL REVENUE	8,855,980	7,878,480	13,547,830

Expenditures

	2020	2021	2022
Programs			
Alternative Care and Programs	7,580,275	6,212,128	5,688,521
Education and Advocacy	411,213	641,338	744,973
Management and General	795,467	572,498	921,313
Fundraising	970,114	761,088	780,047
TOTAL EXPENDITURES	9,757,069	8,187,052	8,134,854

Net Assets

	2020	2021	2022
Change in Net Assets	(901,089)	(308,572)	5,412,976
Beginning of Year	347,002	(554,087)	(862,659)
End of Year	(544,087)	(862,659)	4,550,317

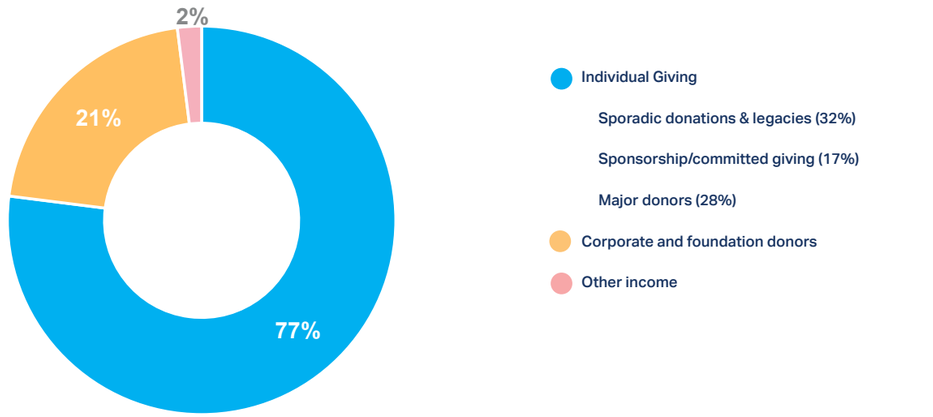
Accountability

As a member of Accountable Now and of the International Civil Society Centre, we take our obligations around transparency and accountability very seriously. The foundation of our approach is our policy document Good Management and Accountability Quality Standards. Our progress in developing accountability practices is reflected in regular reports to Accountable Now, which are publicly available.

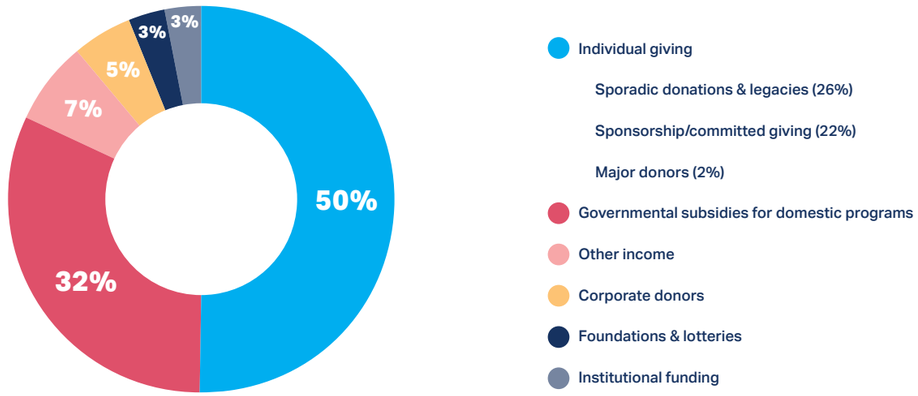
Accountable Now

Following a zero-tolerance approach to fraud and corruption, we are committed to continuously improving our asset protection frameworks. In addition to our current Anti-Fraud and Anti-Corruption Guideline, we are introducing an Asset Safeguarding Action Plan. The detailed financial audit report of SOS Children's Villages International is available on our international website.

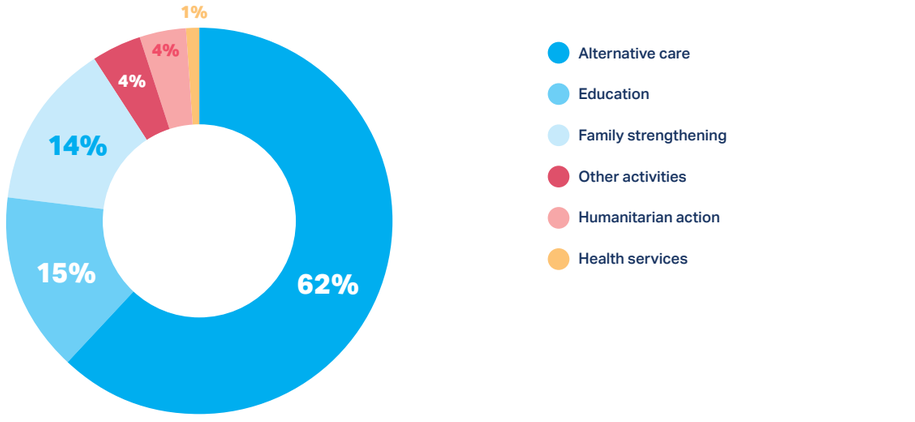
Total revenue by type - SOS Children's Villages USA



Total revenue by type - SOS Children's Villages International



Program expenditures by type - SOS Children's Villages International



Program **statistics**

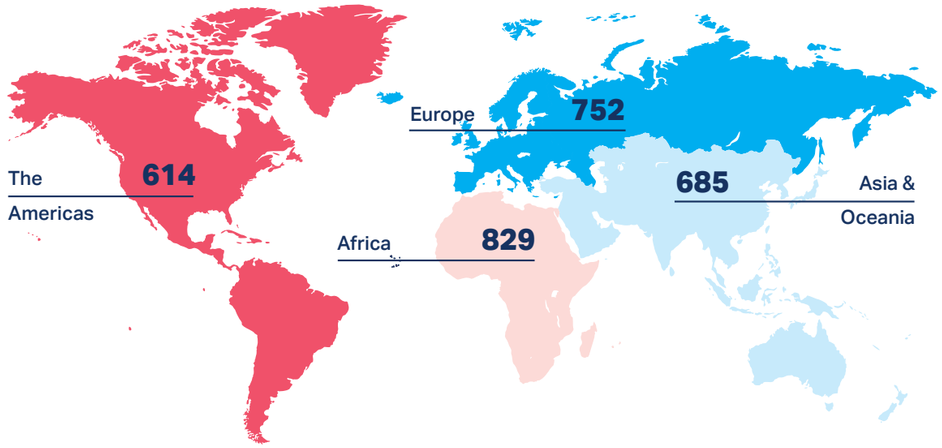
SOS Children's Villages is a global federation of locally rooted member associations. Our programmatic services, tailored to the unique needs of a community, are designed to support children and young people without parental care or at risk of losing it. These statistics are based on reporting by our associations and represent our services for the calendar year 2022.

People we reached

	AFRICA	THE AMERICAS	ASIA & OCEANIA	EUROPE	TOTAL
ALTERNATIVE CARE					
Children & young people					
Family-like care	13,600	5,000	15,200	3,600	**37,400**
Youth care	9,600	2,500	8,200	3,000	**23,300**
Foster family care	800	1,100	100	3,500	**5,500**
Small group homes	300	100	100	1,000	**1,500**
Other alternative care[1]	700	600	100	100	**1,500**
TOTAL	**25,000**	**9,300**	**23,700**	**11,200**	**69,200**
PREVENTION					
Children, young people & adults					
Family strengthening	220,500	33,300	151,200[2]	107,500	**512,500**
EDUCATION					
Children, young people & adults					
Early childhood care & development	8,700	9,900	4,900	3,500	**27,000**
Primary & secondary education	42,500	6,100	42,800	61,600	**153,000**
Employment & entrepreneurship training	8,600	1,700	3,000	2,200	**15,500**
TOTAL	**59,800**	**17,700**	**50,700**	**67,300**	**195,500**
OTHER ACTIVITIES[3]					
Children, young people & adults	67,500	7,300	300	2,500	**77,600**
HEALTH					
Children, young people & adults					
Health promotion & prevention	39,000	100	0	1,200	**40,300**
Mother & Child Hospital, Somalia	266,900	–	–	–	**266,900**
TOTAL	**305,900**	**100**	**0**	**1,200**	**307,200**
HUMANITARIAN ACTION					
Children, young people & adults	1,123,200	8,100	89,600	165,500	**1,386,400**
GRAND TOTAL	**1,801,900**	**75,800**	**315,500**	**355,200**	**2,548,400**

1 Includes care in transitional settings for unaccompanied minor refugees awaiting legal decision and support to other service providers to improve the quality of their care.
2 Includes 600 people reached through SOS CV (HGFD) funded family strengthening project in Iraq, run by partner (Better World Organization).
3 Includes community outreach and education on children's rights, integration support, holiday camps and play buses.

Programs by continent



Programs we operated

	AFRICA	THE AMERICAS	ASIA & OCEANIA	EUROPE	TOTAL
ALTERNATIVE CARE					
Family-like care	150	122	165	96	**533**
Small group homes	14	18	9	64	**105**
Foster family care	22	20	1	48	**91**
Youth care	124	112	208	152	**596**
Other alternative care	13	36	4	8	**61**
TOTAL	**323**	**308**	**387**	**368**	**1,386**
PREVENTION					
Family strengthening	225	171	136	236	**768**
EDUCATION					
Early childhood care & development	77	55	62	40	**234**
Primary & secondary education	83	9	58	28	**178**
Employment & entrepreneurship	42	21	31	32	**126**
TOTAL	**202**	**85**	**151**	**100**	**538**
OTHER ACTIVITIES					
	14	41	2	23	**80**
HEALTH					
Health promotion & prevention	16	1	0	3	**20**
Medical care	24	0	3	0	**27**
TOTAL	**40**	**1**	**3**	**3**	**47**
HUMANITARIAN ACTION					
	25	8	6	22	**61**
GRAND TOTAL	**829**	**614**	**685**	**752**	**2,880**

Thank you

You made a positive difference in 2022, and 4.4 million donors worldwide joined you in making life better for children through the work of SOS Children's Villages.

Without you, siblings would have been separated, trauma-informed care would not have been delivered and children separated from their parents would have grown up alone.

Because of you, families have been strengthened, children have been welcomed into loving homes and young adults have received the training and guidance needed to emerge as productive members of society.

Every positive statistic in this report and every story with a happy ending was made possible by you, so please accept our heartfelt gratitude.

Sincerely,

Cameron Schmidt
Chair of the Board of Directors
SOS Children's Villages USA

Jill Nosach
Chief Executive Officer
SOS Children's Villages USA





Board of Directors

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SOS Children's Villages worked for children and young people in 138 countries and territories in 2022.

*Countries and territories in which we responded to a humanitarian crisis in 2022 are shown in **bold**.*

Join us!

www.sos-usa.org

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Some names in this report have been changed to protect the individual's privacy.