

What inspires us in our work



Stories told by participants of
the Harvesting 2015 Workshop

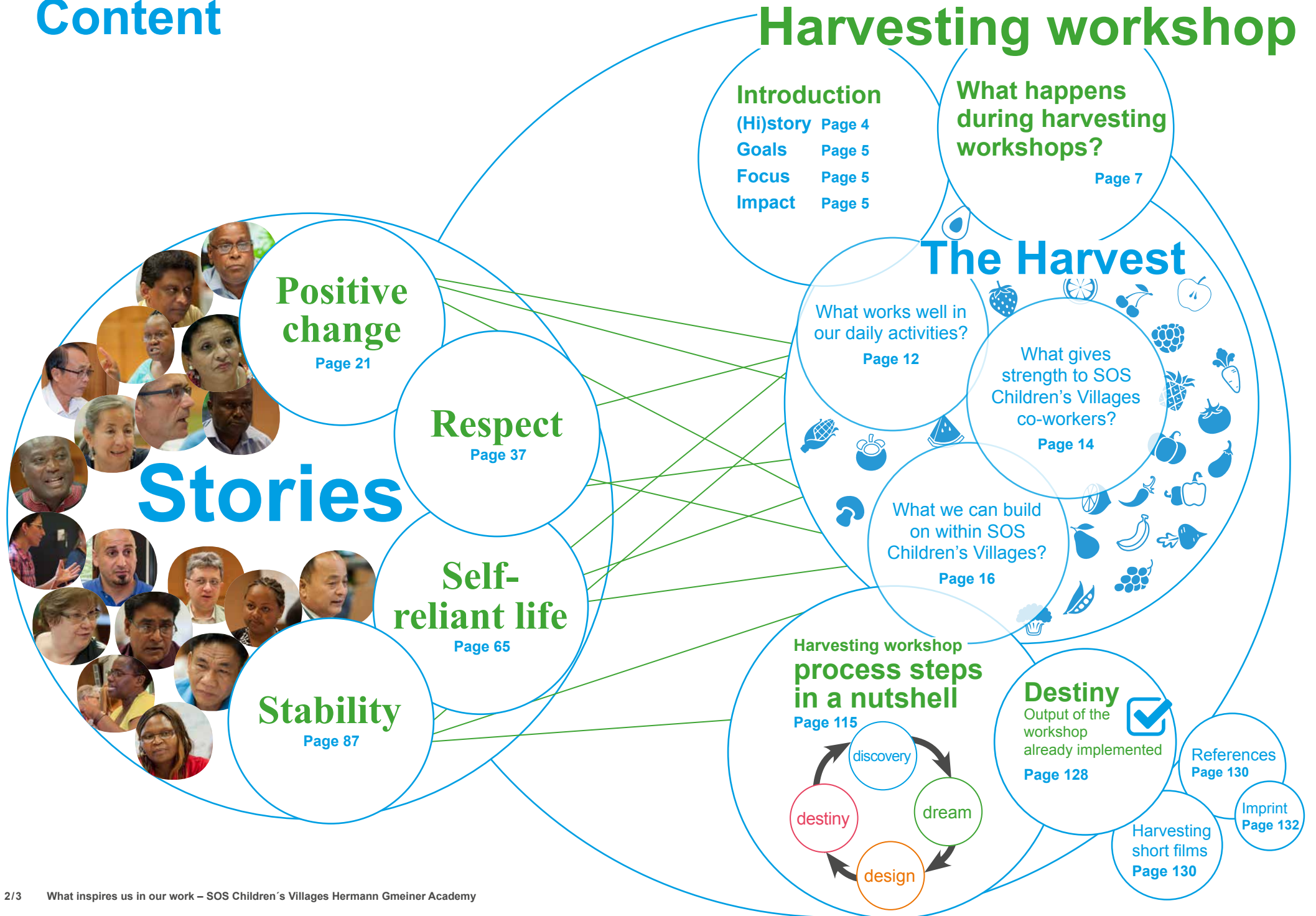


SOS CHILDREN'S
VILLAGES
HERMANN GMEINER ACADEMY

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Stories told by participants of the
Harvesting 2015 Workshop

Content



Introduction

The (Hi)story of Harvesting

Since 2002 108 co-workers from 57 countries have participated in a HARVESTING workshop. It all started in 2002 with 20 co-workers at the Hermann Gmeiner Academy. Between 2002 and 2004 three Harvesting workshops were held and the former participants still hold this time as a special memory and a fruitful contribution to their work. A restructuring of the International

Office and the Hermann Gmeiner Academy in 2008 led to a temporary pause in Harvesting workshops. Since 2012, when the project resumed, Harvesting workshops have become an integral part of the Hermann Gmeiner Academy's education programmes. The workshops now take place every twelve to fourteen months.

Goals of Harvesting workshops

The overall goal of Harvesting is to discover what works well in our daily work, what gives strength to SOS co-workers and what we can build on within SOS Children's Villages. Furthermore, sharing of knowledge on the organisational level of the worldwide federation is a central aim of the Harvesting workshops. Harvesting is about mobilising and spreading the fire of enthusiasm and strengthening the feeling of belonging through getting to know the many faces of the organisation.

Diversity is essential

For each workshop we invite a group of 22 long-standing co-workers from different hierarchical levels and functions, from various backgrounds and countries. Harvesting lives from diversity. Participants come together to discover the treasures of their rich work experience and knowledge through a particular process explained on the following pages.

SOS co-workers tell stories that deal with issues that are of particular importance to our vision:
Every child belongs to a family and grows with love, respect and security.

Focus on what works well

Systems and human beings grow in the direction of their focus.

In HARVESTING we focus on what works well in achieving our mission: We build families for children in need, we help them shape their own futures and we share in the development of their communities.



Impact of Harvesting

The Harvesting workshop process impacts each participant on the personal level as well as it impacts SOS Children's Villages worldwide.

- Participants learn and benefit from each other's wealth of experiences in making a difference in a child's life. During the intensive group process, they discover their strengths. This helps them find identity, meaning, and purpose in work life through connections to the bigger picture: SOS Children's Villages International, an important player in alternative child care.
- Coming together in Harvesting offers participants the possibility to reflect on what the vision of SOS Children's Villages means for the work of each individual co-worker – a path to unlock the potential of co-workers for the benefit of children and young people in the care of SOS Children's Villages.
- Looking at moments, patterns of behaviour or circumstances when SOS co-workers are achieving best results enables SOS Children's Villages to grow in that direction.
- Increased understanding of the field work and of the administrative back up has a positive influence on the professional performance and collaboration within the worldwide organisation.

- Harvesting proves that telling one's own story and relating it to the narrations of colleagues fosters the feeling of belonging, inspires taking action, gives motivation and is lived appreciation as these statements from participants show:
"Compare it to a beehive with each bee having its particular function and specialization. With each bee performing its assignment with passion and skill, all the bees differing skills and competences collaboratively contribute to the general success and sustainability of the bee colony."

Participant 2014

"(...) I feel so proud to be part of the Harvesting network, mainly because there are great human beings with huge dreams for a loving home for the children of the world! Harvesting made me feel alive, motivated me to continue giving the best of my heart and mind for the children and to move actions in my circle of influence."

Participant 2012

What happens during Harvesting workshops?

The Harvesting workshop programme, designed, developed and carried out by the Hermann Gmeiner Academy, comprise the following parts.

- **Generating and sharing knowledge** (see below)
- **Networking** Building enduring, mutually beneficial relationships that are the catalyst for success. We foster continually connecting new people by linking yearly emerging Harvesting networks with one another. We cultivate evolving relations and leverage the network.
- **Incentive** Harvesting allows participants to share their experiences with others and reinforces the reward and the behaviour that led to the giving of the reward. The workshops are one way to increase employee motivation, to reduce turnover, boost morale and loyalty, improve employee wellness and increase retention.
- **Capacity building** We foster a process of equipping Harvesting participants with the understanding, skills and access to knowledge that strengthens them in effective performance.

During Harvesting we usually visit the first SOS Children's Village located in the town of Imst and enjoy a topic-guided city tour through the old town of Innsbruck related to the roots of SOS Children's Villages.

Generating and sharing knowledge

Knowledge sharing takes place within and beyond the workshop participants group. Harvesting participants tell their stories in a variety of settings, from small to bigger groups as well as sharing with other colleagues from the International Office.

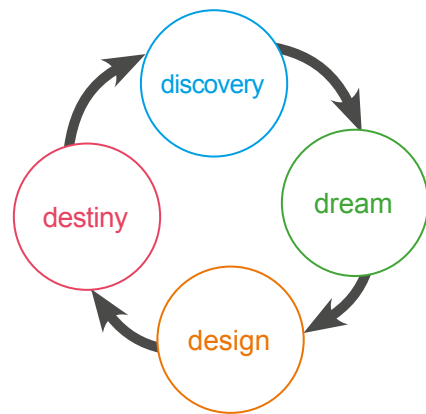
In the workshop process we aim at extracting the tacit knowledge¹ of participants embedded in their individual experiences. "People carry knowledge within them that involves such intangible factors as personal beliefs, perspective, instinct and values (...) It is more of an 'unspoken understanding' about something, knowledge that is more difficult to write down in a database." (Iordanova 2014) The following activities

¹ Roumiana Iordanova (2014): Knowledge Management Toolkit, Methods and tools to share knowledge and ideas. SOS CVI, Innsbruck.

help convey this knowledge SOS co-workers hold.

Extracting knowledge

The underlying approach of Harvesting is called “Appreciative Inquiry”¹ (AI in short). The process cycle wheels from **discovery** to **dream** over **design** to **destiny**, with the aim to extract 4.



In “**discovery**” participants discover what gave them life and strength at times when they were at their very best at work. They discover what is already there, their joys. We use questions like: “Tell me about a time when you felt energized in your work.” In phase two, called “**dream**”, participants, with their discoveries in hand, start imagining a future with increased strength, more life and

1 D. Cooperrider/D. Whitney/J.M. Stavros (2008): Appreciative Inquiry Handbook. For Leaders of Change. Second Edition, Crown Custom Publishing, Inc., Ohio and Berret-Koehler Publishers, Inc. San Francisco.

energy to support the mission of SOS Children’s Villages. Here again we ask questions like: “What might still be?” “How could it look like?” Participants bring it out in a symbol (see p. 20) for themselves and for others to see.

They are equipped now to begin **design**. Like an architect, they design the future they think worthy for their circle of influence within SOS Children’s Villages. How to expand aspects of what works well in order to support SOS Children’s Villages’ mission? We ask questions like: “What are the ways to get there?” It is the time to give shape and structure to their expectations and desires. Now that participants have what they desire in shape, they begin looking for partners, support, measures, infrastructures, means and chances to realize their product in normal day life and work. In this phase the collective wisdom of the Harvesting group is of great value. This last phase called **destiny**² helps each participant to define concrete milestones on the way to build their desired future.

The AI approach together with “Storytelling”³ is the underlying methodology for successful harvesting of

2 Some authors use “delivery”, a term that was subsequently changed to “destiny” as “delivery” can evoke images of traditional change management implementation which may be counter to the very philosophy of Appreciative Inquiry.

3 See references.

the valuable knowledge of Harvesting participants.

Harvesting: Making collective meaning out of the extracted knowledge

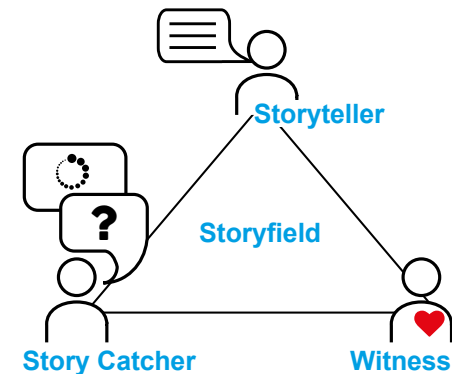
The process of SOS Children’s Villages “knowledge harvesting” goes beyond the group of workshop participants. It is our aim to support individual and collective meaning making. Harvesting wants to inspire all co-workers of SOS Children’s Villages worldwide. We capture SOS Children’s Villages’ successes by making collective knowledge visible, accessible and useful. By knowing what we in SOS Children’s Villages are good at, all involved feel motivated, committed and positively energised. We see this document as one way of spreading the knowledge. Read how we extract and harvest the knowledge during the workshop.

Knowledge sharing in Harvesting workshops

“Storytelling in a story field”

Storytelling is an act of courage and vulnerability. We create a “story field” that consists of three people. The roles of two are to honour and appreciate the openness and courage of the storyteller. Working

in a trio enables the storyteller to let him/herself be guided by questions asked by a story catcher. This allows the storyteller to immerse into memories while the story catcher asks questions and tries to maintain the flow of the storytelling. A witness listens respectfully and closely to the story and gives short appreciative feedback by telling the storyteller how this story touches him/her on an emotional level at the end.



All stories carry important insights that in appreciate inquiry we call **life-giving forces**. Life-giving forces are “those elements or experiences within the organization’s past and/or present that represent the organization’s strengths when it is operating at its very best. A life-giving force could be a single moment in time, such as a particular customer transaction, or it could be large in scope. It can be any aspect that contributes to the organization’s highest points and most valued experiences or characteristics.” (Cooperrider et al

2008, p. 436) We extract the life-giving forces of each story, as overarching topics e.g.: respect, listening and trust, value human beings, risk and surviving, relationship, be ready for change. These life-giving forces are used to inspire action to the desired future of each participant through the above mentioned four-point cycle.

Collective story harvest

Collective story harvest¹ is a powerful method to create a room for sharing knowledge and practices within an organisation. Storytelling raises awareness for relevant topics and builds emotional connection. By actively listening to the storyteller, the whole group is encouraged to reflect and take different listening perspectives – a way to create collective wisdom.

Circles at the “fireplace”

“The circle is the basic form underlining all other forms of participatory process. In every type of organization or group, we meet in circles to plan for the future, handle crisis, and listen to each other.”² In Harvesting, part of the process is to reflect on what we have accomplished every evening around the “fireplace”. Like in a campfire setting, we create a space for reflection and meaning

1 <http://getsoaring.com/what-i-do/potent-stories/collective-story-harvest>

2 www.artofhosting.org

making and practice the art of appreciative listening.

Former participants continue to enjoy the group exchange in “virtual fireplace circles” on a regular basis.

Knowledge sharing in public

Following the workshop process participants share their new or newly discovered insights with a wider group of people in a variety of face-to-face settings.

World café

World café is a method for creating a living network of collaborative dialogue around questions that matter in service to our real work. We have named our café “Meet the Harvesting people world café”.

Participants of the 2015 workshop have developed the following questions meaningful to them and to the expected guests, e.g.:

- How can we ensure that young people in the care of SOS Children’s Villages live independently?
- How can we keep the child at the heart of our daily work?
- What does sustainability mean in our practical work?
- How can we improve international networking and exchange for synergy effects?

World café conversations are based on the principles and format devel-

oped by the *World Café*, a global movement to support conversations that matter¹ that have been applied also in this world café.

Open books

Storytellers open up to their listeners and tell their story like an “open book”². Guests from the International Office and from the public are invited to select a book (a participant’s story). The “open book” tells the story, answers questions and engages in a meaningful conversation. Guests can choose several books.

World kitchen

World kitchen is a method used as a way to include the wider community (e.g. more co-workers of SOS Children’s Villages, donors and friends) to interact with the Harvesting participants and enter meaningful conversations. Sharing a meal with other people is a very natural way to enable social interaction. The main goal of the world kitchen is to create a joyful environment for sharing and connecting. World kitchen builds on the metaphor of a Harvesting feast, which is a common tradition in many cultures. We open a door to first-hand insights to the work of SOS Children’s Villages in various regions of the world. This is one way to raise awareness for the relevance

1 www.theworldcafe.com

2 Inspired by www.livingbooks.at

of the SOS Children’s Villages claim “A loving home for every child”, given the various circumstances that become more tangible through the face-to-face exchange.

Spreading the fire of Harvesting

The process of SOS Children’s Villages knowledge harvesting does not end with the workshop. The fruits of the harvesting process are reaped beyond the Harvesting workshop group. Participants invest energies back at work; they use the experiences and methodology learned in their respective work fields.

By building on the dream and design developed in the Harvesting workshop, certain work processes become clearer and useful approaches are closer at hand. Harvesting participants leave the workshop with clear plans (see “Harvesting workshop process steps in a nutshell” on Page 115)

Some examples:

- To conduct a workshop with young people using appreciative inquiry
- To organise a team meeting in an environment where co-workers can witness caring relationships of SOS care givers with children and young people.

That is the appreciative method in practice.

The Harvest

What gives life to SOS Children's Villages?

On the following pages you find answers to questions like

- **What works well in daily activities of SOS Children's Villages?**
- **What gives strength to SOS co-workers?**
- **What we can build on within SOS Children's Villages?**


These answers were filtered out from stories told by Harvesting 2015 participants. We condensed them into statements. Below you can find the reference showing which stories they are related to. Some stories comprehend several fruitful aspects related to the questions and are thus mentioned more often.

What works well in daily activities of SOS Children's Villages

We build trusting relationships

SOS care givers build trust with children in their care. The following stories prove how strong this bond can be:

- **"Now or never"** on page 47
- **"Never give up"** on page 55
- **"One promise"** on page 67
- **"When everything seems to have failed..."** on page 61
- **"When an SOS mother is leaving"** on page 107

 **SOS care co-workers live relationships** that enable children to build trust, to open up and involve co-workers in their concerns. Children in the care of SOS Children's Villages learn to be empathetic and are aware that children outside SOS Children's Villages sometimes might also need support.

In this case kids took action:

- **"When everything seems to have failed..."** on page 61
- **"Never give up"** on page 55



Our networks are strong

Our core is to build strong, stable and distinctive relationships not only between care givers and the child/young person. This competence remains our strength because we can build on strong relationships with professional networks and other international organisations as the following stories show:

- **"Floods in Srinagar"** on page 101
- **"When an SOS mother is leaving"** on page 107
- **"When everything seems to have failed..."** on page 61
- **"Reunion"** on page 79
- **"Change lives of children after the civil war"** on page 93
- **"Don't let the story end"** on page 51
- **"Through hardships to the stars"** on page 31



We are creative in finding individual answers in the best interest of a child/young person

SOS co-workers are creative in finding flexible answers and are committed to enabling responses that are in the best interest of a child or young person at risk, also in challenging situations.

See the following stories as examples for this creativity and flexibility:

- **"When an SOS mother is leaving"** on page 107
- **"Teach a man to fish not to give him fish"** on page 71
- **"One promise"** on page 67
- **"Witnessing a great change"** on page 27
- **"Never give up"** on page 55



Leaders are strong

SOS Children's Villages can rely on strong leaders that are able to take a long-term perspective for the best of the organisation. The following stories touch this topic:

- **"If I don't do this, who will?"** on page 89
- **"Now or never"** on page 47
- **"Prepare each child best for a good future"** on page 83
- **"We are all important"** on page 75
- **"Through hardships to the stars"** on page 31



We act professionally

SOS co-workers recognize international organisational guidelines professionally and adapt them carefully to the local framework. Existing different local "rules" can be replaced carefully through "translation" and well communication, using participatory principles and involving all relevant stakeholders.

See the following stories as examples:

- **"We are all important"** on page 75
- **"Witnessing a great change"** on page 27
- **"Living the vision"** on page 39
- **"Back to our origin"** on page 43
- **"Don't let the story end"** on page 51
- **"Through hardships to the stars"** on page 31



We constantly develop

Regular updates of international policies (e.g. the SOS Children's Village Programme Policy) give directives and create a sense of confidence and support to co-workers. "The CVPP was like a magic wand which helped to overcome the difficult situation and the light in the end of tunnel appeared!" (see p. 33). These stories are examples for this development:

- o "Through hardships to the stars" on page 31
- o "Witnessing a great change" on page 27
- o "We are all important" on page 75



Co-workers focus on work-life effectiveness – not balance

SOS co-workers manage to keep their energy level up by finding good ways to integrate their private life in the work environment when living within the SOS Children's Village premises as the following stories demonstrate:

- o "Prepare each child best for a good future" on page 83
- o "If I don't do this, who will?" on page 89



Being part of a social movement

SOS co-workers feel proud about being part of a social movement and take on great responsibility in standing up for the rights of the child, as told in the following stories:

- o "If I don't do this, who will?" on page 89
- o "Change lives of children after the civil war" on page 93
- o "The power of empowerment" on page 97



The children in our care motivate SOS co-workers

e.g. by showing their courage. Many stories are proof for this encouragement, like

- o "When everything seems to have failed..." on page 61
- o "Prepare each child best for a good future" on page 83
- o "Teach a man to fish not to give him fish" on page 71
- o "Reunion" on page 79
- o "Living the vision" on page 39

What gives strength to SOS co-workers



Witnessing caring relationships

SOS co-workers feel a strong connection with the SOS Children's Village idea especially when they witness caring relationships in SOS families face-to-face. Through such events co-workers feel pride and affiliation to the global organisation and recognize their own responsibility in this social movement. Examples are these two stories:

- o "Back to our origin" on page 43
- o "One promise" on page 67



Understanding the meaning of our actions

For SOS co-workers it is important to understand the meaning of their actions and to get the opportunity to feel pride and responsibility, as these stories reveal. See stories

- o "Witnessing a great change" on page 27
- o "Don't let the story end" on page 51



Making a difference in a child's life

SOS co-workers identify with the idea of making a difference in a child's life. They courageously demonstrate their caring for each individual and invest in building sustainable and long-lasting relationships beyond. These are only some examples:

- o "Witnessing a great change" on page 27
- o "Back to our origin" on page 43
- o "Now or never" on page 47
- o "Don't let the story end" on page 51
- o "Never give up" on page 55
- o "When everything seems to have failed..." on page 61
- o "One promise" on page 67
- o "Teach a man to fish not to give him fish" on page 71
- o "Reunion" on page 79



Resources in the community

SOS co-workers recognize the resources in the community and draw motivation from witnessing strong local communities. It is again the feeling of meaning. Their part in fostering change by empowering the community where the child at risk or the child in our care lives. These two stories describe these factors very well:

- o "The power of empowerment" on page 97
- o "Don't let the story end" on page 51



Possibilities to be creative

SOS co-workers appreciate the possibility to be creative in finding flexible answers and are committed to enabling responses in the best interest of a child at risk no matter how challenging the situations might be. See for example:

- o "When an SOS mother is leaving" on page 107
- o "Teach a man to fish not to give him fish" on page 71

What we can build on within SOS Children's Villages



Constant development

SOS co-workers constantly continue to further develop, adjust and extend services and pedagogical approaches in the best interest of the child in response to local challenges. Read the following stories about important developments:

- ["Witnessing a great change" on page 27](#)
- ["Don't let the story end" on page 51](#)
- ["Teach a man to fish not to give him fish" on page 71](#)
- ["Through hardships to the stars" on page 31](#)



Values that foster child development

SOS co-workers believe in and live values that foster child development. Education for example is very important within SOS Children's Villages as you see in stories

- ["One promise" on page 67](#)
- ["Prepare each child best for a good future" on page 83](#)
- ["The power of empowerment" on page 97](#)



The impact of our work

Showing the impact of SOS Children's Villages work, enabling face-to-face exchange in programmes, enabling dialogue with children and or young people in the care of SOS Children's Villages motivates co-workers as you can see already in the titles of these stories:

- ["Witnessing a great change" on page 27](#)
- ["Back to our origin" on page 43](#)
- ["Reunion" on page 79](#)



Strong reliable networks

SOS co-workers know the importance of strong and reliable networks. Ideally all involved parties work together for the benefit of the child and young people in the care of SOS Children's Villages, all to the success of our mission: We build families for children in need, we help them shape their own futures and we share in the development of their communities.

See for instance:

- ["A strong triangle" on page 23](#)
- ["When everything seems to have failed..." on page 61](#)
- ["The power of empowerment" on page 97](#)
- ["Reunion" on page 79](#)



Respect for the individual child

SOS co-workers are aware that to respect the individual child or young person in our care and to adopt policies accordingly is evidence that we live the vision: Every child belongs to a family and grows with love, respect and security.

Read the following stories that refer to the SOS Children's Villages vision:

- ["One promise" on page 67](#)
- ["Living the vision" on page 39](#)
- ["Witnessing a great change" on page 27](#)



We aim to prepare each child for a self-reliant life

SOS co-workers are committed to reach the clear goal of preparing young people growing up within SOS Children's Villages for a self-reliant life. Many stories touch this issue, for example:

- ["Prepare each child best for a good future" on page 83](#)
- ["Teach a man to fish not to give him fish" on page 71](#)
- ["Reunion" on page 79](#)
- ["Witnessing a great change" on page 27](#)
- ["Never give up" on page 55](#)
- ["One promise" on page 67](#)



We bring stability to a child's life

SOS co-workers are good at bringing stability into the life of a child or young person who has lost parental care in situations e.g. of emergency or political unrest. Stories like these perfectly describe this valuable process:

- ["Change lives of children after the civil war" on page 93](#)
- ["Floods in Srinagar" on page 101](#)
- ["If I don't do this, who will?" on page 89](#)



We maintain stable relationships in a child's life

SOS co-workers duely go the extra mile, especially when the stability of a relationship in the life of the child in our care is threatened. Read these stories:

- ["When an SOS mother is leaving" on page 107](#)
- ["Don't let the story end" on page 51](#)
- ["Now or never" on page 47](#)



We live family-spirit in our caring relationship

SOS co-workers know the importance of keeping the SOS family spirit beyond the care of SOS Children's Villages in a programme. Two beautiful examples can be found on

- ["Reunion" on page 79](#)
- ["Prepare each child best for a good future" on page 83](#)

Stories

told in harvesting 2015

Dear reader, the pages ahead of you are much more than an ordinary report. They are clusters of stories harvested in the first phase of the Harvesting 2015 workshop process. The stories, quite true, are fragments of the rich Harvesting process. Still, we fully trust in their power to ignite positive change. Therefore, we invite you to take a look at the last pages of this brochure and find the inherent messages of the stories shortlisted as “Discoveries”, “Dreams” and “Destiny” (see “Harvesting workshop process steps in a nutshell” on page 115).

The Harvesting group discovered what works well and dreamed what they want more of because it works. The focus is on the strengths of SOS Children’s Villages!

While enjoying the stories, we invite you to also ask yourself: When was it you felt at your best at work? Remain a little while with this picture by going back to that moment. Discover the components of your story. How was it? What made it possible and how were you able to make it happen?

The discovery of these moments can plunge you into a wave of flow. Your personal discoveries may be similar to those which participants of Harvesting made as they embarked on the journey of (re)discovering their best moments in their various long services with SOS Children’s Villages.

It is such personal stories about moments of flow which you are going to encounter in the stories below. They cover many diverse areas, but common to them all is this: They are stories of “moving moments”, the mere awareness of which “arouses feelings of joy”. This awareness alone is a treasure, which can yield even more prosperity for you as an individual and for SOS Children’s Villages as a whole.

Confidentiality

Storytelling is an act of courage and vulnerability. It takes great courage for someone to put themselves out there to share their story. It is important for us to honor that act and do our best to use every story in a respectful way.

Therefore some stories that have been told in Harvesting 2015 remain with the group. In many stories names have been changed to maintain confidentiality as indicated.

Language

For most Harvesting storytellers English is not the mother tongue. To keep the original character of the story, editing was conducted in a minimal form.

How to read the Stories

If storytelling is a skill that is both inherent to humans and one that can be polished with practice, then so is listening or reading. Listening is the companion skill to storytelling, indeed the story arises in the space between the teller and the listener, the reader.

In essence, a story needs a listener or reader to become what it can be. We do not often get the opportunity to listen well or reflect deeply, especially with a specific purpose.



Dear reader, please read the stories bearing any of the questions offered

at the beginning of each story in mind. Use these questions like a lens. Looking through a specific lens while reading will offer you a distinct look at the story.

Participants of the 2015 Workshop and the Harvesting Team wish you a happy reading experience.

Positive change

Can we create even more positive change?

This chapter refers to stories about a positive change in the life of the individual child in the care of SOS Children's Villages as well as on his or her community. The focus is on long-term effects on children and their families. This means changes in the situation of the individual, in terms of key aspects of well-being. By taking the long-term view, our work aims at changes in the situation of the community, via the individual and the SOS Children's Villages programme (definition inspired by ONE child webinar: Social Impact Assessment, 29 July 2015)





A strong triangle

Where to see the impact of your work as a non-caregiver

Dear reader, consider these questions as a lens through which you can see the following story by **Laura Aguirre Castañeda**.

Q Are you always aware how you contribute to the healthy development of a child or a young adult?

Q How can we appreciate the contribution of the whole SOS Children's Villages system to the development of the individual child?

On those days, we, the sponsorship team, were struggling to make some of our colleagues appreciate our work. How to make them see that our work meant more than translating letters and reports? How to make them see that no matter where we sit, everyone at the organisation contributes to the main goal? Should we carry out a workshop? Should we talk to them? We got the answer in the perfect timing...

We all matter

I got very angry when one of my colleagues said hello to us in the morning with following words: "Oh, hi ladies, there you are playing ... again!"

**Laura Aguirre
Castañeda**

National Sponsorship Coordinator
SOS Children's Villages Peru, Lima

“I joined SOS Children's Villages 17 years ago and instantly, I fell in love with the job as it involved two topics I am very interested in: childhood and foreign languages. In 2008, I became the sponsorship coordinator. Ask me what I like about my job and I will say: it is the opportunity to do more than I am supposed to, and learn from it. I enjoy taking part in programme activities and interacting with children, families, and colleagues. I was born to a family of four and still after 62 years of my parents' marriage, we their children and grandchildren remain witnesses to their still inspiring love story. I enjoyed a very happy and noisy childhood and each time I meet with my siblings, love >

I did not respond immediately, as I did not want to be offensive and because I was very busy arranging the visit of a Norwegian sponsor. She was not going to be able to travel to Chiclayo (800 km away from Lima), so she asked us to bring her sponsored child, Lucrecia, and her SOS mother to Lima – all costs covered by her – and to arrange the meeting at the national office. It would not be a big deal, because it was summer time and because her sponsored child was already 18 years old and had completely agreed to the arrangements.

A loving home for every child

The sponsor came first and waited with me for the girl at the reception. Some minutes later, the young lady and her mother arrived. The sponsor was so excited to see the girl she had been supporting for so many years, that she got very emotional. Sponsor and sponsored child embraced each other lovingly, and this very strong hug was only interrupted

by the words of the generous lady: “You know, I was supposed to give this present to you later, at the restaurant while having lunch, but I cannot wait until then, please, open it.” She gave the girl a big fat beautifully wrapped book. I was so focused in this scene, that I did not notice that the colleague who had been teasing us in the morning showed up and had the opportunity to see the whole scene. He was so touched that he began to tell others about it ... in one minute half of the office was on the ground floor...

Lucrecia, in the meantime, had already unwrapped the gift, and looking at her expression when finding out what it was, you could say it was something special ... Indeed, it was. The sponsor had made a book out of all the letters, reports, pictures, and pieces of information she had been receiving from Lucrecia and from us for fifteen years! The young lady was astonished and kept saying: “Mom, this is me, this is my whole life! This is my biography!” By looking at that

book she was recalling the first day when she joined her SOS family, her first birthday party, her first pair of pink shoes, the school, her friends, but above all, her life in a caring family environment.

It's all about you!

All of a sudden we, the national office co-workers, saw also our work translated into that beautiful book. Many years of hard work, of commitment and passion were there. Standing there, silent, as if touched by an epiphany, I saw we were forming a powerful triangle: on one corner the SOS mother, on the second one the sponsor, and on the third one we, the co-workers. Lucrecia stood in the middle not believing her eyes: “Mom, it's all about me!”

is always in the air! I am a single mom of a 21-year-old boy. With his recovery from leukemia, life has a different meaning to me. Indeed, I have been blessed with a strong, loving and supporting family and with true friends. Society in Peru: More than in the power of words, I firmly believe in the power of acts, in the power of a good example and of its multiplying effect. As we work with heart and mind for a good cause, so also will our children. As there are challenges of all sorts so equally are opportunities for diverse kinds of good.

I enjoy spending time with my family and friends, riding my bike and nevertheless, I love driving my car as well and preferably, on weekends, when the traffic is not so tragic in Lima. Travelling and meeting and interacting with people are things I so much like. I welcome and enjoy opportunities to dance, sing, cook, eat, read, etc. Ask me about my favorite scenario, and I would say: it is by the sea; then lucky enough, I was born and also live in a coastal city!



Witnessing a great change

Teenage pregnancy in SOS Children's Villages

Dear reader, consider these questions as a lens through which you can see the following story by **Karin Demuth**.

Q What does it take to create a safe and caring family environment for new-born babies of girls in SOS Children's Villages' care?

Q What indescribable feeling can it be, being witness to that timely moment, when out of a seemingly sad circumstance, a positive change for all occurs?

Q What do we learn about the importance of empathy in circumstances of vulnerability?

Teenage pregnancy is a sensitive issue within SOS Children's Villages. Whereas in the past, pregnant girls automatically had to move to another housing option, for example to a youth programme or to relatives, this practice has recently been re-considered. I was sent to Bolivia to work on a case study of a girl who became pregnant at the age of 17 and where another solution was found: The girl could stay in her SOS family. The reason for this new approach was due to a case where a girl in an SOS Children's Village in Bolivia hid her pregnancy out of fear and gave birth alone in her bedroom.

Karin Demuth

Communications Advisor Care & Protection Support International Office
Innsbruck, Austria

“Professionally, I enjoy a background in journalism. In this field, I worked in the print and radio area, even to the extent of working for a few months for my own magazine. I also taught German to persons applying for asylum in Tyrol, Austria. I have been working for SOS Children's Villages for more than 22 years. Although I changed department/function/competence centre several times, I have always been involved in the area of communications. At present, I am responsible for communications in the Programme & Strategy Competence Centre in the International Office, currently with a strong focus on the 2030 strategy project. >

This was a wake-up call for the whole SOS Children's Village.

After extensive discussions and a group therapy session, the SOS Children's Village management team, together with the staff, agreed on more flexibility in regard to teenage pregnancy: Whenever a girl becomes pregnant, her situation must not be judged, but the pregnant girl must be given help in order to deal with the situation. Moreover, the individual situation of every girl has to be assessed and the best solution needs to be found.

A joint decision

When the girl whose story I documented in the case study discovered her pregnancy, she wanted to live with her boyfriend. But she struggled with a range of troubles with him and his family. The solution to go back to the SOS family was a joint decision, taken by the girl, her SOS mother, the SOS family, and village management. It helped to consol-

idate her life, to continue with her training process and education for independent living in the future. This solution meant emotional stability for her and at the same time strengthened family life as her daughter was welcomed as a new family member and the whole family contributed to caring for the baby. Although this meant a change for the family, everybody adapted easily while they were supported by the village staff. This new approach is also seen as a step towards breaking the cycle of child abuse and abandonment as pregnant girls in the past, when forced to leave their SOS family, were at high risk to live in a marginalized environment with high risk of child rights violations.

Creating empathy among SOS mothers

As an accompanying measure, new spaces to discuss cases of teenage pregnancy were launched, creating empathy among other SOS mothers. In the past, there had been talk that

having a pregnant girl in an SOS family might set a bad example and increase the risk of other girls following this example. However, having a baby in an SOS family is a chance for other children to get a realistic picture of what it means to have a child, with all the responsibilities it brings for the present and the future. Besides, giving pregnant girls the chance to stay in their SOS family supports the nature of a family environment and strengthens relations. The girls see that the SOS family is there for them, even in situations of crisis. Young mothers have to take the responsibility, but SOS Children's Villages is there to help them take on this responsibility.

Awareness raising enforced by village management

Furthermore, the village management started to enforce awareness raising on challenges with teenagers and teenage pregnancies and to provide more information, lectures, workshops, etc. on sexuality topics

to young people as a measure to prevent teenage pregnancy.

This approach is a great step into the right direction: An individual solution was found for the girl. In this case it meant that the girl could stay with her SOS family until she is able to live independently. In other cases the best solution might be another one. What counts is that the best interest of the girl and the [her] baby are considered and that individual solutions are found.

I had the chance to witness the change the village went through and how they developed this new approach. I was impressed by the openness, the commitment and effort they showed to find a solution that really is in the best interest of the young girl. This is how it should be if we take our vision, mission and values seriously.

I am married. My husband comes from Berlin, Germany and happily enough, he adjusted well to little Innsbruck and the alpine environment. I have a sister and she lives just a 20 minutes' walk away from my home. I am glad that both my parents are still alive and as they now advance in age and their strength weakens, roles begin to change: Now they need the support they used to give me when I was young. I try my best to be there for them. Just recently, I read that Europe has accommodated fewer refugees in 3 years than Lebanon, Jordan and Turkey in ONE DAY! As a human being in society, this topic – people who have to leave their country for whatever reasons – concerns me a lot. Consequently, I

am involved in helping refugees to find family members with whom they have lost contact during or after their escape. Moreover, I recently started to work as a volunteer for the Red Cross.

In my leisure time, I love to explore the world: by travelling, in the best case, or by reading books from all parts of the world. These enrich me with yet another perspective, and help me feel part of something big. I also love practicing Yoga, at least a few minutes every morning and more intensely with my weekly Yoga class which I have attended for more than 12 years.

”



Through hardships to the stars

Per aspera ad astra

Dear reader, consider these questions as a lens through which you can see the following story by **Andriy Chuprikov**.

Q Are you always aware how you contribute to the healthy development of a child or a young adult?

Q How can we appreciate the contribution of the whole SOS Children's Villages system to the development of the individual child?

Today, SOS Children's Villages Ukraine is a well-known, respected national organisation in the child rights protection area. It is an equal reliable partner for the Ukrainian government in projects related to childcare. The organisation receives governmental support, including financial support for the SOS families' budget. SOS families are a de-jure and de-facto family-type form of alternative care for children without parents. SOS Children's Villages Ukraine is fully involved in the national legislation and changes in procedure in order to protect children's rights better. Due to changes in its care model, SOS Children's Villages Ukraine is entitled and has power to advocate for children's rights and participate in the country's de-institutionalisation campaigns that reform the childcare system. Its



Andriy Chuprikov

National Director of SOS Children's Villages Ukraine, Kyiv

“

I joined SOS Children's Villages seven years ago. Prior to that, I worked for many years with diverse international institutions and organisations like the World Bank group, European Commission-projects and a leading private American NGO, all in the Ukraine. The areas of my work were business and management consulting, small and medium-sized enterprise development, marketing and investments as well as business training and

programmes correspond to the community needs and can support more and more children in need every year.

But it was not like this some years ago...

This story is about changes which SOS Children's Villages Ukraine had to implement in order to ensure a future for the organisation's programmes and for children's development in the future. Moreover, this story is about dreams for the future, and it is a story of reaching stars through thorns...

Everything began in 2010 just after the official inauguration of the first SOS Children's Village in Ukraine in Brovary town not far from the Ukrainian capital.

The Ukrainian child protection legislation and child protection system changed dramatically and quickly during 2008-2010. As a result of these changes, SOS Children's Villages was a part of a national de-institutionalization process being a private child education institution as a legal entity. This meant that the admission of new children to the SOS Children's Village was impossible, governmental subsidies were impossible, support from

society was impossible too. Basically it meant: No future for the SOS Children's Villages in the country while the number of abandoned children was increasing in the Ukraine.

The young organisation faced the challenge of how to include the SOS care model in the list of the national family-type care models. It was a disaster for the whole SOS Children's Villages Ukraine team who had invested a lot of resources and much time in the construction and opening of a new SOS Children's Village in Brovary town. At that time, forty children were living in 9 SOS families and 4 empty newly constructed and fully equipped houses were waiting for more families and more children. The team was confronted with the dilemma to either change recognition of the SOS Children's Village model or the impossible, to change the Ukrainian legislation.

New approach developed by SOS Children's Villages International

Luckily at that time SOS Children's Villages International developed a new approach described in the SOS Children's Village Programme Policy

(CVPP). This new approach allowed for responding better to the community's needs, children's needs and local legislation through innovations and partnership. And it was very important that the child was in the centre while all SOS interventions also had goals to respond to a child's needs. The CVPP was like a magic wand, which helped to overcome the difficult situation! And the light in the end of tunnel appeared!

Mr Andriy Chuprikov, National Director of the SOS Children's Village Ukraine, formed a team of like-minded people who wanted changes for a better future for children and the organisation. Mr Chuprikov was a leader of the team and a main locomotive for change.

Finding out existing needs in the community

Before any action was taken and even before the strategy development started, the team conducted a feasibility study in Kiev region and in Brovary town. The main goal of the study was to find existing community needs in the child protection area, to find the social gaps and to identify the role of SOS Children's Villages Ukraine in the coun-

try's social system. In order to have an external view, the feasibility study was done by external experts from a partner NGO. One of the study terms was to involve as many stakeholders as possible, including SOS mothers, children in our care, local and regional authorities, national experts and possible partners. In the implementation phase, it helped that the stakeholders had feelings of ownership for the changes and they supported the new SOS Ukraine strategy.

Based on the feasibility study results, SOS Children's Villages Ukraine developed a strategy for CVPP implementation, created an action plan and changed the organisational chart. The changes were based on several principles:

- best interest of the child
- child in the centre
- best response to community needs
- corresponding to country legislation
- helicopter- and out-of-box-view
- thinking about ideal dream
- stakeholder involvement

Speaking with one voice

coaching. These functions arise directly from my professional background in law, international economy and management with specialization in the International development field.

I am married and we have two vibrant, promising children with seventeen years lying between the first (a boy) and the last (a daughter). Though my family and I live in the out-

skirts of Kiev, the capital city of Ukraine, I remember being born in the cold Siberian city called Tomsk. There I spent the first two months of my life and since then never returned to it again. Travelling wide at a young age with my parents through the former USSR and having lived in the Far East, Siberia, Kazakhstan and Caucasia, we finally settled down in the Ukraine as I turned 8 years old.

The roles between team members were clearly defined. Also several messages for the public and for all stakeholders were created. All team members agreed on the same messages and to speak with one voice about the changes. In all steps and phases of change, information and description about the changes were disseminated to all stakeholders.

As a result of the changes, the SOS Children's Villages model was recognized and SOS families became foster families living in the SOS Children's Village, receiving support from SOS Children's Villages Ukraine. Three-party agreements between foster mothers (former SOS mothers), local government and SOS Children's Villages Ukraine were concluded. Roles, rights and responsibilities were clearly defined in the agreements. Recognition of changes in the model allowed families to receive governmental subsidies for the family budget, allowed for a smooth admission process for children and put a stop to international adoption of children from SOS families.

In addition, new services like short-term foster care, educational programmes with local schools and kindergarten were introduced. In

several foster families, couples with their own children were hired. Work with birth families and relatives of SOS children was increased. In the house of the former SOS Children's Village Director, a community social center and youth center were organised, offering new necessary services for the local community and for the children of SOS Children's Villages.

Due to changes in the organisational chart and the combination of specialists like psychologists and pedagogues in one family support department, the cost of the programme decreased due to synergy effect.

Advocacy work on a national level

SOS Ukraine also increased its work to support families of origin in order to prevent children's abandonment. Together with UNICEF and other international NGOs, SOS Children's Villages Ukraine developed a National Strategy for Prevention of Children's Abandonment which was adopted by the Ukrainian government and launched as a special decree.

The successful changes in SOS Children's Village Brovary and the implementation of the SOS Children's Village Programme Policy in Kiev and

Kiev region opened a door to serious advocacy work from SOS Children's Villages Ukraine on a national level. The successful CVPP implementation in the Kiev region also helped in opening the second SOS Children's Village Programme in Lugansk region with new innovations. SOS Children's Villages Ukraine established an integrated SOS Children's Village in the community and piloted a project of children's re-integration from institutional care to biological families. The Ukrainian government recently used the experience of SOS Children's Villages Ukraine in the reintegration of children for national recommendations, national methodology and standards.

Responding to new challenges in the country, SOS Children's Villages Ukraine started a new project with internally displaced people in Kiev and Lugansk regions after a conflict flamed up in Eastern Ukraine.

Today, 89 children live in SOS Children's Village Brovary in 14 foster families. In addition, 26 children are supported in 10 foster families in Lugansk Children's Village Programme. SOS Ukraine supports 1150 children in their families of origin through SOS Family Strengthening Programmes. This year

SOS Children's Villages Ukraine with support from UNICEF is implementing a special project for internally displaced people in Eastern Ukraine. The project covers up to 2000 children with psychological, social, pedagogical and material support.

But SOS Children's Villages Ukraine has dreams for its future development (see details p. 126):

- 3rd location - overcome problems of Roma children and create kind of "hub and methodical center" for cross-country cooperation, experience sharing of work with Roma people
- Play main role in child rights protection advocacy campaigns on national level with UNICEF.
- Become self-sustainable member association

Maybe today some of these dreams look unrealistic, but SOS Children's Villages Ukraine believes that a leader and a team of like-minded and committed people can reach stars and change the world, especially in a country where thousands of children are in need of living in a loving home! According to a saying from Roman Antiquity: "Per aspera ad astra"!

My life in society is a life for advocacy. To that effect, I participate in diverse civil societies like: the Public Council of the Children's Ombudsmen Office; Ukrainian Parliamentary group advocating for the children's rights; Public Council within the National Ministry of Social Affairs; League of Professional Women in Ukraine as a volunteer consultant.

In my leisure time, I love fishing, sitting at a calm place observing nature and the firmament, working in my garden and on my bike, exploring the surroundings. I love going swimming with my friends and I also love reading, with John Grisham as favourite.

”

Respect

How can we best respect the individual child?

The stories in this chapter highlight the importance of finding “tailored” answers to the individual child’s needs as defined for example in the Children’s Village Programme Policy (2009, p.6):

“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 (...)

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 (...)

SOS Children’s Villages provides “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 (...) We support them to strengthen their capacity to make appropriate responses to the situation of individual children.” (p. 9)





Living the vision

Impact the lives of young people through love and respect

Dear reader, consider these questions as a lens through which you can see the following story by **Aster Asfaw**.

Q How can we make sure to maintain a respectful eye on each individual child - respect for the child above fulfilling material needs?

Q How can we best prepare our SOS mothers and parents to be able to focus on the individual child's needs?

Children and adolescents are fantastic and fascinating to work with. Watching them interact with their environment and each other is one of the great benefits of working for an organisation like SOS Children's Villages. Unfortunately, there are a few young adults who misbehave and disrupt others. Sometimes, these are major disruptions and sometimes minor but, in either case, they can be extremely frustrating. Finding yourself in a situation with a young person who is misbehaving can be extremely unpleasant and sometimes a little intimidating, but with love and respect you can navigate these disruptions, or in some cases, avoid them altogether.

Aster Asfaw

SOS Children's Villages International,
Office Eastern and Southern Africa,
Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

“I am from Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. I am the CVI Rep (Children's Village Representative) for Ghana, Nigeria, Lesotho, Swaziland and Namibia. I have a background in organisational leadership, sociology and accounting. For a good six years, I was the national director for SOS Children's Villages Ethiopia as well as a continental strategic planning facilitator and member of the Management Council. Prior to SOS Children's Villages, I worked for various NGOs like: ACORD, Médecins Sans Frontières (Doctors Without Borders).

Aster, in ancient Greek, stands for "STAR"! It is also a privilege I enjoyed as the fifth >

There is this young man, who was rebellious, dissatisfied, angry and rude. Whenever he would come to the national office to request financial support, he argued with people, screamed and sometimes insulted co-workers who deal with young people. I always asked myself why he was acting this way. What was wrong with him? How can I support? Although I was not dealing with young people at that time, I asked my supervisor to give me an opportunity to support the young adults.

One beautiful morning, this young man came to my office. He opened the door abruptly and stood in front of my desk. He said, "I don't know why but I was referred to you." His voice was so loud and thunderous that I didn't pay attention to what he said but just the way he said it shocked me. I replied to him with a clam and soft voice, "Good morning, please sit down." He looked at me with tension and shouted I need money, I didn't eat for the last two

days, I slept on the street. I understand I said, Please sit down and we can talk about it. I offered him tea and bread before we started our conversation. I saw his face becoming bright after he finished eating the bread and drinking the tea. Then I sat next to him and asked him a little bit of details about himself. He shared some of his childhood memories which were not so pleasant. Although he was relaxed to talk to me, he didn't trust me fully so he asked me to give him money and wanted to leave. I politely explained to him that I want to help him to change his current situation. However, I didn't force him to talk about it but gave him some money that would help him with food and accommodation for two days and asked him to come back after two days. I also told him that these two days are for him to think about his future. He left my office with hope and a shining smile in his face. After continuous support and guidance, he completed vocational training, and has been

recruited in a private company. He is now leading his own family and has become a contributing citizen.

My colleagues told me that day was the first time he left the office without insulting or shouting at people. They asked me what I did. I told them that I only gave him love and respect. I listened to him and showed interest to his story. I didn't judge him but rather tried to understand him. I attended to his immediate need. It is difficult to talk to people while they are hungry. I tried to spread out hope to a boy who thought that he had lost it. I believed in him so that he started to believe in himself. I earned his respect because I respected him. I was just living our vision: "Every child belongs to a family and grows with love, respect and security." Let me ask one question. Is our organisation's vision alive and active, or is it something that is only talked about? I believe that the power of vision is at its best when it is practised and lived day in

day out by all people in the organisation. The story I just shared with you shows how I live the vision in a small way.

child in a family with five sisters and four brothers. I have been married for fifteen years now. Though having no children of mine, I find blessings in the many children I am blessed to work with. Moreover, I enjoy the great blessing that my parents are alive and doing pretty well. Just last year, they celebrated their 50th year of married life. What a great day indeed.

Bringing in the best I can for individual, community and general development in society is a passion I wholeheartedly subscribe to. I am a Rotarian and I participate in various projects like providing clean water to the community, a polio eradication

campaign, mentoring and coaching. I am a member of a forum where women come together to learn from each other, networking and empowering women to higher leadership role. In my leisure time I like to watch movies with my husband, read books and sometimes hang out with friends and family. I also like to play online games like cards and Sudoku. Besides, I love to explore new places, attend religious ceremonies in churches, etc. Though not often, I cook delicious food during weekends. My husband loves the lasagna I make. Once every two weeks I treat myself as a Queen by treating myself to spa, steam bath, body massage, manicure, etc.



Back to our origin

The importance of putting the child first

Dear reader, consider these questions as a lens through which you can see the following story by **Yara Maria Lanfredi de Andrade**.

Q How can we strengthen our co-workers to make sure the child is always first?

Q What kind of spirited excitement does it unleash in you when energies from the roots of our organisation still spark flames of bonding, affection and commitment in the present?

Q How can we better realise the power of focussing on our core values?

It was in 2009 that I first partook in a brand awareness workshop given by our continental brand advisor. This workshop started with the background of our organisation and how it was established. One of the tools used was a historical video presentation. That was when I first had the opportunity to watch a video of Hermann Gmeiner talking. I felt a connection, a bond to his history and to his work.

After this brand orientation the national office of Brazil decided to form a group to do this kind of brand orientation seminars throughout our country. I decided to take part in this group. First, I translated the presentation into Portuguese, because it was in Spanish, and employed my motivation and determination

Yara Maria Lanfredi de Andrade

Executive Assistant to the National Director of SOS Children's Villages Brazil, Sao Paulo

“Professional life: After 20 years working with international commerce, I followed my husband in an expatriated opportunity to Venezuela. It was during my 3 year stay there that I came into close contact with the NGO world. I fell in love with helping children, vulnerable children, by assisting in an institutional orphanage. On return to Brazil, I had no choice but to work in the third sector. Then I began to work for SOS Children's Villages Brazil, at the Sponsorship Department where I worked for two years. Later on, I coordinat- ➤

to visit as many of our villages as possible. It was really great to be in the villages and feel the inspiring atmosphere.

Once at a seminar a co-worker said, “This is the first time a person from the national association comes to the programme just to motivate us, to tell how important our work is and how each one of us counts. Normally NA co-workers come to give us new guidelines, policies, rules or to tell us how we should work.”

This testimony impacted me a lot, and made me more determined to continue the task of strengthening our identity.

After that came the brand book and the key messages that were also translated and became our starting point for each and every brand orientation to new co-workers.

As time passed by and the financial crises came, it was even more crucial to keep in mind our mission and our vision. It became important that every co-worker feels the pride as well as the responsibility of working in an organisation that is a social movement. The national brand team little by little stepped away and I remained alone in this journey.

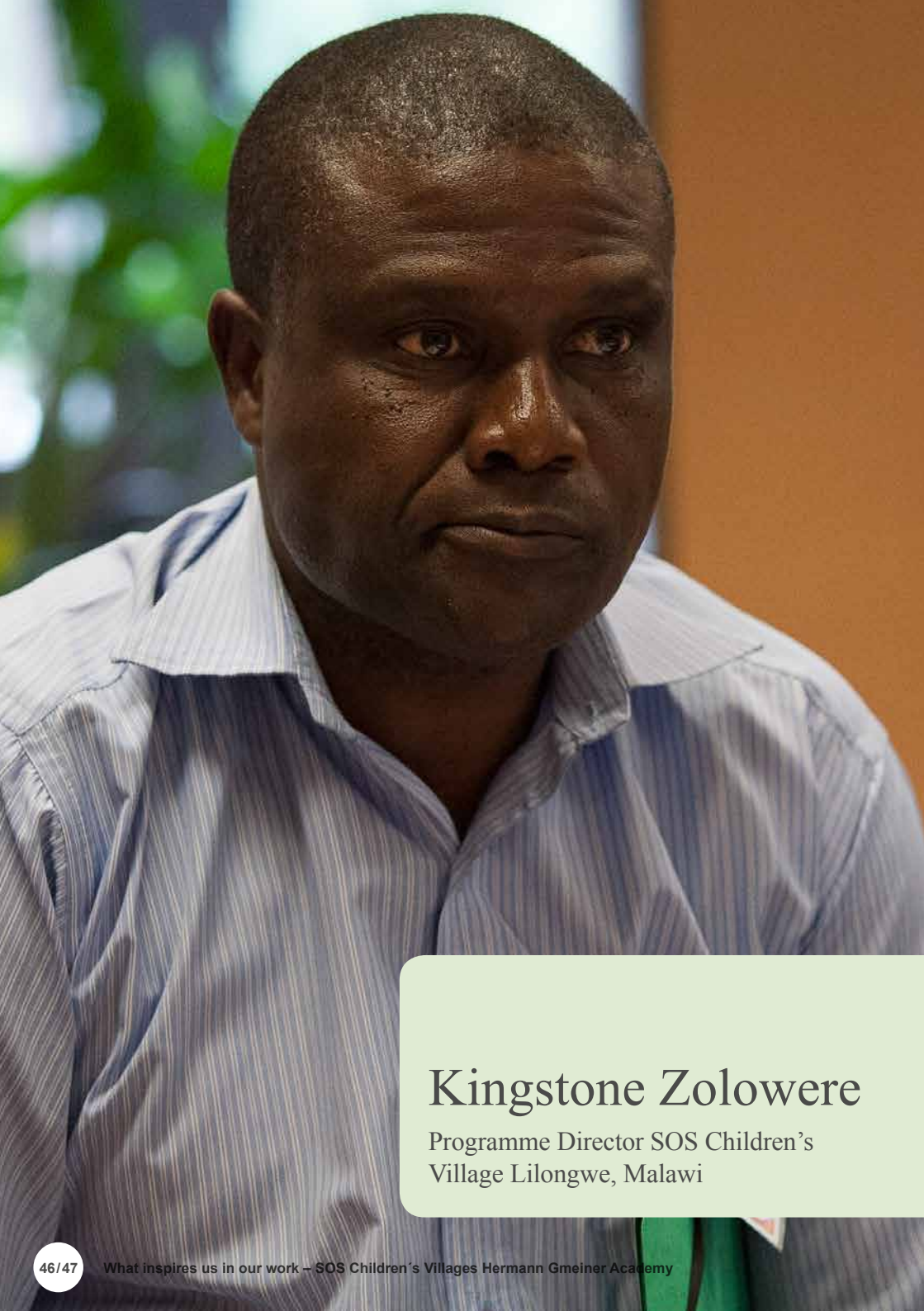
Working as executive assistant to the national director, responsible also for the strategic planning and information, working at a desk and away from the children, I feel the need to visit, whenever possible, the programmes and see the results of our work.

ed the national strategic planning, and am also a member of the national team for the SOS brand in Brazil. Today I am responsible for information and reports sent to the International Office in Innsbruck, Austria.

Family: I have been married for 35 years. My family is my balance and my safe harbor. I am blessed with two children who now live far away in other cities; happy enough, there is the telephone. I have two friends who have become family to me. After so many years at SOS Children’s Villages Brazil, it is exciting seeing and experiencing how many co-workers go from colleagues to acquaintances, to friends and now to my very own SOS family. **Society:** I believe strongly in the credo that to hope for change in others, one must first be

him or herself the change. By being examples of ethics and transparency, we can spread positive attitudes. I am taught to respect all political opinions; still I firmly stand against bribes, lies, forgery, pirating, and exploitation of children and of illegal immigrants. In my personal time I assist other NGOs.

I love it spending leisure time with the people I love. I love to travel, preferably with my husband, visiting new places, having new experiences and seeing new cultures. Reading and going to the movies are hobbies I like very well. I am also an animal lover. I find their unconditional affection and attachment very touching. Handle a pet with respect and protection and experience such rich rewarding moments like a puppy tail-wag! ”



See "The Harvest" on page 12



Now or never

A story of courage to rescue a child from dangerous gang members

Dear reader, consider these questions as a lens through which you can see the following story by **Kingstone Zolowere**.

Q How can we enable positive change by standing by the individual child in challenging moments of their life?

Q How does it feel to go beyond the given scope of tasks in your function?

I told myself, "It is now or never, I have to rescue this boy from these gang members." Now or never, I took the second step towards the gang. It was a matter of life or death, I had to rescue this boy.

This is my personal story of courage to save an SOS young person from the hands of gang members who were terrorising the neighbourhood of one of our SOS Children's Villages in Malawi.

I had just arrived at one of the SOS Children's Villages. Stain¹, an SOS young person had just come back

¹ Original name has been changed to maintain confidentiality

Kingstone Zolowere

Programme Director SOS Children's Village Lilongwe, Malawi

“I am a qualified secondary school teacher with academic degree in education. Prior to SOS Children's Villages, I taught at various secondary schools in my country from 1988 to 2003. This is when I developed a strong passion for SOS work. I resigned from government service and joined SOS as Village Director for Mzuzu SOS Children's Village. Mzuzu is about 400 kilometres north of the city of Lilongwe. In 2012, I obtained a Master of Science Degree in Strategic Management at the University of Derby (UK). In 2014 I was promoted to the position of Programme Director. Moving >

from his home village where he had been sent because his behaviour was unbearable and was putting the lives of the other SOS children and young people at risk. Stain joined the notorious gang in the neighbourhood and vowed to attack his SOS mother wherever they met in town. Many children who went outside the village came back crying, saying Stain beat them up and vowed to attack his SOS mother once they meet. Other co-workers also feared for their lives. The matter was reported to police and Stain's photographs were posted on the "wanted" criminal list – a total shame to SOS work. Stain grew up in the SOS Children's Village for the past 20 years. I told myself that I have to do something. The time is now or never. I have to meet this boy and resolve this, not to hand him over to police. We promised Stain a new home in the SOS Children's Village, not a police cell. I thought of how to meet him. But every effort to invite Stain to the village proved futile.

Then one day, one of the young people met Stain and alerted me. I asked if Stain would accept to talk to me on that boy's mobile phone. I asked Stain where he thought it was convenient for him to meet me. Being suspicious that I would bring policemen, Stain proposed that we meet behind an old building some 50 metres from the main road at 17:30 hours. It was a dark and dangerous place. But I told myself, it is now or never. I parked my vehicle along the roadside. I told myself it is now or never, I must rescue Stain from this gang. Now or never, I struggled to lift my foot for the next step towards these gang members in the dark. When I reached them, Stain was not there. They asked me "what do you want here?" "I want Stain," I answered. "Who told you Stain lives here?" I answered that I had just talked to Stain and he is the one who lead me to that place. One of them who was a giant and appeared to be wearing a mask asked, "Why are you looking for Stain? I thought you removed him from the SOS

Children's Village?" I looked at him and he looked away. "Yes, Stain was removed from the SOS Children's Village but I have not removed him from my heart." I answered. He dialled on his mobile phone. Then I heard him saying, "Stain, come here and meet your dad." I then realised that they had hidden Stain suspicious that I would come with policemen. I once again told myself, 20 years ago when Stain was a baby, one week old, we promised him a loving home in the SOS Children's Village, not a police cell.

When Stain arrived I asked the gang members if they could allow me to take Stain aside. They accepted. We moved to the roadside where I had parked my car. I said to Stain, "You do not belong here. You have to get out of this gang." Stain looked at me and tears flowed from our eyes. I then asked him "What can I do for you?" He said he wanted to go for a driving course. I told him that I will arrange for that. Towards the end of that week Stain left the gang to

pursue his driving course. I deliberately booked him at a training school 300 kilometres away from our city in order to keep him away from these gang members. Today we are proud that Stain is a driver and able to earn a happy living!

back to Lilongwe, I lead the SOS Children's Village programme consisting of seven units: kindergarten, primary & secondary school, medical centre, family-based care, family strengthening and vocational training centre. I am also trained in child protection as a national focal person for the member association.

I am married and my wife is a teacher by profession. We are blessed with two daughters and a boy. While our first daughter, a nurse by profession is married, our second daughter is a qualified teacher. Our son is currently a medical student still in university. Respect for diversity is a value we so much cherish and respect in our family doings. I am a member of

the SOS ESAF (Eastern and Southern Africa) regional child protection network, representing my country in that forum for experience sharing on child rights promotion. At our community church, I enjoy my role as leader of the communications department. I like watching soccer, African movies, especially Nigerian, reading newspapers to follow up political developments in and around the world. I take a walk around the neighbourhood with my wife. All the children are out of home either at college or at work. So it is like another honeymoon for us. This is life at 50!

”



Don't let the story end

Protecting childhood – The biggest challenge of humanity and an experienced answer within SOS Children's Villages

Dear reader, consider these questions as a lens through which you can see the following story by **Rodica Marinoiu**.

Q How does it feel when you reach the feeling of "flow" because you realize the meaning of your actions?

Q What can we learn about the power of strengthening local communities?

My story starts back in 2001, when in my country, in Romania, many children were living on the streets in Bucharest. Many children were abandoned in hospitals and many abused in their own families in a time when people used to say "beating is from heaven".

That is when I started to build up a profession, and more than that a mission: to find a way to support as many children as possible. So I used to work in a public social service in the emergency interventions department.

As a social worker I was dealing with children in the streets, taking them from there by force with the police services to a placement centre; then we were supposed to find their families and their homes in order to send them back, most often in other cities in my country. Often we received recommendation for establishing legal protection measures, because their families were too poor or not interested in their children's life. Often these children did not know who they were, or they used to lie about it, so they had no names, only nicknames, thus they remained



Rodica Marinoiu

Coordinator, SOS Counselling and Support for Children and Parents Bacau Centre, SOS Children's Villages Romania

I started my social work career in Bucharest in the most ill-famed district. After six years of struggle in a child protection superfluous system, I had the opportunity to join SOS Children's Villages Romania back in 2008 where I started as a social worker in the family strengthening programme and became coordinator after a short time. With the support of my team and colleagues from the national office we further developed this project (see above) to a counselling centre. Currently we support 300 children & their families. Within

SOS Children's Villages I had the big opportunity to develop myself e.g. by experiencing different approaches by co-developing a

- Communitary system approach (Community Based Services – UNICEF Romania project)
- Entrepreneurial approach (microgrants for families)
- Humanistic approach (parental education programme – Intern. Child Dev. Programme)

In my family we are two brothers and two sisters. My parents used to say that for our

in these placement centres for years, were I was working.

Our interventions consisted in identifying their roots, their families, their identities, referring their cases to their local authorities, or to court in order to establish an identity for them.

The results of these interventions were not satisfactory. Even if we sent them back home, or in placement centres from their own communities, these children used to reappear in Bucharest begging on the streets, in trams, prostituting themselves, living underground.

One day I met two siblings, a boy and a girl, from a rural community in Bacau county. They were taken from the streets by police. It was the third time to receive them again in the placement centre where I was working. Then I talked with them and I asked them, "Why do you not want to live with your parents and why do you run to Bucharest all the time?" They answered, "We don't feel like we belong there anymore because since we were little children we were taken away from home and transferred from one placement centre to another."

er." Now when they are going home, their parents ask them to participate in the daily work in their household, to take care of animals, things that they are not used to do anymore and they do not like anymore. That is when I understood that taking children from their families is not a good thing to do, because it is taking away the chance of the child to integrate in his/her community. After all nobody would support these children in adulthood: never fitting in, not in their communities, nor in the big city, seen as beggars or "the children from the placement centres".

It happened at that time that I had to move in my own town Bacau. There I met one of my colleagues from university. She ran a strengthening programme from SOS Children's Villages Romania for families with children in a rural village. I was very interested in what she was telling me and I became interested to join this project. I quit the position I had and joined my colleague Lavinia Hagiu.

I felt a moment of "flow" when she presented me the project, the values and the principles of SOS Children's

Villages because I felt that this is a new beginning for me. It was the first time when I could work with families of children in their own communities and I had the opportunity to find out why children are leaving from their families and what needs to be done to improve their lives.

It was so encouraging to me to have simple tools, like the frame of the family strengthening programme project, that I was to develop with her support. A simple thing happened and I knew: "This is the job I want to do!" These are the values I believe in and the vision I can follow: the child in the middle, around him/her the family and around them the community. This was the place for me where I had the opportunity to participate in developing social services according to children's needs, to not let the story of the children in my country end anymore!

Starting from this principle our strengthening family team from Hemeius and the colleagues from the national office built up a strong network for the children from our six rural communities. They now have a coun-

selling centre for children and parents, a place where they can get support, a good advice or good opportunities to overcome crisis situations, to get a job or to develop profitable activities.

All these children now have known stories, so their difficulties can no longer be hidden. Our team works for the best solutions possible together with our local partners. Children now have a place here where their rights are always held to the attention of local authorities: preventing child labour, school dropout, domestic violence and child neglect. Education programmes addressed to parents and teachers, camps or trips for children, a daycare centre, building strong local networks with teachers, doctors, policemen, developing best practice models are answers we developed as a response to the biggest challenge for humankind: to protect childhood!

It is great to love your own work, to feel that things you are doing are part of a bigger movement all the time, that the people that surround you have the same purposes and hold the same principles!

education, they would walk "without shoes". Now, being single mother I am happy to see how my beloved daughter grows up. I learn a lot from her about what the child's right "to participate" or the benefits of really "listening" means. I am a happy mother. I admire my father, because his life story is about poverty that communism brought to farmers. His big family remained with nothing after their land was abusively taken. He and his parents had to work hard to be an educated person. He used to tell us that in winter he walked to school only with socks. School was far so he used to stop and eat an uncooked egg to resist the cold.

I admire my mother who, after remaining without work in Romania, found the power to go abroad and work hard for me and my brothers. Thanks to her courage and determination I have the job I feel I am made for. I am grateful to her.

In my leisure time I like to take long walks, jogging, playing badminton with my daughter. I like to read, travel, discover new places, enjoy the peace of special places like the Danube Delta. After a long day of work I like to watch political analysis programmes on TV.

I am proud to be the winner of the award for best social worker of 2013 year for humanitarian social assistance of National College of Social Workers in Romania.



Never give up

A short story about Tanuka, a girl who was rescued from a dark life

Dear reader, consider these questions as a lens through which you can see the following story by Saiful Islam.

Q What role does patience play in this story?

Q How can we trust in the resilience of young people in our care?

In the morning of 21st January, 1988 a kind-hearted person, Mr. Md. Rajon found a baby girl wrapped in a dirty cloth at the corridor of his residence. The baby was very sick and suffering from scabies. Mr. Rajon admitted the child into a medical clinic for treatment. After one month, the baby was cured through proper treatment and care. Nobody claimed this baby. Finding no other alternative, Mr. Rajon brought the child back to his own house. Since then Mrs. Rajon has been taking care of her. Mr. Rajon died on 18th February 1996 due to a heart attack. Mr. Rajon's own children had been living in the United States of America. After the departure of her husband from the world, Mrs. Rajon decided to live with her biological children in America. Finding no other alternative, she

Saiful Islam

Project Director, SOS Children's Village Dhaka, Bangladesh

“Twenty-two years ago, I joined SOS Children's Villages in Dhaka, Bangladesh. Prior to that, I had four years of professional experience with other NGOs in Dhaka where I worked as training coordinator and community supervisor. The core of my work has been the development of young people at SOS Children's Village Dhaka. In 1998, I assumed further responsibilities such as: guiding the SOS families, organising programmes for children and young people of SOS families and youth facilities, providing necessary

transferred the child named Tanuka to SOS Children's Village Dhaka to take care of her in an SOS family.

Tanuka was moved into an SOS family on 28th June 1998 at the age of 10, following an intense mental stress due to the uncertainty of her living situation. After a few months of integration into her SOS family, she could realize that she had gotten a secure home. Unfortunately, after a couple of months we observed some conflicts in the relationship between the SOS mother and the young girl. In spite of some realistic efforts the relationship between them still did not improve.

Tonuka seemed to be a little bit shy in nature when she was admitted to the SOS family. Most of the time she was found in a depressed condition. Most probably she was frightened of her SOS mother because of her rude behavior. That's why she did not rejoice to live there and would remain with dolorous mind.

Tonuka started her schooling at the SOS Hermann Gmeiner School Dhaka by attending third grade in

1999 immediately after integration into the SOS family. She was an average student but gradually she became slow in learning and deteriorated in study due to lack of attention. She was found to be reluctant in study and naturally she could not concentrate her mind. The growth and development of Tonuka was not normal at all. Even during her adolescent period she was not in a happy atmosphere in her SOS family because of the unexpected relationship with her SOS mother. She was also held back in eighth grade and her peer group was not good in nature. The educators and social worker put a lot of efforts to support her improvement and also sent her to a professional counselor. The village director along with his team gave special attention to her, talked with her school teacher and peer group and found out that she was unable to cope with her SOS mother. The SOS mother could not accept Tanuka from the core of her heart. All her attempts to improve their relationships had been in vain.

Suddenly Tanuka's SOS mother decided to get married and left the

village. A new loving mother was being placed in the family and took up the challenges. She was briefed about all the children including Tonuka. The new mother tried her level best to pay attention to her.

After having a new mother, Tonuka became a little bit more stable and she gradually improved in her studies. Finally she completed the secondary school certificate exam obtaining good results in 2008. This achievement brought utmost happiness to her life as well as to the SOS family. Tanuka got admitted at University Women's Federation College Dhaka in Higher Secondary level and started to attend the class from the village. Within a couple of months after admission Tanuka desired to move into the boarding house outside. We listened to her opinion, considering her age, maturity and some positive signs of development and arranged a student hostel where she started to live.

One day the village director observed that she was entering the village with gloomy face and ill health. He also realized some smell

and therefore he asked the social worker to visit Tanuka's boarding house and to communicate with the class teacher of her college. The social worker found symptoms of indulgence in the use of substances and found out Tanuka attended class irregularly. Her morale had degraded and her behavior pattern had changed dramatically. The circumstances led her to a haphazard life and she withdrew herself from education.

After finding this out, the village director took initiative to save her and brought her back to her family at the SOS Children's Village. Some of the teenage girls spread the news with big sound and it became talk of the village. Children and mothers engaged themselves to make different appetizing of the story in every corner of the village. Children were teasing the other children and mother of Tanuka's family house. So the family members had to endure a lot of suffering due to people's comments. Gradually her SOS brothers and sisters developed a very negative attitude towards their elder sister. Even her

guidance to run the vocational training center for ultra-poor young people, helping them in their integration efforts. Augmenting all these is the active role I play as a member of the child protection team of SOS Children's Village Dhaka and as a member of the national management team of SOS Children's Villages Bangladesh for the development of programmes.

My long journey with SOS Children's Villages has been possible because of the extraordinary support of my biological family and the great devotion of my wife. We are blessed with two enterprising daughters. My family and I live on the premises of SOS Children's Village Dhaka. In our everyday life, we enjoy lots of interaction with the village children, mothers and co-workers. We are proud of being part of this SOS family. >

SOS mother who had a specially soft heart with her, stood against her due to peculiar type of disorganised behavior and improper conduct. The mother realized that the undesirable behavior pattern, which was the result of using substances ultimately, would have far reaching bad impact on other younger members of the family. Most of the members of the village community including childcare co-workers, children and management told the village director he did wrong to bring her back in the village. The SOS mother asked the village director, pressured by the children and community people, to send Tanuka outside again.

Then at least the village, house and the village community would be saved from her harmful activities. She was telling lies, smoking, talking with bad associates on the mobile till midnight, using gestures and showing aggressiveness. Sometimes she had a polite attitude and talked in such a nice way that it was very difficult to tell if she was addicted or not. Sometimes she in a mental depression and in anxiety also. She would make plans and pretend to go

outside for some reasons but would use substances instead. During that time younger boys and girls of that house showed dishonor due to her malpractice.

In this stage the village director handled the case professionally and took different initiatives to make people realize that the problem of this girl was created by this society. He adopted various approaches and arranged different discussion sessions with children, mothers and co-workers to create a positive environment and advised people to behave well with Tanuka. He also convinced the house mother, her brothers and sisters and the village community that a separation of this young girl from the village is not the appropriate way to bring her in right path.

The village director, social worker and respective mother sat with Tanuka in a positive manner and advised her to try earnestly to return back into normal life, give up all bad habits and restart her studies, get admitted again in 1st year at the same college and to pay full attention to her studies. Tanuka assured that

from now on she will never involve herself in any undesirable activities. As per the decision, she re-enrolled in the University Women's Federation College Dhaka in 1st year in higher secondary level in July 2009. But, the girl was found again absent in her class and also found in disorganised situation during a visit of the social worker which was really unfortunate. The village director sent the girl to the medical specialist of the Center for Relieving from Drug Addiction run by the government to seeking expert advice. Since then, the girl was under treatment of the physicians of the stated hospital for a couple of months. Prescribing medicine and medical tests, the physician advised us the as follows:

- keep the girl in our care in the village during her treatment
- provide necessary counseling as needed
- cut off her contact with bad companions
- ensure taking medicines in time as prescribed, etc.

We followed the doctor's instructions accordingly. But the problem is Ta-

nuka showed non-cooperation and sometimes she was found furious to go out. In this stage the house mother was requested to give deep attention, show love and respect, create opportunities to involve her in activities together with brothers and sisters. Fortunately, the mother followed the advice and did proper justice to the girl. Gradually she become cool, stable and returned to right track.

In the meantime, we started to work with the woman who handed over the girl to the SOS family. Mrs. Rajon is a very old woman who has a soft spot for the girl. We fought a couple of years to bring her back to normal life. Tanuka took admission in a renowned computer learning Centre and completed Programming C++ in 2013. Now she lives in a rented house with some of her girlfriends in Dhaka. A nightmare is over now and the girl is leading a normal life.

In my leisure, I love to read story books, novels, newspapers, journals related to social development issues. I have highly benefited from yoga practices. This and frequent visits to different places in the country in the company of the youngsters and my family members are sources of pleasure to me. Every month I wait to see the beauty of the full moon from the roof of my residence. The

beauty of sky attracts me and I spend my time enjoying the natural beauty, especially in spring.

My passion for the general society is to participate in and foster the raising of social awareness and particularly in cultivating the attitude of generosity and solidarity. awareness and particularly in cultivating the attitude of generosity and solidarity.





When everything seems to have failed ...

Dear reader, consider these questions as a lens through which you can see the following story by **Buyaphi Mahlalela**.

Q How does it feel to be guided by a child's voice?

Q What elegant and courageous steps would you take when the voices of children bring you face to face with challenges beyond your normal day-to-day work responsibilities?

I cannot forget that one Wednesday afternoon when three primary school pupils from the village where I was working came into my office after school and closed the door. These children normally come to my office like any other child in the village, but they usually do not bother to close the door. On this particular day, I could read it from their eyes that something was troubling them. At first they looked at each other trying to make a signal as to who exactly was supposed to start the conversation. As I cleared my voice and asked them "What can I do for you?" Thando¹ surprised me when he said "Anti, we need to talk to you about

¹ Original name has been changed to maintain confidentiality

Buyaphi Mahlalela

Child and Youth Development Coordinator,
SOS Children's Village Nhlngano, Swaziland
and responsible for child protection

“I joined SOS Children's Villages in 1995. Through these years, I have worked in various departments. I assist, support and offer guidance to SOS parents with the aim of reaching the vision of creating a loving home full of respect for the rights of the child. I work with the pedagogical (childcare) staff to plan and support each individual child's development programme. Attending the Harvesting workshop is a great chance to learn from other colleagues from around the world and also share my experiences with them. I come from a family of six girls and I am the third born. All my sisters have children of their own and some of them are now adults. Myself, I am a single adult. I adopted my

something that is troubling us and we need your support.”

The children told me of their friend at school who was not under the care of SOS Children’s Villages, but was suffering because of a certain medical condition. They narrated how he misses school sometimes because of the illness and his parents did not have the means to support him as both of them were not employed. What really touched me about the children’s story was when one of them said. “We know that he is not budgeted for as he is not living with us here at SOS, but he is also a child in need.” The children’s action challenged me to use my heart and not my mind, especially in that given moment.

I remember going to the school of this boy with the social worker. My heart was telling me: “You need to do something and you need to do it now!” My meeting with the teachers and the child was very fruitful as I got to understand the child’s situa-

tion even better and up to this day, I see my children as heroes to have taken the courage to support another child against all odds. Manqoba¹ told me how the sickness started and how his parents have tried to get medical assistant for him, but in vain. What worried him the most was that he felt everyone around him, including his parents, has given up on him getting better. He told me that he was no longer staying with his parents, but has moved in with his grandparents and that he does not know when they will also get tired because now he is fifteen and has been in this condition from the age of four. These words really touched my heart!

I organised a meeting to see Manqoba’s parents. They narrated how they have moved from one government office to another without getting any help. This statement made me think of my networks and

¹ Original name has been changed to maintain confidentiality

how they can help the child. Together with the parents and social worker, we managed to go to a few government ministries where we know there are resources available to assist children like Manqoba, and from that day on, there have been a number of organisations including the government supporting this child. Manqoba will be going for an operation in South Africa before the end of this year and funds will all be covered by the government. Manqoba’s parents are happy to see what has been done to support their child to such an extent that they have taken him back to their home. My children who reported the case are always telling me how better their friend’s situation is now and looking forward to the operation which we all believe will be successful and Manqoba will live a normal life like all other children.

sister’s son who has just completed his first degree at the University of Swaziland and is still looking for a job. The greater joy I am blessed with is spending most of my time with SOS children and mothers – all together, a greater part of my family! Our Swazi society embraces and holds high, the principles of ubuntu – a socio-cultural and ethical value. With ubuntu, we feel being one big family and offer greetings to other persons you meet on the streets is the first sign of recognition of the other as a human being. I love to encourage our children to do the same. It gives me joy to share in the joys and

sorrows of the community I live in. I make sure that I attend weddings and funerals because this is very important in our culture. In my leisure time I like it, taking stock of my daily activities in quiet. This act of self-introspection helps me understand myself and my doings better as well know what others think about me. I enjoy reading books, especially those with happy ends. Reading out short stories to children, observing their concentration at such moments and equally listening to them read and tell short stories, are sources of satisfaction to me. ”



Self-reliant life

How can we prepare young people growing up with SOS Children's Villages for a self-reliant life after leaving care?

Please find below a collection of stories around the question of how we can

best support a self-reliant life for young people after they leave the SOS Children's Villages family and care system. As for example the document: "**Now What: Challenges ahead of you. A guide for young people leaving care**"¹ shows, SOS Children's Villages can already build on knowledge when it comes to this complex issue.

The United Nations recommends that "Agencies and facilities should have a clear policy and carry out agreed procedures relating to the planned and unplanned conclusion of their work with children to ensure appropriate aftercare and/or follow-up. Throughout the period of care, they should systematically aim at preparing the child to assume self-reliance and to integrate fully in the community, notably through the acquisition of social and life skills, which are fostered by participation in the life of the local community."²

These principles have been integrated into SOS Children's Villages programme work.

¹ SOS Dječija sela /SOS Children's Villages Bosnia and Herzegovina (Sarajewo 2011)

² UN Guidelines for the Alternative Care of Children



One promise

Dear reader, consider these questions as a lens through which you can see the following story by **Mohammed Said**.

Q How can we enable a young person in our care to develop a strong belief in him- or herself?

Q How can we enable and strengthen care co-workers to help children and young people in our care see how uniquely special and talented they are?

Q What can we learn about endurance and determination?

Close your eyes and count to ten. Now open them again. Do you still know where you are? Do you still have a sense of who you are? I think I did, up until the vulnerable age of 9 when life as I knew it ceased to exist. When I opened my eyes to find myself immersed in a sensation of complete disorientation; where knowing where I was turned into a challenge, knowing who I am became a puzzle I still have not found the last piece to. Yet, it was that exact same moment that led me on my journey at SOS Children's Villages.

Fate took me, along with my siblings to SOS Children's Village Bethlehem in the holy city in the world. A place that forms a paradox; it is a refuge, a safe haven that creates hope. At the same time it reminds you that

Mohammed Radi Mohammed Said

Programme Director SOS Children's Village in Bethlehem, Palestinian Territories

“ In 1999, I began my professional career at SOS Children's Villages, in Bethlehem My functional responsibilities since then have variedly changed as the years progressively pass by. I was once a watchman, then activities' coordinator, progressing forward to become development leader and later on promoted to village director – my childhood dream! Currently I hold the position of Programme Director at Bethlehem. The story of my family and loved ones is as heart- rending as the high price life circumstances in

without an internal drive to strive for success you will simply fail. I know this is a harsh reality to endure, but it is the reality of the world we live in.

From my personal experience growing up, as a young man, no matter how much the people around you love you and try to guide you in the direction they see right, you just don't listen. I challenged them, till I realized I should be challenging myself; channeling that energy to developing a better version of me. How I eventually went about it was through education. Despite all the obstacles I had to overcome, I learned that education was my key to success.

With the support of the now National Director at SOS Children's Villages Palestine, Mr. Mohammed Shalaldeh, I enrolled at university after having left school for 10 years. So as you can see it took me a while to understand who I wanted to become, which is a contributing member to not only SOS Children's Villages as an organisation but to the community at large in the field

of child and youth development. I began with a Bachelors Degree in Fine Arts which projects my inner soul, once completed, and inspired by the renowned words of Khalil Gibran: "To understand the heart and mind of a person look not at what he has already achieved, but what he aspires to." I made a promise to myself. That promise was fulfilled when I graduated at MA level with a Masters in Institutional Building and Human Resource Development, that helped me to move forward in my career at SOS.

With much pride I can say I am the Programme Director for SOS Children's Village Bethlehem. I do not want to stop there though; through faith and perseverance my ultimate goal is to pursue my education, to attain a PhD in the field of child rights and youth development. Such a degree will contribute to the promotion of awareness and enhance the values of peace, freedom, and diversity in my society and above all influence decision making on a national level in Palestine.

Furthermore, working at SOS Children's Village Bethlehem is a daily reminder that we can take destiny into our own hands by believing in one's abilities no matter what others may think. Dreams and aspirations require vision, hard work and initiative, especially in a society that categorizes based on wealth and family status. That is why I feel the obligation to motivate children and young people in the care of SOS Children's Villages into seeing how uniquely special and talented they are, to realize they can determine their future, as I see in them the person I was, the person I am and the man I want to become.

Palestine demand. As a child, along with my five other siblings, we lost our parents. Yet, it was this immense loss that led to a whole new chapter opening up in our lives. An unfolding of events that began at the SOS Children's Village in Bethlehem; experiences which shaped us all and enabled us to light up like six stars in Bethlehem sky! Alas, we are today independent, educated adults contributing to our society. My life in society is as intensely challenging as the high price living in Palestine extorts. In my role as an

active member of society I advocate peace and tolerance. In the face of dire hardships, discovering a sense in life, coupled with the pleasurable sense of diversity even amongst the small population in Bethlehem, make that portion of earth, a place worth living in. My leisure time is part of the play of enjoying being with my thoughts, meditating and contemplating the world around me, all in an attempt to piece together parts of a complex puzzle called life. I also have a passion for music and the arts.

”



Teach a man to fish not to give him fish

Dear reader, consider these questions as a lens through which you can see the following story by **Huỳnh Công Bình**.

Q How can we widen our scope of actions to best support a self-reliant life of young adults after leaving care?

Q What is the best way to get decision makers on board when you see demand innovation?

Q What can we learn from this story about creating the pre-conditions for development?

Q How can we gain motivation from "the success in life of previously abandoned children and young people"?

Today I would like to tell you the story about the poor young people without parental care who strive to overcome their difficulties, to work and learn harder with the main target to get better in their life thanks to support programmes of the SOS Children's Villages organisation: SOS vocational workshops and family strengthening programmes. Their good life has made my work more meaningful.

SOS Children's Village Centre in Vietnam has operated since 1999. In the first phase, we had to survey the situation and get a lot of young children under 9 years old into our families. Our SOS mothers and I, at that time, were middle-aged and eager for new jobs. We were all busy taking care of children. In our village

Huỳnh Công Bình

Project Director of SOS Children's Villages programme activities in Bến Tre province, Việt Nam

“ I joined SOS Children's Villages in 1997. The activities I cover range from the SOS Children's Village, over the SOS Kindergarten and SOS Workshop to SOS Youth House and FSP. The question, how best to ensure that our children live and study in the most child-friendly environment is the key motivation guiding my understanding and exercise of duty. Moreover, winning friends for our course is also an important part of >

there was always bustling laughter. Then, the children in our care grew up and went out to study far away. We then conducted a child rights situation analysis to find out who would be at highest risk of losing parental care and should thus be placed in our village and we also conducted other surveys to admit them in our homes.

In this phase there was one problem in the process of surveying children in remote areas that we noticed less in the past. We had met the unfortunate children without parental care also but we could not get them into the village. The reason was that they were not matching the admission criteria which said: no children older than 9 years old.

After careful consideration, we decided to report these cases to SOS leadership although it was not included in the funding programme of the organisation at that time, and then we helped the SOS leaders meet the very poor children mentioned above.

Fortunately for them, in 2008, Bentre's needs were met by the organisation's funding support for activities of the small-sized vocational training workshop. The aim of this workshop is to help poor young people who cannot afford to study in high school. After one year, the young people can do simple things related to electricity, running water, welding and carpentry in a household. The SOS vocational workshop in Bentre has taught 92 learners, including 7 children from the SOS Children's Village for more than 7 years. After finishing the course, these learners can start their own business.

Later, in 2011, family strengthening was also carried out in Bentre. Every year, the Vietnam government and our organisation share 50/50 percent of 200 30-USD monthly grants for poor children at risk of dropping out of their studies due to poverty or being orphans. Similar to the workshop, family strengthening also is very practical and effective. Since 2011, this programme has helped 275 children regularly. 55 children

from the support of the programme have become good students in their class, and 2 children have gotten into university, still receiving monthly financial support.

Once checking the SOS Workshop, our SOS leaderships fully agreed with the workshop activities, under the motto: **“Teach a man to fish, not to give him fish.”**

On the occasion of the 15th anniversary of the SOS Children's Village Bentre, many guests and I cried with happiness to hear young people say: *“if there was no SOS Children's Villages, we would not be sitting in the lecture hall in university and might have fallen into a vicious cycle of poverty again!”*

In general, the SOS vocational workshop and family strengthening have met very practical requirements of poor young people without parental care in our province since its establishment. The local authorities at all levels and the people have recognized the practicality and efficiency

of these assistance programmes. We are very glad that we gave them a hand, played one small part in their happy life and have brought joy and happiness to many people, especially unfortunate children without parental care.

my function. My family lives, since 1960 in Bến Tre, a nice small city right at the end of Mekong Delta River which has many interlacing rivers and canals. The city is famous for its coconut trees and very many other tropical fruits. From family background, I am the youngest in a chain of many brothers and sisters. I am married myself and we have two children who are still in school. My family and I live in the SOS Children's Village and it is excitingly enriching, watching all the children play and share together. I

understand society as a network system. Therefore, my interest is on how best to harness the synergies of these networks to embrace challenges, fight for the vulnerable and bring about change in the general society. In my leisure time, I love to go around my village and play badminton with my close friends. I enjoy talking with the SOS mothers and children, sharing views with them. High on my free time activities is the improvement of my English. So I like watching movies, surfing on the internet and travelling. ”



We are all important

We all have a role to play

Dear reader, consider these questions as a lens through which you can see the following story by **Philile Khumalo**.

Q What can we learn from this story about participation? How can we make sure we involve all relevant people in a change process?

Q Think of how exciting that moment can be when you are directly part of the turn of events, as young people are successfully guided to see that, while enjoying the present, it is profitable to also keep an eye on the future?

Q What can we learn about the impact of sponsorship on the future of the individual child after leaving care?

As a sponsorship coordinator, my main function is to ensure that sponsorship standards are followed and complied with and to build a professional and effective sponsorship team. It started in 1995 when I joined the organisation, and then I was the sponsorship secretary. There was one village in Mbabane.

There was however no one in my position so I was expected to set up the sponsorship office. First, I needed to familiarise myself with the function and it involved working with the village. I set up a familiarisation tour to the village to get an idea how it [=> what? the child sponsorship process?] was happening before. More than 90% of the children in the village had sponsors which meant they were receiving money gift. Dur-

Philile Khumalo

National Donor Services Co-ordinator, SOS Children's Villages Swaziland, Mbabane

“My professional background is in teaching and communications. I worked for nine years with the organisation Save the Children, as information officer. Part of my job portfolio then was the production of a weekly radio programme. Twenty years ago, I joined SOS Children's Villages Swaziland. I started up as the sponsorship public relations secretary, once acted as the secretary to the national director and now I am the national coordinator. >

ing my tour I got a lot of information about child sponsorship. I was also told that children received part of the money gift in cash to the equivalent of about 10 USD sent by a sponsor each time it was sent.

After my findings were discussed with the national director and it transpired that the cash gifts needed

to be stopped because all money gift must be saved for use by the children and young person when they finally leave the village. You can imagine the reaction of the recipient when they heard this. As somebody responsible for this function I had to be the bearer of the bad news. A meeting for the village team was convened and SOS mothers were represented. "What is change"? I asked and one SOS mother responded. "Change is something different from what it was and is not easy." "Yes" I said and I continued to discuss what it meant regarding the cash money gifts with the support of the village team and supporting

documents from the international office. I must say that it was not an easy meeting. A lot of questions were asked. It took a long time to convince the team but with a lot of education on what the international sponsorship stands for in the organisation and what we as a national association are expected to do, they eventually understood.

That was not the end as another meeting for the children and young people had to be convened as they are the direct beneficiaries of the international sponsorship. After receiving the money gift, children and young people had to write thank-you letters to their sponsors. Now I asked myself: "How do I write a thank-you letter for something I have not received?" This question bothered me for some time in my mind each time I thought about the meeting with the children and young people.

Indeed the day of the meeting came. SOS mothers and other staff

members were in the meeting and children were anxiously waiting to hear even though some already knew what it was about from their SOS mothers. "If you were told that you will no longer going to receive money from now on, how would you react?" One young person stood up. "What a difficult question!" is all he said. Their concern was answered after a detailed explanation. "We understand, but we will not write the thank-you letters. How do you thank someone for something you have not received," said one of them. Again after some long discussion with the help of the SOS mother and the staff, they agreed they will continue to write the letters. I must say it was a pleasant breakthrough. After a year one young person was integrated and with his money gift he bought furniture for his new home. He was so excited and shared his joy with brother and sisters in the village and youth facility. They remembered the meeting about money gifts and it became a reality.

All this would not have happened the way it did if the whole village team was not involved. Who knows, it would have even taken longer than it did. Everyone's contribution mattered and was needed.

As I am writing the story, Swaziland has three big sponsorship teams in all three villages and each member of the team has a vital role to play.

They are all important!

My family and my loved ones are to me great sources of inspiration. I have two sisters and three brothers, and with our mother, we together enjoy wonderful moments. The death of my husband fifteen years ago did leave an inevitable gap. However, I am today quite happy that I did gird up my loins, for and with my boys, embraced life. Happier I am today, that, my boys are doing well in life and we share an inspiring relationship. As a member of society I do take time to visit the sick, both in their homes and in the hospital. I do the best I can to support the needy within my reach. Children in my

society are indeed close to my heart and their concerns and future are for me, virtuous fields for action. These social duties of work agree with my understanding of the Catholic practice of Christian faith. I am a member of the Catholic women group, and for many years now, a board member of Cheshire Homes, Swaziland. In my leisure time, I enjoy travelling, cooking, reading magazines, going to church, being with my boys and socializing with friends. I love music and dancing, but as I age, I don't dance often again. My bones seem to be getting a bit tired!!!



Reunion

Village in touch with integrated young people. How to network? How to create strong links?

Dear reader, consider these questions as a lens through which you can see the following story by **Emmanuel Ekow Effirim**.

Q How can we gain energy from the positive results as returns from engaging on tracking the footprints?

Q How well in touch are you with SOS Children's Villages young adults?

In 2007, I was transferred from SOS Children's Village Asiakwa to take the responsibilities of a youth leader who had resigned from his post at SOS Children's Village Tema. About a month down the line there was a request from the national association on the data of all integrated young people.

There were no data to that effect when we went through the records. We contacted one of the integrated young people who manages a barbering salon about one kilometre away from the village for support. He gave his consent and lists of the integrated young people were

Emmanuel Ekow Effirim

Village Director SOS Children's Villages Asiakwa, Ghana

“I am a teacher specialized in technical education. I have 26 years of working experience at different levels and locations. I joined SOS Hermann Gmeiner School in 2002 as a basic design and technology teacher. In 2005 I became a youth counsellor (youth leader) and later, the national youth development coordinator. 2007, I moved to SOS Children's Village Tema to support our youth development programme. **There I headed the formation of SOS Old Children Association (SOCA) with the aim to bring all the young adults (re-settled) together to serve as role models for the younger ones in** ➤

provided. He provided us with some of the needed information.

The request was then to ask for the following information:

- Total number of integrated young people
- Employment status of each young person
- Marital status of each young person
- Home or abroad
- Living or dead, etc

It became very difficult moment for me as a new person in that seat who had little or no information about the integrated young people at that location. Thinking of even how to approach these young adults with such questions like “are you single or married?” etc. But with the support of the barber and some of the SOS mothers, we were able accomplished the task given. A few months later a student from University of Ghana pursuing a PhD in Social

Work interview the integrated young people as part of his project.

Another journey began again, an arrangement was made with these young people. Some accepted and others declined to grant the interview.

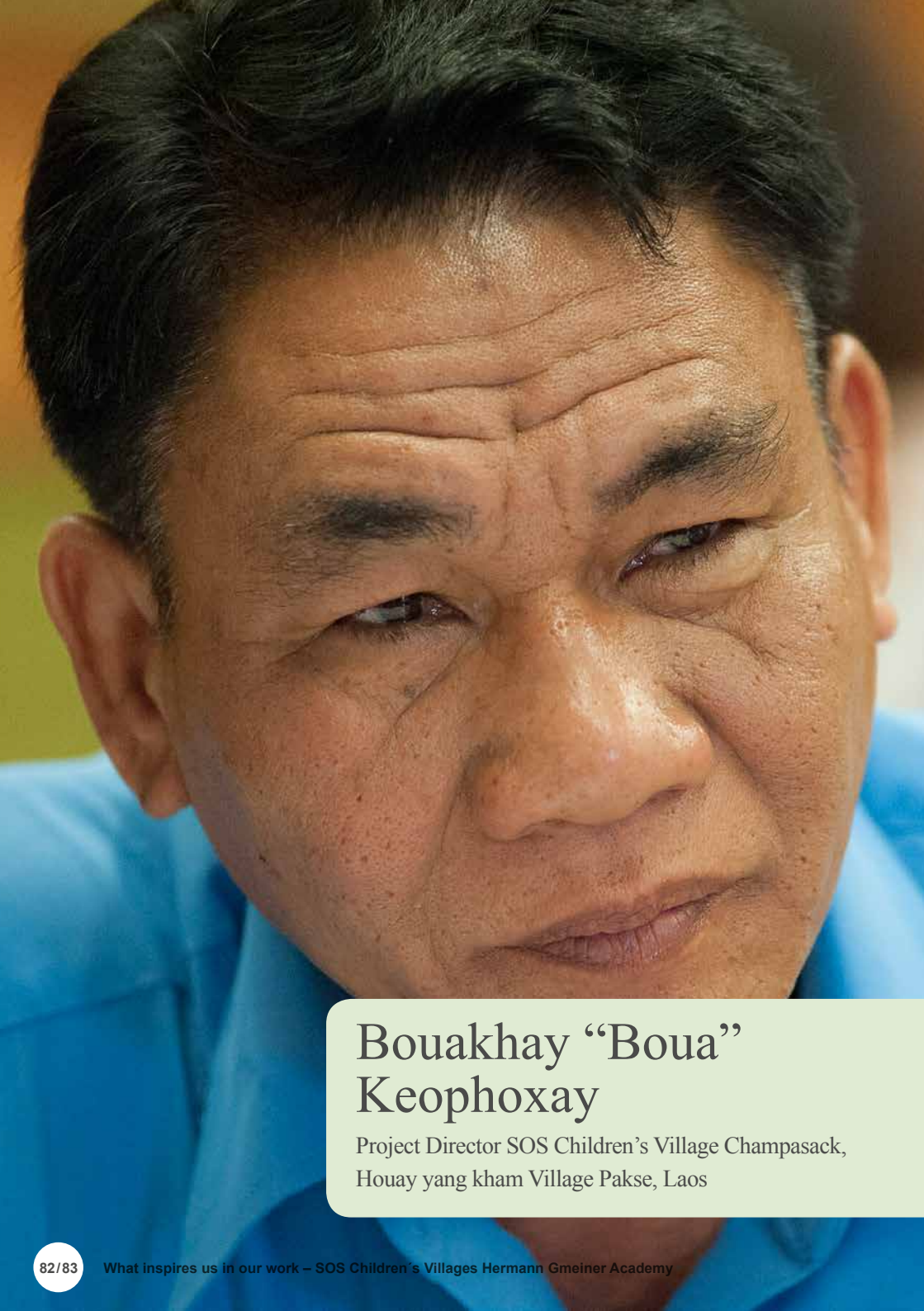
Finally after the exercise the student gave us the report on the feedback; some aspects were positive and others very negative. We studied the report and an arrangement was reached to hold a dinner for the integrated young people in appreciation for the support given to the student and also as a reconciliation and reunion of the young people and the village.

A number of the young people and some members of the senior management team were invited to the great and emotional event. For some of them it was a memorable day because that was the first time visiting the village since they were integrated several years ago.

During the event, these young adults gave life to an association that would be called SOS Old Children Association. The aim among others was to bring all integrated young people together, support each other through networking, support the village through various means and also serve as role models to young people in the villages.

the villages. Born in 1961, I was raised by a single parent in a coastal town called Winneba in the central region of Ghana. I am married and we are blessed with three children – two boys and a girl. While our eldest son lives and works in Accra, Ghana, my wife, I and the other children live in Asiakwa, Ghana. The youngest son, 12 years, spends most of his time with SOS families, especially house 8 in Asiakwa. I am active in our Christian Methodist church community: From patron of the Methodist Junior Choir at Asiakwa, to member of the church building and fundraising committee. I take

time to render teaching services on basic design and technology to the students of Hermann Gmeiner College in Ghana. This is my contribution to seeing they come out in flying colours in their final exams. As I come from a coastal town, I enjoy swimming and beach soccer. During festive occasions and national holidays, I enjoy visiting national park gardens, together with all the children, young people and the caregivers. Our favourite is Arboretum Gardens where there is a canopy walkway which is about 40 meters high and 300 meters long. ”



See "The Harvest" on page 12



Prepare each child best for a good future

Dear reader, consider these questions as a lens through which you can see the following story by **Bouakhay "Boua" Keophoxay**.

Q Which invaluable treasures of your work can you discover by realising the lasting effects of your work?

Q How do you manage to keep your work-life balance ?

I joined SOS Children's Village Pakse, the second SOS Children's Village among 6 villages in Laos in 1996. I started my work as a village director and later as project director for SOS Children's Village Champasak.

The decision to join SOS Children's Villages was a decision of my heart: I love to work with and for people, to establish relationships and work in a team.

When I look back at the beginning of our SOS Children's Village I must say I had to do various tasks round the clock. My primary responsibility was to take care of our children. Besides this as a residential co-worker, as a person in charge, I joined my hands with our SOS mothers, all of

Bouakhay "Boua" Keophoxay

Project Director SOS Children's Village Champasack,
Houay yang kham Village Pakse, Laos

“

I started my professional life as mathematics and physics teacher in a teacher training college in Pakse. In 1996 I joined SOS Children's Villages in Pakse as the village director. When I look back at that beginning time, I must say, we had to do various tasks round the clock. As village director, I was responsible for managing and monitoring, in the best interests of the child, all village activities in line with SOS Children's Villages”



our co-workers, and involved myself in looking after the children to ensure that they get better care in the SOS Children's Village. In this work period I gained a lot of experiences like learning to trust myself and others. I learned to love and manage life crises. I found a way into a "normal life", because of these beneficial experiences of reliable relationships and friendships. That fills my heart with gratefulness and the reasonable hope that also in the future, children at risk and their families will find the helping hands and feeling hearts they need – as I have gotten.

I am managing and monitoring all village activities in line with the SOS organisation's concept and Laos' laws in the best interests of the children to ensure that all of our children live and continue to study in a child-friendly environment.

Being a village director, project director, I must stay in the SOS Children's Village campus for 24 hours. Even on a day off, I do not go out of the village. Therefore, when I have

a free time, I play badminton, table tennis, and volleyball, sometimes football with our SOS mothers, SOS aunts, co-workers and children. I enjoy sharing my experiences about my work in order to help us to easily work together.

For over 20 years we have provided support to orphaned and semi-orphaned children – in total 1,075 children (300 children from SOS Children's Village Pakse) of which 225 young children (36 children from SOS CV Pakse) are studying in higher education institutions and 6 young children (2 children from SOS CV Pakse) study in China and Vietnam and one does a job training in Israel.

377 young people (113 from SOS CV Pakse) have been integrated into society of which 70 (40 from SOS CV Pakse) have now got their own family. The majority of the children who finished their bachelor's degree in the past years found work e.g. as teachers, electrical engineers, soldiers, policemen, government

officers, tourism guides, civil engineers.

490 scholarship students are being supported through our family strengthening programmes and 196 students have already completed their secondary level from our SOS Hermann Gmeiner Schools.

The temporary care was initially run in 2005 in one of our villages as a pilot project and could be extended to two more SOS Children's Villages. Until now we have supported 1,171 malnourished kids who are now in a satisfying healthy status.

The SOS Medical Centre is one of our attached projects which started to run in 2004 and provided free first aid not only for SOS mothers and children but also for people from community as well. Since it operated, 52,353 people have come to use our services.

Laos is my home country where I grew up and learned the way of my life. It has given me lots of things. So

I try to make my contribution on the basis of my experiences that I gathered by being part of SOS Children's Village or the society. I keep sharing my ideas and views for better care, nourishment and uplift of children who are in need.

concept and Laos's laws. At the same time, as a residential co-worker, I joined hands with our SOS mothers and other co-workers in looking after the children to ensure that they get better care in the SOS Children's Village. I am married. My wife and I are blessed with three diversely successful daughters. While our daughters now live independently in Vientiane, the capital of Laos, my wife and I live in the SOS Children's Village in Pakse. The conditions of my own childhood in a family of nine, and the goodwill of my parents in seeing that the best come out of us, instilled in me courage, determination and resilience.

Moreover, I learnt to appreciate people, be content with what I have, appreciate nature and what it has to offer. Those virtues from my childhood conditions form the foundation of my social and cultural networking as well as the passion to keep sharing my ideas and views for the better care and uplift of children who are in need. Badminton, table tennis, volleyball, football: These are some of the free time activities I enjoy with our SOS mothers, aunts, co-workers and children in the village. Exercises as these deepen understanding and joy thereby help us to easily work together all the more.

Stability

How to best create stability in the life of a child by going beyond the “normal”?

SOS Children’s Villages is a specialist in alternative care. This is a reason for us to become active in emergency situations: to protect children and their families and help them in the best suitable way. (Emergency preparedness & response page, Andreas Papp, Global Intranet, August 2015). When children are exposed to emergencies, be it as a result of war or natural catastrophe, we take action to bring them as quickly as possible from the emergency situation into a caring family environment where their development as individuals is supported. What is it we do?

- Ensure that unaccompanied and separated children are safe, protected and cared.
- Make every effort to reunify them with family members.
- Identify suitable alternative care placement in the best interests of the children when reunification is not possible.

Read below stories about differing emergency situations written by courageous co-workers! Surely they tried to achieve the above-mentioned although their tasks were not necessarily or explicitly called “Emergency response programme”. One story is about challenging changes in the given society. Nevertheless, the common theme is the efforts to enable stable relationships for a child who has lost his or her most important bonds.





If I don't do this, who will?

What SOS Children's Villages meant to me when I was sat at gunpoint

Dear reader, consider these questions as a lens through which you can see the following story by **Vijay Rana**.

Q What are the moments that unleash strong feelings of bonding and identification with SOS Children's Villages in you?

Q What kind of personality and character is important to SOS Children's Villages in order to cope with extra-ordinary challenges?

Looking back over my 27 years of life as a part of the SOS family I somehow feel content, happy and indebted to this organisation for all those experiences and wonderful moments. I left the home at the age of 26 with a heart full of youthful compassion and big ambition. When I first saw the place, there were no proper roads and almost no sign of proper civilization so I had to start the journey with a heavy heart. However, the love from children and the support that I got from mothers, co-workers and my wife played a perfect distraction from the low point

Vijay Jung Rana

Project director of SOS Children's Village Lumbini in Bhairawa, Nepal, Rupandehi

“In 1998, I began my career in SOS Children's Village Surkhet as a village secretary. When I look back at the beginning of SOS Children's Village Surkhet, I must say we had a humble beginning with just two of the senior co-workers: the village director and me. So, I had to do various tasks round the clock from accounting to joining hands with mothers in looking after the children. In 2002, I became the village director and in the same year, our country was plagued by political instabilities and was plunged into war with Maoist guerillas. As many INGOs fled >

throughout and motivated me to keep going.

While working with SOS I have gone through many moments of success as well as failure. I would like to share one of those defining moments.

It was that moment when I was held at gunpoint, literally, that I realized what SOS Children's Villages truly meant to me. I realized that the source of my attachment to the organisation was beyond a youthful passion, an altruistic dream, or a financial support system; I was attached through a subconscious, selfless bond I call 'love'.

2006 was a chaotic year for Nepal. In several failed attempts to form a federal democratic nation, the Maoist movement only resulted in riots, strikes, violence, caste conflicts, economic downturn, rising inflation, and turmoil. During 2006, I was working as the project director of SOS Children's Village Surkhet, and

as if the turmoil in the country wasn't unfortunate enough, Surkhet happened to be a hub for most of the Maoist activities in the western part of the country. Soon enough, most INGOs and NGOs moved away from the Mid-West because the region was not considered "safe" anymore. I am not sure if it was my courage, my persistence, or just a wishful thinking, but I decided to continue working at SOS Surkhet despite the bombing incident, the threat notes, and blackmail letters from the Maoists. My family members were very upset with my decision; most tried to persuade me to quit my job through multiple phone calls and some even came to visit, all with the hope that maybe I would change my mind. Call it my stubborn nature or my committed attitude towards the organisation, but I genuinely never considered leaving SOS Surkhet. I wasn't sure about my own strength and my dedication towards SOS until one day I had a group of Maoist guerillas threatening for money and much more demands. I found myself

at gunpoint, in my own residence inside SOS.

I was a father of three daughters and in that situation I could have EITHER surrendered to keep myself and my blood-related family safe while letting them rob me off my moral principles or played the game of life and death in the hope of winning. As dramatic as it might sound, one simple question put me out of the dilemma at that very moment: "If I don't do this, who will?" Turns out, the odds were in my favor! Well, I am alive! I am in front of you all.

Those days had their own perks when I remember them. I was young and more energetic than I am now.

Storytelling seems as if it can go forever. Sharing such precious moments of my life with all my colleagues from different part of world is a really heart-warming experience to me. But these are just the small part of our life that we have achieved till now. We all must have tons of such

experiences. We all definitely shall learn the life lessons from each other. I am eagerly waiting for more of such chances where I can take you further ahead in the wonderful journey of my life.

to the capital of the country, our organisation remained and as the village director, I tried to harness the support of the community and in many occasions, organised dialogues with the Maoists.

I grew up in a family of 3 brothers and 4 sisters. I was seven years old when our father died. Hard times indeed! Nevertheless, our mother mastered the situation and with utmost skill and care, she enabled a good education for us all. I have been married for 25 years and am blessed with 3 daughters, all studying medicine. In addition to that, our second daughter is the No.1 air rifle shooting player of our country. She participated in London

Olympics 2012 as well. She is the pride of our country.

Bhairahawa is my home town. I grew up there, learned the ways of life there and my greatest passion is to give back the very best I can. I am an active member of District Child Welfare Committee and the Lion's Club of Bhairahawa. I treasure contact with organisations working for the welfare of the child.

I am a sports loving person. I play badminton and table tennis with my friends and our village children. Spending time together with my wife, children and home pets are high on my list of leisure time activities.

”



Kirthi Kithsiri Hettiarachchi

Senior Project Director of SOS Children's Villages Sri Lanka, Pilyandala

See "The Harvest" on page 12



Change lives of children after the civil war

Dear reader, consider these questions as a lens through which you can see the following story by **Kirthi Kithsiri Hettiarachchi**.

Q What can we learn about how to stick to our principles in circumstances of chaos and fatal loss?

Q How can we brighten up the spirit of children, especially in civil war torn environments by offering them a home?

The civil war in Sri Lanka was dragging on for more than 30 years, destroying the day to day life, lives of people, properties and families who live in North to South and East to West.

At the final stages of the civil war, thousands of people started to enter

to the areas controlled by the government from the territories controlled by the LTTE¹ and this was an extremely difficult situation to face for all concerned parties. As the fierce fighting was going on, every human being of this country prayed for "PEACE". At dawn of a day in the year 2009 the government of Sri Lanka announced that the war ended. Meantime more than three hundred thousand people had fled from the war zone amidst the war, and the people were brought in to a refugee camp placed at Cheddikulam in the district of Vauniya.

At the camp people were scattered all over the place and families were lost. Among them the children were looking for their parents. Parents were in search of their children. Nearly half of the population in the IDP [?]

¹ Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam

“I have completed 20 years of service with SOS Children's Villages. I am presently working as senior project director of SOS Children's Villages Sri Lanka as well as the location manager of SOS Children's Village Pilyandala. Moreover, I have been assigned the tasks of national focal point for child protection policy of SOS programmes in Sri Lanka. I am also a member of the programme team that conducts quality assessments and implementation of the SOS Children's Village Programme Policy in SOS >

camps was children and young adults and most of them were in traumatic conditions. The children and the care-takers of this project had faced many difficulties at the initial stages of their living inside the IDP camp such as schooling, medicine, hygiene etc. due to lack of essential services. In spite of all these difficult

conditions people and children were at risk of health hazards, child rights violations and abuses and the authorities were lacking the required capacity to cope with the situation though they were very concerned about the situation.

The government was in need of support from other organisations to assist these people who were really in need of support. The need of providing care for unaccompanied children came into light and on request by the government, SOS Children's Villages came in to act to assist the children who were at risk. SOS Children's Villages Sri Lanka managed to assess the situation. We commenced our work while constructing the semi-permanent shelters as we thought we should not keep children in the canvas tents, and our site became a solid permanent structure for children.

We started to identify children who were at risk, isolated and without parents. We were successful as we managed to bring many children in to one place. The main objective of this project was to re-unify unaccompanied children with their families of origin. SOS Children's Villages Sri Lanka managed to investigate the status of 234 children with the assistance of the relevant authorities and re-unified 154 unaccompanied children with their families of origin. That was not an easy task due to obvious reasons!

SOS Children's Villages Sri Lanka with the support of Continental and International Office came up with a new SOS Children's Village in the Northern part of Sri Lanka for these children as this was where they came from. The children were provided with: care, re-unification, trauma therapy, health care, education, integration, counselling, identity registration and finally happiness. The programme was able to provide the necessary protection to the unaccompanied children who were at serious risk. We could give them an opportunity to restart their education with the necessary counselling and extra coaching for those who experienced long lapses in schooling.

It is a significant achievement that four children who sat for the G.C.E. (Advanced Level) examination in 2010 passed the examination well. Thirteen children who sat for the G.C.E. (Ordinary Level) examinations also have done well.

During the period that the "Emergency Relief Programme North" at Cheddikulam was in operation, various recreational activities were carried out for these children. A three-day trip to the capital city Colombo, giving them an opportunity to visit the places of interest such as Parliament, museum, zoological garden, renowned government TV station & radio station, places of religious and cultural interest. They had an opportunity to interact and dine with SOS families in other areas where they experienced a warm welcome and hospitality from culturally different brothers and sisters that gave them a very strong feeling about their counterparts in SOS Children's Villages.

Another opportunity the children experienced was the holiday camp which was held at SOS Children's Village Anuradhapura where all SOS children from all parts of the country participated. The children of Emergency Relief Programme at Cheddikulam partici-

pated in cultural, aesthetic, sports and educational programmes with other SOS children belonging to a different ethnic group that immensely helped to create a strong bond.

These are only a few of the activities carried out to give these children a happy childhood which was taken away from them by the civil war and to give them a good mental and physical relief to feel that they are experiencing a normal life.

By establishing SOS Children's Village Jaffna, SOS Sri Lanka was able to make a positive change in the lives of children who otherwise might have experienced further traumatic conditions and disturbances in their lives. This is how SOS Children's Villages Sri Lanka "changes lives of children after the civil war."

I am so proud of myself as I had the great opportunity to support children when they really needed support during their very very difficult time in middle of a war and just after a war. This satisfaction is with me as I was involved in this process from very beginning and even today. Now every child is with a big smile.

Children's Villages in Sri Lanka. I come from a big family of five sisters and two brothers. I am married and with my wife Anoja, who is a school teacher, we have three daughters. As a member of society, I strive to contribute to the social and spiritual ongoing of society and to the wellbeing of the poor and vulnerable. I was once the charter president of the Lions Club in my area as well as the president of the religious Shanthi Foundation, which offers jasmine flowers to lord Buddha on the day millions of

people rock in to the "Sacred Bo Tree" which is 200 km away from Colombo. After the tsunami catastrophe, I was assigned diverse functions to cater for the refugees. My leisure time is dedicated to sports. I am a sportsman. Since my school days I have been crazy about sports. I played cricket, football, table tennis, wrestling and I was a scout as well during my school days. I love travelling to see and experience the world as much as I love spending time with my family and friends.



The power of empowerment

Supportive community

Dear reader, consider these questions as a lens through which you can see the following story by **Tiwe Richards**.

Q What are the vibrant resources within a given local community and how best to harness these – in collaboration – to spark flames of achievement beyond imagination?

Q What are the striking abilities local communities can develop in special circumstances?

Q How can we best trust each other and develop new ways of collaboration?

The story begins with the writer asking you to imagine an established and functioning facility which is thrown into desperation as all of a sudden the political and economic situation of the country takes a nose dive.

Inflation rose to unprecedented levels. The money lost its value before it left one's hand. If one dares put it into the bank, by the time you get it back it would have lost its value and the purchase power next to nothing. A number of hours were spent trying to source basic commodities to be used in the facility. The idea being, spend the money on whatever, as quickly as possible. The situation

Tiwe Richards

Kindergarten Principal SOS Children's Village Bulawayo, Zimbabwe

“My professional life began as I joined SOS in 1994, working as an educator at the SOS Kindergarten Waterfalls. In 1995 when the construction of the SOS Kindergarten in Bulawayo was completed, I moved over there to become the principal. It was all exciting and challenging moments for me. Right from the beginning, it was all networking, ranging from registering the kindergarten with the authorities over recruiting of new staff members to physical development of the environment like planting the lawn, designing the playground, setting up the group rooms etc. What a joy doing all that!! From my family >

worsened to a point that while I was concerned about the children in the facility and their needs, I could not help being concerned about the welfare of the co-workers too and my own family. We had the children to focus on, but we also had our own personal challenges to think about.

The education regulation in the state requires that children be given a nutritious mid-morning meal and to get the basics, I tried to use the many networks that I had established over the years to source some of the commodities. With even this, it was difficult to remain relevant and offer what was expected of us.

Basic foodstuff and other commodities were available in the country illegally and a majority of people in the community were using foreign currency to make these purchases. I had no access to the foreign currency. If I had made the effort to access the foreign currency, I would have put myself and the organisation at risk politically.

One day in the morning standing by a window looking outside, I came to the conscious realisation that children were arriving from their different homes driven by their parents. I asked myself: "What else can I do?" "Aha," I said. "The parents have the money. I need to find a way to the money." I then selected a number of parents who I was familiar with and those I had used informally in the past for any fundraising activities. I told them about the challenge I was facing which was to provide adequately for their children. They were surprised as I had not talked about my challenges before. They helped me organise a meeting to meet all the parents.

The parents came in large numbers for the meeting and I stated my challenge of being unable to source basic commodities that are required by their children while they spent four to eight hours with me and I sat down. A lot of debate took place and it was going nowhere. One parent stood up to ask that no minutes be taken. They asked me what I wanted

and I was in no position to give them an answer. They made a correct assumption of what I wanted and went on to make concrete decisions on how much each parent was to pay termly. They arranged the transport and the person to go to the neighbouring country to make the necessary purchases. That evening saw the birth of a powerful Parents Teachers Association which has supported the facility so much over the years.

I have never looked back and the story demonstrates the "Power of Empowerment". If we as an organisation recognize that there are so many resources in the community, we will achieve beyond our imagination.

background, I am the first child in a family of seven children. In my work, I have, over the years, enjoyed tremendous support from kindergarten parents and the Bulawayo community particularly during the economic downturn. And this reflects back to me, the values I received from my own dear parents and family – values like resilience, determination, appreciation, contentedness and gratitude. These in turn, I am quite sure, my own three children also embraced as much as they also now exemplify to their own children. Giving back to society forms a big part of my life. I devote much of my time and resource to the

welfare of the community I live in. I enjoy every engagement in the Young Women's Christian Association where issues of women and girls are discussed and empowerment programmes put in place. It is often approximate to leisure, spending time with my mother who is elderly now. I love walking as a way of keeping fit particularly if I have company. Reading takes me to different places and I touch base with different people of the world. I enjoy reading biographies. I love sewing; it is relaxing for me and also quite satisfying as I look at what I have produced.



Floods in Srinagar

Response by SOS Children's Villages India

Dear reader, consider these questions as a lens through which you can see the following story by **Maddali Srinivas**.

Q What can we learn from this story about clearly defined target groups?

I chose to narrate my experience of the flood relief work taken by SOS Children's Villages India in the year 2014 when I led the team of co-workers in Srinagar in organising the relief work which spanned nearly four months.

I was very excited to leave for Srinagar in the third week of September 2014. On the one hand I was preparing myself physically and mentally, equipping myself with medicines and other necessary items of survival in the flood ravaged city of Srinagar. Even before actually leaving for Srinagar I started making my plan of action after touching base with my team members in Srinagar. I landed in Srinagar on 21st September. The road from the airport to our office was still full of knee deep water but

Maddali Srinivas

Zonal Director North of
SOS Children's Villages India, New Delhi

“ Since 2009, as Zonal Director North, I live in Delhi, from where I support and guide the operations of 10 SOS Children's Villages projects spanning from Srinagar in Jammu & Kashmir to Jaipur in the state of Rajasthan. With an educational background in English and Sociology, I started in professional life in the hotel industry. In 1986 I joined SOS Children's Villages, resigning in 1993, only to join back again a year after. >

vehicles were plying. I straightaway left for a visit to the flood affected parts of the city by using various modes of transport: car, two wheeler, walking on foot and by boat.

I remember those first few days when I could never retire for the day before 2.00 a.m. in the morning since there was so much time spent in interacting with the members of the affected community – children, ladies, menfolk in various places – making the actual assessment of their needs after interacting with them, through individual interaction and focused group discussion, then analysing the feedback received, making the plans and reporting to be done. Lots of data and reports to be compiled and sent.

Of course I could not have achieved anything without the support of the other members of my team. I lost count of the time. When I used to retire for the day I used to be dog tired but used to get up fresh, excited and raring to go into the thick of action on the next day. Time flew and before by the second day we started the relief work.

How did all this happen?

Torrential rains from 30th August to 7th September 2014 flooded the whole of Srinagar drowning and submerging more than 70% of the city. There was no place for the water to go. The water levels in the Dal Lake and other lakes started rising alarmingly and the waters from the lakes started overflowing and inundated the nearby areas. Local government was not prepared for it since it had never happened in the past.

Life came to a standstill as people started going to the rooftops and terraces of tall buildings to take refuge & shelter. Normal life was thrown out of gear and severely affected. Communication was cut off and mobility was also paralyzed. Road links to Srinagar were cut off from Jammu city for a few days due to landslides.

The government of India rushed teams from the National Disaster Rescue Force and teams from other military and paramilitary forces to Srinagar through special aircrafts and started the rescue operations. In the city of Srinagar people staying

in higher areas which were not affected started helping the affected persons by taking them to safer places and providing them support by way of food, essential items and medicines. People abandoned their homes along with their children carrying handful of items and went to safer places. Local government also swung into action and started taking actions to support the affected persons. The flood started receding on 8th September 2014. The event was declared a national disaster.

There was need for more support as national and international NGOs started their relief work. SOS Children's Villages of India was one of first few non-governmental organisations to start relief work.

My intent in the beginning was to reach out to the affected communities: interact with them, assess their needs, draw a plan of action with their involvement and then share with higher authorities through a plan for action along with costs involved. This took nearly four days.

I noted that there were a few agencies and individuals who provided emergency and immediate relief. But it was not going to last long and would not help the affected communities in the long run. It was like giving a fish to a hungry man – but for how many days it is possible? I saw that many families lost their means of livelihood, therefore when we made the plan of action for the affected communities, we planned separate interventions in the emergency and relief phase, rehabilitation stage and reintegration stage. We made plan of action for four months and worked accordingly to implement it.

The team of co-workers in Srinagar took initiative and first of all focused on the wellbeing of the our children, mothers and co-workers. Four of our families were submerged in water and all the four mothers along with the 40 children were taken to other homes which were not affected and provided with much needed support. The youth home for the boys was submerged in water and all the young adults were rescued by the locals and taken to safety. All our

From 1994 to 2009, I worked as village director in SOS Children's Village Chennai in the southern state of Tamil Nadu.

I am wedded to the cause of children – and have enjoyed every minute of my work with the organisation. This is the point where my family and professional life meet. I was born at Vizag, a coastal town in Andhra Pradesh – in the southern part of India,

and the youngest in a family of three brothers and three sisters. However, I have spent the maximum time of my life in New Delhi. I am married and we have two sons. I consider myself very fortunate to have been blessed with kind and understanding parents, family members and inspiring friends.

Therein rest the roots of my passion for community life in the general society. I



8 families were provided with food items, medicines and drinking water.

SaidaKadal and Khusalsar are two communities which live in close proximity of the Dal Lake and were severely affected. More than 70% of houses in SaidaKadal were completely damaged and more than 40% of the houses in Khusalsar were damaged.

I reached Srinagar in the week after the floods and started the relief work in the affected communities. Following was done for the affected communities.

- Providing the affected families with food stuff, essential household items and medicines.
- Creating child spaces to engage children from age of 3 to 18 years daily for few hours in play and creative activities, helping them to cope with the trauma and build their resilience. Children were also provided with whole and nutritious snacks daily.
- Capacity building of the affected families and helping them to start

either a new livelihood or enhance their existing livelihood.

All the affected families are now moving towards self-reliance with support from SOS Children's Villages and others. The work of SOS Children's Villages has been appreciated by all the stakeholders.

It was of paramount importance to stay focussed: Have the main frame of action in mind, break it into smaller steps and actions, take one step and one day at a time and complete the task in the given timeframe. We used to have a review meeting every day in the late evening or night some days. You have to come out of the comfort zone, challenge your limits. You may feel stressed out by the pressure of work but it gives you immense strength and empowers in the long run to weather many a storm. I received invaluable support from the Village Director of Srinagar, Mr Naushad Raza, and other members of his team and stakeholders from the communities where we worked.

The work lasted from 24th September 2014 and it continued till February 2015.

The feeling of positive energy I felt cannot be described in words – it's felt – you feel rejuvenated and thank the almighty for being the opportunity to do the work.

involve myself in community service activities especially with the activities of the resident welfare association in our locality.

Leisure time: I like to read extensively and listen to music. Outdoor games and activities like cricket, badminton and walking, are for me, moments of relaxation and

sources of strength. Cooking and household works extending to fondness for feeding of dogs, cows and birds, are parts of my passion for service. I set aside a little time daily for reflection. ”



When an SOS mother is leaving

The challenge of a changing environment in residential care for children

Dear reader, consider these questions as a lens through which you can see the following story by **Eckhard Thiel**.

Q What can we learn about letting go of well-known tracks and opening up to new pathways in responding to current needs?

Q What was it like when a particular challenge turned out to build the basis for a new, meaningful "format" in your work function?

In our SOS Children's Village we had ten SOS families and two residential groups with teams of five educators shifting day and night in 2004.

In the first half of 2004 we had built up a new SOS family. It started with three siblings and in autumn we took four other siblings into this SOS family to complete it. In January 2005 the SOS mother of this SOS family left the organisation. We assigned a young co-worker to stay with the 7 children. We could not place them in our other groups or SOS families

Eckhard Thiel

Team Leader Residential Youth Care Programmes, SOS Children's Village Worpswede, Germany

“My professional life has its base in educational sciences and philosophy. In 1986, I joined SOS Children's Villages as an educational co-worker supporting SOS families, giving advice to SOS mothers and their helpers, offering the children leisure education with a focus on sports and music. It thrills me even today remembering the holiday trips, mostly bicycle tours I undertook with groups of children. In 1993 I started occupational studies of music therapy at the completion of which, my work focus changed towards music therapy and music making with children – a very satisfactory and inspiring engagement indeed. In 2001 I took on the task as a team leader for residential youth care ▶

and we were under pressure to find a solution.

In spite of the increasing shortage of suitable applicants for SOS mothers, there was no question we would have to find someone to replace her. We found a qualified social worker whom we thought to be able to do this and who seemed to be very engaged. He started with a lot of enthusiasm but after one year he also left SOS quite suddenly.

We decided not to dare a second attempt because it was still difficult to find suitable, qualified persons and we feared to fail again. With the two educators left – one of them the young one who knew the SOS family from the start – we started to build up a team. We had a third experienced educator in our SOS Children's Village who looked forward to joining this team. To get a stable team with four educators it took us about one year. The work was not supposed to be organised as it was

in our residential groups with the shifting day and night, due to the fact that we needed more continuity for those young children who endured already two changes within our SOS Children's Village.

So we decided for the four to work in blocks. The basic model we developed step by step, was one with three blocks: Monday to Wednesday, Wednesday to Friday, Saturday to Monday. In practice it was used flexibly with regard to the actual situation. This way, the educators were shifting, one staying with the children for a block of days and the others supporting him during the day or having free time.

It worked well, but it was supposed to be a temporary solution for this case until we had an SOS mother to take over. Beyond that, there was a legal problem: We needed an exceptional approval from the governmental office to be acknowledged

as "house community" to be able to work in this way.

For the team, working hard and also being successfully involved, this situation was neither comfortable nor appreciative.

In our contacts to the responsible co-worker of the governmental office, we discussed this issue again and again; until in 2012 we were successful in applying for the exceptional approval.

The group remained until this date, because the time to be taken over by an SOS mother had passed and the children had developed strong connections to their educators.

With the exceptional approval in the background we could write a concept and finally achieved an official status for our group. Now in 2015 we have five groups working like this, two of them specialized in:

- the care of young children (up to six years) with special needs (especially multiple developmental delays) with the capacity for five children;
- the care of young people, who still need continuity similar to families, with the capacity for seven young people; this group is suitable for young people even from the age of thirteen.

We still have our two residential groups with the shifting system and we have five SOS families. Thus our range of services for residential care is more differentiated now.

Anyhow, we can be sure that some of the basic conditions will be changing – e.g. the legal ones – and we have to be aware that managing our children's village to correspond to the changing environment is an essential skill to be developed.

programmes, developing and building up new forms of residential care.

I was born to a family of three in a little village in south western Germany near the border to France and Luxembourg and when I started working at SOS Children's Villages, I moved close to 600 km to the north of Germany. I married and we have two sons, all independent, living and working in Hamburg. Fortunately it takes only 90 minutes to get to Hamburg, so we can meet often.

My strength in society is my zeal to live according to my convictions. With a critical view on facts in society, I display the readiness to take responsibilities for my opinions and

views. Bringing my life ideals into practice, I try to contribute to building up a multicultural and tolerant society, to a fair distribution of funds and to saving nature for the next generations by being conscious about the things I buy, share things with friends and neighbours when possible and support organisations, which contribute to creating a better world, e. g. Médecins sans frontières.

In my leisure time, I enjoy being in motion: mostly running, biking and swimming, and walking with my wife. I love to hear music – especially Jazz – and to be creative myself playing piano, improvising, writing music and (mostly funny) poems.

”



Claudia Reichl

Team Leader International Programme
Funding SOS Children's Villages Hermann
Gmeiner Fonds Germany, Munich

“

In 2007, I joined SOS Children's Villages Hermann Gmeiner Fonds Germany e.V. in the finance division working part-time. I was responsible for all financial issues related to Latin America and the Caribbean. In 2009, I assumed the position as a team leader. Our functions range from transfer of funds to the national associations, over reporting to supporting the managing directors in decision-making processes for funds allocations.

My family consists of my son Caspar who is 11 years old, my husband, my parents, my sister and friends, many of whom are contacts from my first school year. Two years ago when I was diagnosed breast cancer, I felt happy having all these people around me at that challenging time! Now I am cured. Lucky me! It is now quite exciting seeing me being there with and for them all, especially for my son.

Moving from normal necessity of fending for daily life to the point of coming up to ask for the meaning of life and what one works for, are a combination of factors that bring about change in life and in general society. This was the point I came to after five years of working experience with one of the big four audit companies in the corporate finance division. Coinciding with the birth of my son, I felt the need for change. Working for an NGO (HGFD) really satisfies me and I feel I can give something back to society. I am involved in the parent's association of the school my son attends.

Leisure time for me is organising, management, relaxation, entertainment and socializing. I organise the stream flow of our family from daily routines to things like holidays, doctor consultations, training schedules of my son etc. I like to read books, play and learn with my son, spend time with my parents and enjoying time out with friends in Munich. I do sometimes try out my luck in a sports club; something I am not always successful in doing!

”



Maria Atanasova Dantcheva

Head of Programme SOS Children's Villages International, for Central and Eastern Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States, Sofia, Bulgaria

“

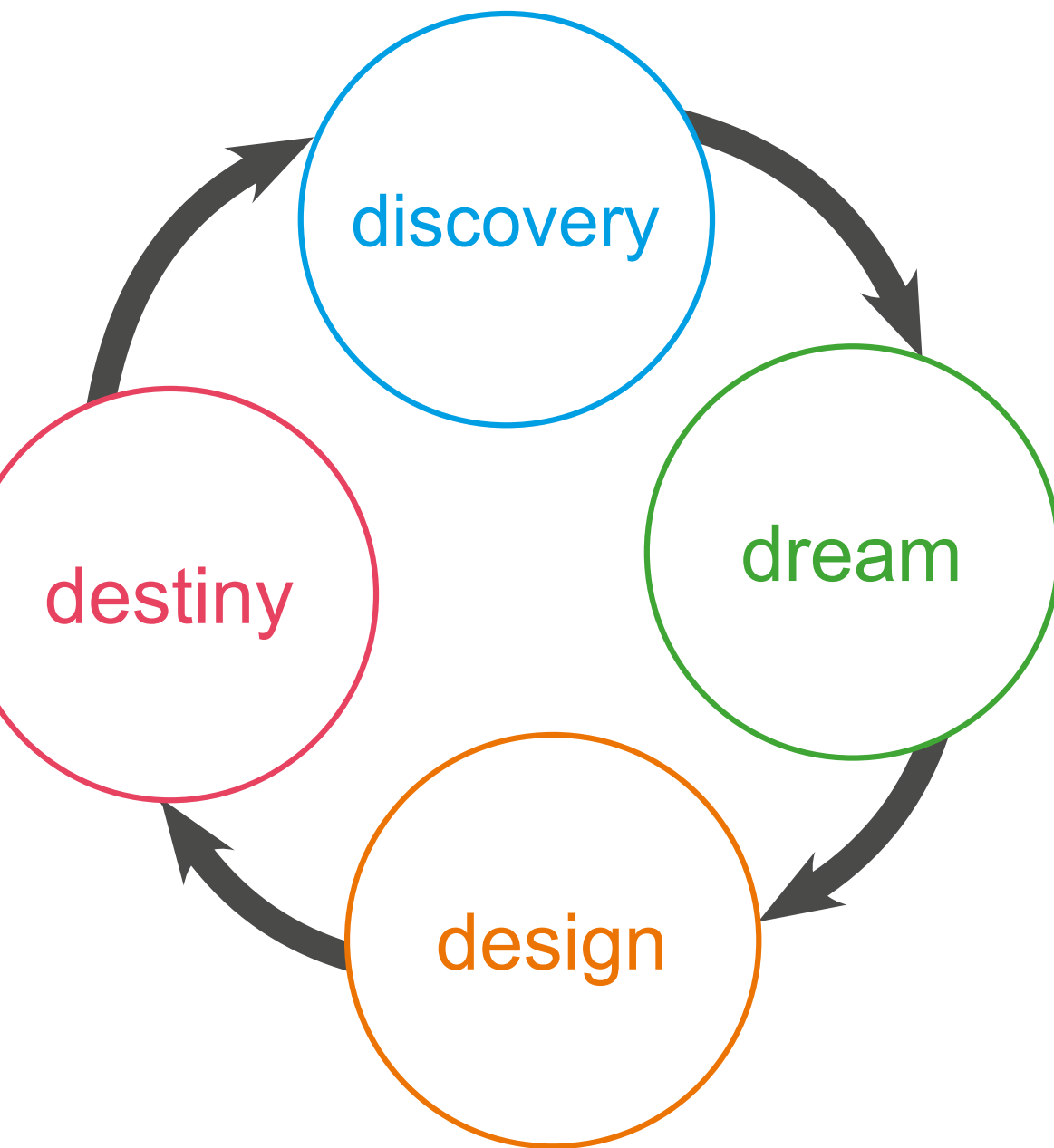
I joined SOS Children's Villages Bulgaria in 1993, the same year the association opened the first SOS Children's Village in the country. In the first years in the national office, I worked as a social worker responsible for admission of children in SOS families and the managing of contacts with their biological parents. Later on, as a national youth care coordinator I was involved in the establishment of 4 youth homes and also during my time as a family strengthening advisor, we opened four family counselling centres. In April 2010, I assumed a position in the International Office Region for Central Eastern Europe & Commonwealth of Independent States Programme department I occupy today.

I am happy to have grown up in a wonderful family, with my brother and sister. We spent unforgettable summer holidays in the countryside with our grand- and great-grandparents. Bearing in me, memories spanning three generations is something that makes my life rich. I got married in 1998 and five years after, our son Georgi was born. Georgi has a great sense of humour. "I have a 'winter granny' where I go each day after school and a 'summer granny' where I spend my two months holidays". So he captures his experiences with his grandmothers.

I actively work for the establishment of modern child protection system in Bulgaria. I am an active member of several working groups on state level for changes in legislation on child welfare.

I spend and invest time in my son, his hobbies and happiness, as I am sure that very, very soon the situation will change! We like very much long walks and talks, excursions, meetings with friends and relatives. I like to read and take care of the flowers on the balcony.

”



Harvesting workshop process steps in a nutshell

Here you find a summary about what is, what might be and what will be in Harvesting 2015 participants' work lives.

See "Extracting knowledge" on page 8.



Discover the story on page 39

Living the vision

Impact the live of youth through love and respect

Aster Asfaaw, Ethiopia

Dream What might be
Happy childhood

Design What will be
Happy childhood moments

Destiny Milestones for creating the envisioned future

- "Happy Childhood Moments" project idea developed (10/15)
- Projected & secured (12/2015)
- "UBUNTU – talent search" project launched in at least 2 countries (01/16)
- National UBUNTU talent show program organised in at least 2 countries (12/16)
- Inter-country UBUNTU talent show program conducted (06/16)



Discover the story on page 43

Back to our origin

The importance of putting child first

Yara Maria Lanfredi de Andrade, Brazil

Dream What might be
Child first

Design What will be
Putting the child first

Destiny Milestones for creating the envisioned future

- Putting the child at first
- Bi-monthly staff meeting will take place at one programme near the National Office so we can see the purpose of our work (09/15)
- Establish a national group to develop a motivating and touching brand / identity awareness seminar (12/15)
- Have an internal communication campaign, using motivating and touching stories (08/16)
- Carry out the brand sensitization seminar throughout the country focusing on our history, mission, vision and our common dream (12/17)



Discover the story on page 47

Now or never

A story of courage to rescue a child from dangerous gang members

Kingstone Zolowere, Malawi

Dream What might be
Strong communities for strong families

Design What will be
Strong Chadza Community for strong families that promote child rights

Destiny Milestones for creating the envisioned future

- Strong Chadza Community for strong families that promote children's rights. Setting the ground (2016)
- Participatory planning (2017)
- Training on child rights (2020)



Discover the story on page 55

Never give up

A short story about Tanuka, a girl who was rescued from a dark life

Saiful Islam, Bangladesh

Dream What might be
Building confident young adults

Design What will be
Confident young adults

Destiny Milestones for creating the envisioned future

- Confident young adult. Organise a discussion session with national management team (07/15)
- Planning meeting with co-workers for taking 2 activities for the year 2016 (11/15)
- Workshop with mgmt.-level co-workers to take over good things to carry out programme (2016)
- Planning meeting to be organised to materialize and 2 actions to be targeted for next year (2018)
- Organise a workshop with like-minded organization (2018)
- Planning meeting to be organised to take over specific tasks (2019)
- Organise a young adult gathering (2020)



Discover the story on page 51

Don't let the story end

Protecting childhood: The biggest challenge of humanity

Rodica Marinoiu, Romania

Dream What might be
Happiness

Design What will be
Common opportunities on community-based activities services

Destiny Milestones for creating the envisioned future

- Common opportunities on activities services
- Pilot project on vacation: common summer and winter activities (07/15)
- Impact evaluation (09/15)
- Smart objective on annual plan (2016)
- Identified opportunities for common services (Local strategy) 2016



Discover the story on page 61

When everything seems to have failed

Mahlalela Buyaphi, Swaziland

Dream

What might be

Building a strong solid foundation for children

Design

What will be

Programmes addressing all children's developmental needs so that they become fully contributing members of society

Destiny

Milestones for creating the envisioned future

- Sharing of vision with management (08/2015)
- Identify each team's strengths and work with them. Develop a plan to impact on the child's life (10/15)
- Identify children's needs (11/15)
- Implement plan (02/16)
- Evaluate impact (05, 08, 11/16)
- Plan for coming year (12/16)



Discover the story on page 75

We are all important

We all have a role to play

Philile Khumalo, Swaziland

Dream

What might be

Ready to leave

Design

What will be

Are you ready to leave?

Destiny

Milestones for creating the envisioned future

- Meet with national director, Data collection on integrated young persons and how they are doing (9/15)
- Share analysed data with all 3 villages, draw action plan on how young persons can be assisted to independent living with the active use of the child development plan (2/16)
- Start implementing action plan (4/16)
- Number of independent youth will increase by 10% and if it works well will share with other member associations



Discover the story on page 71

Teach a man to fish instead of giving him fish

Huỳnh Công Bình, Vietnam

Dream

What might be

Comfortable environment

Design

What will be

Comfortable environment for my SOS Children's Village

Destiny

Milestones for creating the envisioned future

- Comfortable environment for my SOS Children's Village
- Start with myself: Try my best to get high knowledge (after training courses). Spend more time with our co-workers in the village => to understand their strengths + weaknesses => to help them solve their difficulties in their work. (2015)
- To build a warm environment: I remind the behaviour of the colleagues: mothers, teachers => always interested, sympathetic, to help each other. For new positions: to survey, choose appropriate staff, strong-minded, cooperative, in order to take care of the SOS children (2016)
- To pay regular attention to children: maintain healthy relationships in village => setting a good example for children. To create more joy in village. To stimulate conversation with children. To understand them. To solve their troubles in their study life ... (2016)



Discover the story on page 67

One promise

Mohammed Said, Palestinian Territories

Dream

What might be

Unity with community

Design

What will be

Definition of unity

Destiny

Milestones for creating the envisioned future

- Definition of unity
- Run for unity 2016
- Unity Forum 2018
- Unity with Community 2018



Discover the story on page 79

Reunion

Village in touch with integrated young people.
How to network? How to create strong links?

Emmanuel Effirim, Ghana

Dream **What might be**
Connecting with young people around the world

Design **What will be**
Connecting to all integrated young people

Destiny **Milestones for creating the envisioned future**

- Connecting to all integrated young people
- Doing ground work. Get all data of all young people in Ghana (2015)
- Forming national association team (2016)
- Organise networking event (2017)
- Support association to grow (2018)



Discover the story on page 83

Prepare each child best for a good future

Boua Bouakhay, Laos

Dream **What might be**
Go ahead, win together



Discover the story on page 89

If I don't do this who will?

What SOS Children's Villages meant to me
when I was sat at gun point

Vijay Jung Rana, Nepal

Dream **What might be**
Boundless SOS

Design **What will be**
Boundless SOS by 2018

Destiny **Milestones for creating the envisioned future**

- Approval of boards and ND June 2016
- Arrangement of awareness raising programme (12/2016)
- Meeting with local government authority (06/2017)
- Orientation: to the dedicated team about the concept (12/2017)



Discover the story on page 93

Change lives of children after the Civil War

Kirthi Hettiarachchi, Sri Lanka

Dream **What might be**
Stability towards 2030

Design **What will be**
Secured Children's Village Programme at Piliyandala. Stepping Stone:
Contribute to the sustainable path from Piliyandala Children's Village

Destiny **Milestones for creating the envisioned future**

- Contribute to the sustainable path from Piliyandala Children's Village
- Identify core target group and non core target groups (2016) (Awareness to co-workers, stakeholders)
- Prepare the Planning doc (2016)
- Implement outcome of the planning Kindergarten, Hermann Gmeiner School, Medical Centre (2018)
- Contribute 20% to self-sufficient path (2020)



Discover the story on page 97

The power of empowerment

Supportive community

Tiwe Richards, Zimbabwe

Dream **What might be**
Supporting early childhood

Design **What will be**
Sustainable early childhood development centres in the community

- Destiny** **Milestones for creating the envisioned future**
- Sustainable early childhood development centres in the community
 - Approval by ND (12/15)
 - Meeting with all stakeholders (07/16)
 - Three executive committees of the Parents Teachers Association (9/16)



Discover the story on page 101

Floods in Srinagar

Response by SOS Children's Villages India

Maddali Srinivas, India

Dream **What might be**
Back to the future

Design **What will be**
Self-sustainability in all aspects of work

- Destiny** **Milestones for creating the envisioned future**
- Meet national management team (07/2015)
 - Plan for North Zone (08/2015)
 - Finalize zonal plan – HICC (09/2015)
 - Short stay care 1 - 2 projects (12/2015)



Discover the story on page 107

When an SOS mother is leaving

The challenge of a changing environment in residential care for children

Eckhard Thiel, Germany

Dream **What might be**
Flowing change

Design **What will be**
Well working change management in our SOS Children's Village

- Destiny** **Milestones for creating the envisioned future**
- Meeting with direct colleague, look on the actual changing processes we are inv. => Change communication structure. => Building up new group for children with special needs
 - Presentation of results in leading meetings => planning further steps: priorities, responsibility, evaluation
 - Evaluate the changing processes: what worked well? What should be improved?
 - Quality Circle: is in place in 2017 writing down acting rules about changing processes



Claudia Reichl

Hermann Gmeiner Fonds Germany, Germany

Dream **What might be**
Focussing and connecting

Design **What will be**
Giving more support to member associations - working closer together

- Destiny** **Milestones for creating the envisioned future**
- Develop criteria and proposal analysis -> focus on country's decision (08/16)
 - Survey: Need of countries, offer possible support of promoting and supporting associations (12/16)
 - World Café: How to work together?
promoting and supporting associations + countries + general secretariat (2017)



Discover the story on page 27

Witnessing a great change

Teenage pregnancy in SOS Children's Villages

Karin Demuth, International Office Innsbruck, Austria

Dream **What might be**
Value the simple things

Design **What will be**
Have a guideline on teenage pregnancy

Destiny **Milestones for creating the envisioned future**

- Finish Case study
- Publish and promote case study (7/15)
- Have case study, topic discussed in networks and meetings (15/16)
- Receive and work in feedback from regions, countries, young people (16)



Change

Or how we learn from the past.

Maria Dantcheva,
SOS Children's Villages International for Central and Eastern Europe
and the Commonwealth of Independent States, Bulgaria

Dream **What might be**
Prosperity

Design **What will be**
PROSPERITY - 2020 sustainable quality programmes in eight countries of our region

Destiny **Milestones for creating the envisioned future**

- Decision for the training is taken. Topic is defined. (6/15)
- External expert for the training is found. (7/15)
- Scope of the training and topic are defined. (7/15)
- All participants are registered, agenda is sent. (8/15)
- Discussion with management: Do we want to have more interaction with National Associations? (Autumn 15)
- 2-day-training in Brussels in Social Business for 7 to 8 countries of our region (9/15)
- Analyse the training, scope of the topic, next steps (9/15)



Discover the story on page 23

A strong triangle

Where to see the impact of your work as a non-caregiver

Laura Aguirre Castañeda, Peru

Dream **What might be**
Respect

Design **What will be**
Spreading respect for each other!

Destiny **Milestones for creating the envisioned future**

- Approval of National Director (1/16)
- Training workshop (2/16)
- Launching the campaign (3/16)
- Evaluating the impact a year later (3/17)



Discover the story on page 31

Through hardships to the stars

Per aspera ad astra.

Andriy Chuprikov, National Director of SOS Children's Villages Ukraine

Dream **What might be**
Per aspera ad astrum.

Design **What will be**
SOS Ukraine is sustainable..., the first leader in the child protection area in the country.

Destiny **Milestones for creating the envisioned future**

- Business plan for the fundraising development (9/15)
- Advocacy plan development (10/15)
- Feasibility study for the third programme location (12/15)
- Start up programme with Roma people (2017)

Dreams

It would go beyond the scope of this document to describe all dreams dreamed in Harvesting 2015. Find therefore below some visions about what Harvesting participants want more of. They envisioned generative, affirmative and hopeful images of the future. These examples have been sent to us by participants who see them already as parts of their story.

The goal of the second phase in the appreciative inquiry process called “dream” is a vitalizing exploration of “what might be”. People explore their hopes and dreams for activities within their circle of influence, their networks, their organisation, and the world at large. It is the time when “Harvesters” engage in thinking big and out of the box. This goes beyond the boundaries of what has been in the past and builds on strengths learned in the past.

SOS Children’s Villages Ukraine has dreams for its future development!
SOS Children’s Villages Ukraine

- plans to open a third location in the Transcarpathian Region to overcome the problems of Roma children in that region. They would like to create a kind of hub and “methodical center” in the region for cross country cooperation and sharing of experiences of work with Roma people.
- would like to play the main role in the child rights protection advocacy campaigns on a national level together with UNICEF
- would like to develop their own fundraising activities and become a self-sustainable member association

SOS Children’s Villages Ukraine therefore believes that a leader and a team of like-minded and committed people can reach stars and change the world, especially in a country where thousands of children are in need to live in a loving home! According to a saying from Roman Antiquity: “Per aspera ad astra”!

Yara Maria Lanfredi de Andrade, Executive Assistant to the National Director of SOS Children’s Villages Brazil, dreams of her national association by 2020:

- SOS Children’s Villages Brazil will be motivated and self-sustainable performing relevant and recognized work, providing quality service for the children and their families. To achieve this major step we have to put the child first.
- Before taking any major decision, according to Yara it is necessary to remember the SOS Children’s Villages identity, what makes us strong and reliable. How to do this? Follow the footprints of Hermann Gmeiner, the founder of SOS Children’s Villages and respect our values and mission. Furthermore, we should see our vision as common goal: Every child belongs to a family and grows with love, respect and security.

Idea emerged from stories told

In this inspiring phase of dreaming, another idea emerged inspired by the story of Laura Aguirre (see “A strong triangle” on Page 23). What if every child leaving SOS had his or her own photo picture book?

Biography tool

- SOS parents could be invited to make a photo album, eventually also including short comments, showing the development of the individual child.
- One photo book per child. Such a tool enables the identity building of a child or young person and could be handed over when the young adult is leaving the SOS Children’s Villages care system.
- A copy could remain with the care giver(s) and the biological parents.

Destiny

First steps impacting participants' work field:

The above-mentioned dreams show the nascent energy of Harvesting.



Please find below a sample of output of the workshop already implemented by Harvesting 2015 participants. We love to see the Harvesting „fire” burning around the globe. Some participants have already reached some of their milestones. Many of them have already started using tools and ideas in the activities they planned in the Harvesting workshop.



Yara Andrade, Brazil

Destiny

Already creating the envisioned future (Impact Harvesting 2015)

- ✓ Summary of Harvesting sent to all the 23 location directors in Brazil as well as to the management team. All of them could learn about the fantastic experience I had the opportunity to take part in.
- ✓ Management team meeting held at programmes near National Office: core business = always present.
- ✓ In line with the Care for Me! campaign, we will launch a quarterly magazine called Bem Cuidar (Care Well).
Aims:
 - Qualify + disseminate information
 - Map practices and mobilize society to the integral development of children and young people who have lost or are at risk of losing parental care.
- ✓ In January we will establish the Instituto Bem Cuidar (Care Well Institute - a little brother of the Spain Academy).
 - Training for our co-workers
 - Training for other organisations dealing with protection and defence of rights.
 - A first e-learning course will be held still this year.



Rodica Marinoiu, Romania

Destiny

Already creating the envisioned future (Impact Harvesting 2015)

- ✓ I used AI method with a group of young people. Was fabulous!
 - We have books of the young people participating at one of our European Economic Area projects
 - Next step: debates (“world café”).
 - I have all conditions in place to invite these young people to dream and look deeper.
- ✓ Young people have formed their own group: “Teen Titans” (on Facebook)
- ✓ Even though they are from different parts of our county they met in Hemeius and want to meet continuously.



Tiwe Richards, Zimbabwe

Destiny

Already creating the envisioned future (Impact Harvesting 2015)

- ✓ Feedback given to national management team - encouraging response.
- ✓ Meeting with national director planned.
- ✓ Workshops on child protection held for nursery schools in local community.
Kindergarten co-workers taken on a team building trip out of town.
Appreciative Inquiry has given me a new lease of life.



Maddali Srinivas, India

Destiny

Already creating the envisioned future (Impact Harvesting 2015)

- ✓ 2 of the four milestones successfully crossed:
 - Had two meetings of the national management team, came up with the draft vision of SOS India for 2020 and 2030
 - Final vision and road map to be made after getting inputs of board members. Final strategy is expected to be ready by Nov 15.



Eckhard Thiel, Germany

Destiny

Already creating the envisioned future (Impact Harvesting 2015)

- ✓ Short workshop input at regional meeting on “Intercultural Openness” about “The international embedding of SOS Germany into the worldwide federation” (30 Sept/1 Oct)

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Harvesting short films

List of trailers to stories told in Harvesting 2015

- Harvesting 2015 Workshop – Trailers of stories told by workshop participants
- Harvesting 2014 Workshop – Experience exchange and knowledge sharing
- Harvesting 2012 Workshop – The story about Harvesting

To watch all films see <http://www.hermanngmeineracademy.org/HarvestingWorkshopVideos>

Harvesting workshop team



Irene Gleirscher

Head of project
Adult Training

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“I am thankful to be involved in Harvesting! It is so enriching to see such a diverse group of people discovering their strengths jointly, to feel the trust amongst them grow, to watch the network being alive, and to grow myself by hosting this experienced colleagues together with a committed and great team.



Walter Waltz Anyanwu

Team member
Spirit-ubuntu

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“Harvesting enlivens and enriches me so much. Then, it brings home to me what it really takes to serve the child at risk:

- SOS Children's Villages
- It's everywhere that
- You bring in the very best you can
- I bring in the very best I can
- We bring in the very best we can
- To save the child at risk.



Christian Honold

Team member
Managing Director

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“Harvesting to me means to enter a world of exciting labour experiences enriching me in my perception of the SOS world.



Margret Steixner

External consultant
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“Every culture has its own way to celebrate the harvesting season, but all connect it with joy, gratitude and appreciation. All these words are also true for HARVESTING and I felt privileged to be a member of the team, that prepares the room for all the special stories to be told.

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in the Harvesting workshop 2015 possible.

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