

# What inspires us in our work

SHARING OUR TREASURE TROVE  
HARVESTING WORKSHOP 2019



SOS CHILDREN'S  
VILLAGES  
HERMANN GMEINER ACADEMY



# What inspires us in our work

## Sharing our treasure trove

### Stories and Dreams Harvesting Workshop

**May–June 2019**

**Team Education, Hermann Gmeiner Academy**

This booklet represents the output of this year's Harvesting workshop. 21 long-standing co-workers from all SOS regions shared their inspiring stories about moments of flow – this year related to the trust they've experienced in their working life in SOS Children's Villages.

From 27 May to 3 June 2019, the co-workers participated in a Harvesting workshop and shared their valuable insights, primarily within the workshop group but also beyond. This compilation enables a sharing and learning amongst a wider audience.

Read about what gives life to our colleagues and what keeps them strong. Let yourself be inspired by their aspirations for a flourishing future for SOS Children's Villages that will enable us to support more children and families around the world.



**SOS CHILDREN'S  
VILLAGES**  
HERMANN GMEINER ACADEMY

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# Preface

## What is Harvesting?

Harvesting time is when SOS Children's Villages co-workers from around the world come together to share stories about the best moments in their SOS working life. In the yearly Harvesting workshops, we – the Hermann Gmeiner Academy, along with the international Human Resources and Organisational Development (HROD) team – invite long-standing co-workers to discover, dream and design their ideal future for SOS Children's Villages within their circle of influence. We also hold knowledge-sharing sessions, where Harvesting participants share their rich and diverse work experiences with colleagues from the International Offices through storytelling. In this way, colleagues from different countries engaged in a variety of work fields and contexts share their extensive knowledge on issues such as:

- quality care in the best interest of the child
- taking action in crises
- personal commitment in difficult situations
- overcoming misconceptions for fundraising opportunities
- consolidation of consistent information for the opportunity to grow.

This year we focused on the topic of trust – how trust is essential to our co-workers' daily work and for feeling connected to the SOS mission and vision: Every child belongs to a family and grows with love, respect and security.

The participants' stories and dreams gathered from the workshop process and conveyed in this booklet offer opportunities for learning at the level of the individual, the workshop group and the international federation.

Before we explore these stories, however, let us draw attention to the meaning of the word harvest. Harvesting is a time of reaping, gathering and bringing in the fruits of past labours. It is a bridge between the past, present and future, since harvesting includes selecting the best fruits of this season and preserving its seeds for future planting.

In businesses and social organisations, what is sewn, planted, managed and harvested is – among many other products – knowledge.

# Why do we Harvest?

As an international non-profit organisation, SOS Children's Villages is faced with similar management tasks as transnational groups and corporates. One such question is: how can SOS Children's Villages best manage the vast knowledge of its employees in the most effective way? How can this knowledge be used to further its vision and mission?

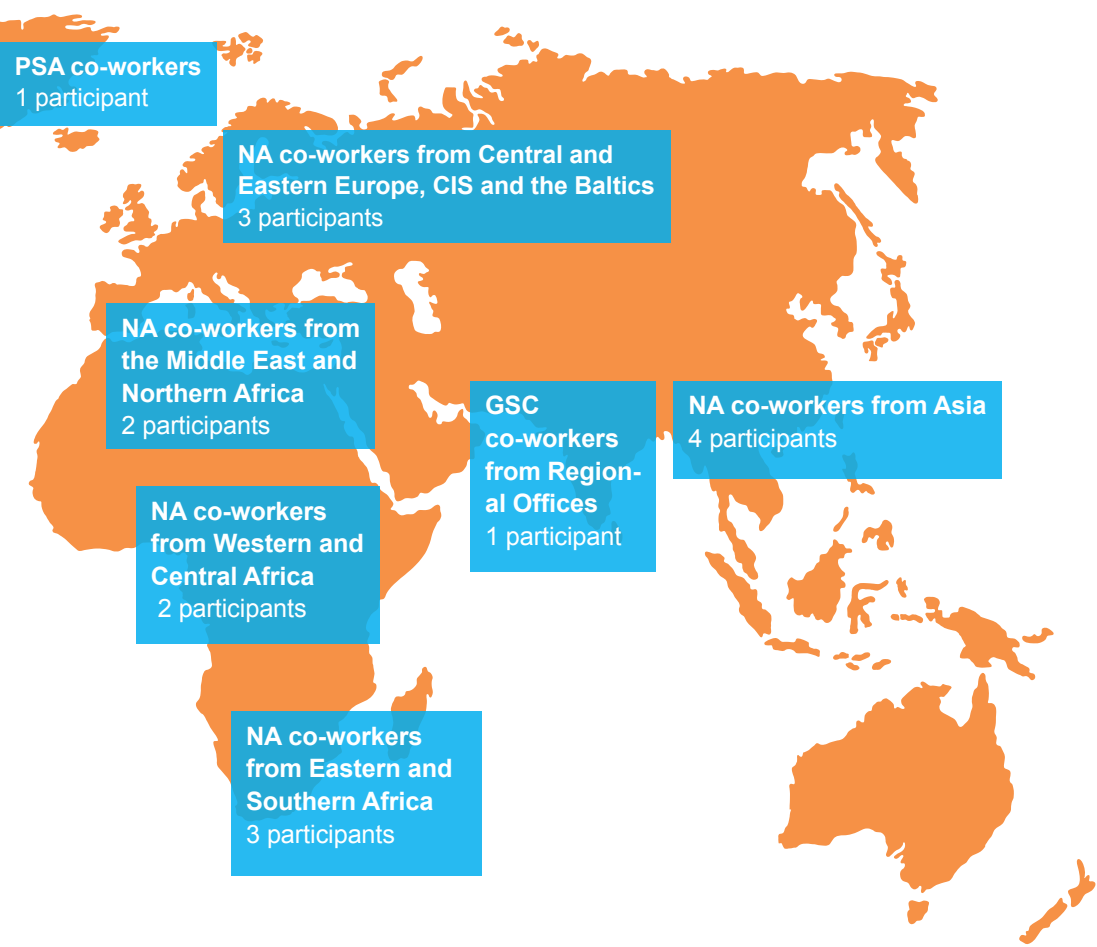
The large amount of knowledge collected in an organisation is often not articulated and, therefore, not available to others. It is found in the heads of its members, in procedures and structures, in habitual behaviour and ways of thinking.

Around 40,000 SOS Children's Villages co-workers perform wonderful work, often under very challenging conditions. In Harvesting workshops, participants explore and share tacit knowledge by storytelling, thus bringing successful and inspiring work experiences to the attention of the organisation. Their knowledge becomes tangible and, as a result, accessible.

However, Harvesting is not just an instrument for knowledge transfer: it goes far beyond that. One important effect is that people feel appreciated by being invited to share their experiences in the form of storytelling and listening. By seeing how their story fits into the bigger picture of the organisation and realising the power of

their joint mission, co-workers attain a sense of belonging to SOS Children's Villages, also as a federation. See below the regional distribution of participants of the workshop 2019.





**PSA co-workers**  
1 participant

**NA co-workers from Central and Eastern Europe, CIS and the Baltics**  
3 participants

**NA co-workers from the Middle East and Northern Africa**  
2 participants

**NA co-workers from Western and Central Africa**  
2 participants

**NA co-workers from Eastern and Southern Africa**  
3 participants

**GSC co-workers from Regional Offices**  
1 participant

**NA co-workers from Asia**  
4 participants

# Aims of Harvesting

The overall goal of Harvesting is to discover what works well in the day-to-day activities of SOS Children's Villages, what gives strength to SOS co-workers and what we in the organisation can build upon. The aims of Harvesting are further defined on three levels:

## The individual level

- We make conscious the tremendous expertise of our co-workers, thus making implicit knowledge explicit
- We enable co-workers to use this explicit knowledge as a basis for further development and improvement in their daily practice
- We offer tools for creative action towards a desired future for SOS Children's Villages
- We appreciate and value co-workers as individuals and as bearers of experience and knowledge

## The workshop group level

- We ensure intensive sharing of knowledge and experiences prepared as stories
- We enable face-to-face exchange in a diverse group of co-workers
- We learn from each other in terms of our different working contexts

## The organisation level

- We generate a feeling of mutual understanding, solidarity and closeness among participants and an affiliation with SOS Children's Villages worldwide
- We ensure knowledge-sharing with co-workers who do not participate directly in the Harvesting workshop group
- We provide condensed knowledge to decision makers in the organisation

# How are participants selected?

Mandated and supported by the board<sup>1</sup> of the Hermann Gmeiner Academy, the Academy and the international Human Resources Organisational Development team invite co-workers to the annual Harvesting workshops. Co-workers are either nominated by their supervisors or self-nominated, and are selected for the workshops by their regional HROD directors. In order to allow for smooth knowledge sharing and exchange, participants must:

- Be capable of working and communicating in English
- Be open to sharing their experiences and willing to engage in an intense participatory process
- Have a minimum of 5 years of experience within SOS Children's Villages
- Have a minimum of 5 years left until retirement

As diversity is essential for a fruitful exchange, co-workers from all Member Associations – from National Associations (NA) to Promoting and Supporting Associations (PSA) to the General Secretariat (GSC) – are welcome to take part. HROD decides on the final list of participants, taking diversity into account in terms of the number of years of service in SOS Children's Villages as well as geographical and professional background. Ideally, the group should consist of co-workers from all working fields. The regional distribution of participants in 2019 is illustrated in the map on p. 6/7.

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<sup>1</sup> Kay Vorwerk, Managing Director of SOS CV Germany e.V. and current President of Hermann Gmeiner Academy, Norbert Meder, CEO of SOS Children's Villages International, Wilfried Vyslozil, Chairman of HGFD e.V., and Christian Moser, MD of SOS CV Austria.



# Methodology

## Appreciative Inquiry

Organisations and human beings grow in the direction in which they focus their attention. In Harvesting workshops, we use the **Appreciative Inquiry (AI) approach** and focus on what works well in participants' daily work activities.

We believe it is more effective to ask,

*“What do you want more of?” or  
“What do you want to see grow  
stronger or better?”*





than to look for weaknesses, mistakes and problems. Research on positive psychology also shows that the act of asking questions already influences co-workers of an organisation in some way.

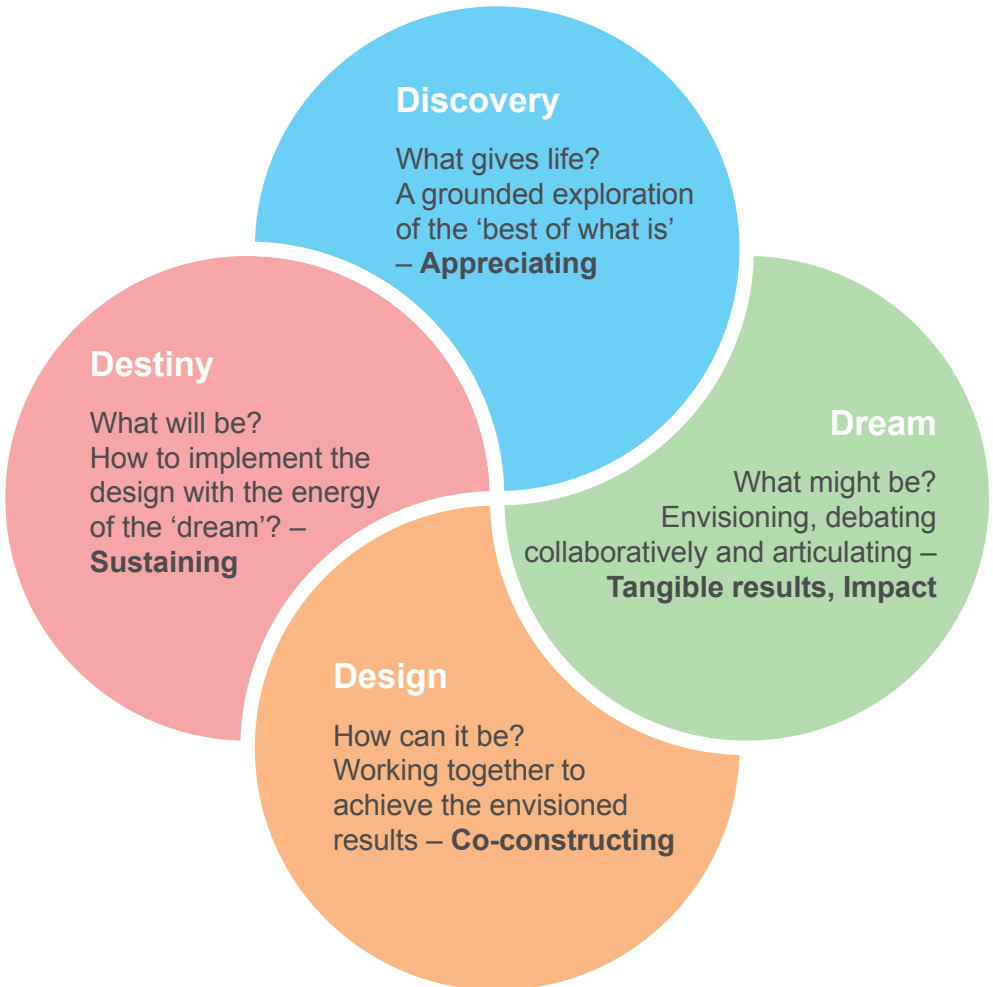
People generally show more confidence and readiness to journey to the future when they know what to carry forward and what to build on because it worked well in the past.

We apply the AI approach to the individual workshop participant and combine it with methods that foster open dialogue, such as Storytelling, Collective Story Harvesting, World Café, Design for Wisser Action and World Kitchen. For more information on these methods, please find the Harvesting Curriculum and Handbook on our “Harvesting Network” workspace on the Collaboration Platform.



# The 4-D Cycle

The 4-D Cycle of the AI approach is a process of discovering the positive elements of the past and carrying them into the future. The first three stages – Discovery, Dream, and Design – take place during the Harvesting workshop. The last phase – Destiny – is a long-term process that co-workers are encouraged to act on after returning to their workplace.



# Discovery

In the first phase of the workshop, we invite participants to tell a story about a “flow moment” in their SOS work lives. Within the workshop group, participants share an experience of being entirely focused on and energised for a specific task or project in their given function, perhaps even when they were exerting the maximum possible effort. They start telling a story about a flow moment:

*“Flow is the feeling of pleasure resulting from enjoyment over the attainment of set goals, the fulfilment of desired expectations, the feeling of being in harmony with the experiences of the moment and of achieving previously unexpected success.”*

*Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi 1990:49*

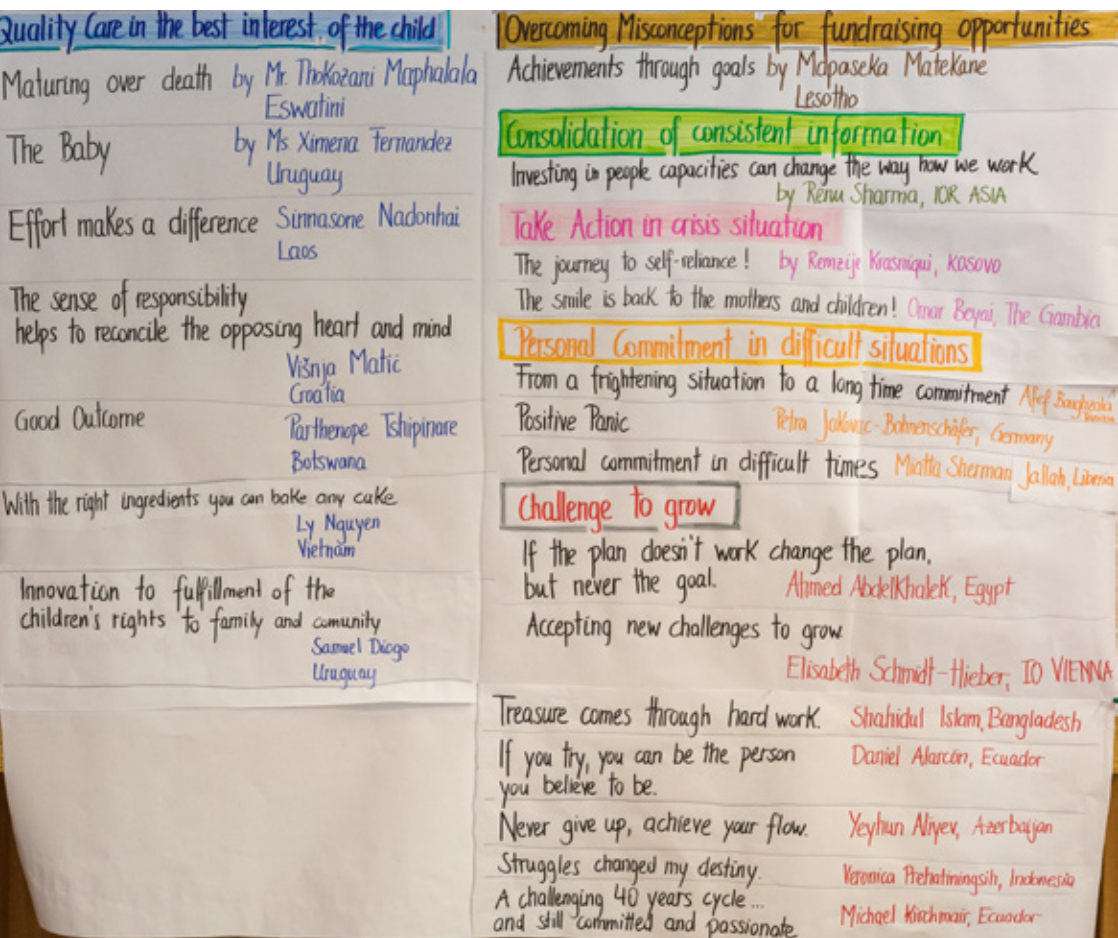
They share their stories in small groups of three. The storytelling is prompted by an invitation such as: “Please think back to a time in your working life when you experienced trust and at the same time you felt fully absorbed and energised and truly enjoyed the activity you had at hand. Take me to this moment when something special happened and trust prepared the ground for action to act.”

By doing this activity, participants discover strengths and solutions that they or the organisation already have, as well as the things that bring them joy. We then extract the life-giving forces from participants’ stories and collect them in a mind map. These key topics illustrate the collective wisdom about what gives life to SOS Children’s Villages based on the specific experiences of this group of SOS co-workers in the Harvesting workshop.



Next, the participants begin drafting their stories in a writers' lab. Each participant presents the title and topic of his or her story. The group then tries to categorise the stories into topic clusters that represent the chapters of this booklet. During this process, we come to see our multiple perceptions. Not all colleagues have the same view of the topic clusters or where each story should go.

Clusters are therefore reviewed jointly. The photo below shows the final allocation of the stories under the following topics:





## Dream

With their discoveries in hand, participants move on to the second phase – they start “dreaming”. Dreaming allows participants to increase and expand in strength, life and energy.

### We ask them questions such as

- What could be better in SOS Children’s Villages?
- What might be different within your sphere or circle of influence in SOS Children’s Villages?
- What are your dreams for the future?
- What is the world calling for?

Harvesting participants start to think about what they want to see grow in the organisation to serve as catalysts for achieving this positive change. Asking questions like these sets the scene for the individual to exercise his or her potential in “creative envisioning” for SOS Children’s Villages. The output of this process step is tangible symbols made of wax and a written description of the dream.



The more tangible our dreams are, the higher the chance that we will realise them. In order to define the dream clearly, each participant first explains it to a small group of colleagues.

Later every “Harvester” presents his or her dream to the workshop group. Experiencing this concentration of future aspirations all together releases a great deal of energy for change and motivation.



These creative and collaborative exercises bring dreams to a level that is personal and achievable for the participants, and set the scene for the next phase of the 4-D Cycle, Design.





## Design

With their dream symbols, participants are now equipped to begin to design. Like an architect, they design the future they believe to be worthy of themselves and of SOS Children's Villages for all others to see. It is very likely impossible to implement a dream through only one "Project" and neither is one person enough to do so. It usually takes several designs and resources to make a dream come true.

The Design phase is a preparation for implementing the design in normal daily life and work. The so-called "Design for Wiser Action" method (see Art of Hosting Core Methods) involves powerful questions, deep listening and a step back from the known. Each participant tries to reach a design that he or she can then present back home in a way that will gain approval for its implementation.





The Nuu-chah-nulth tribe used to say:

*“A person who cannot ask for help cannot be trusted.”*

The “Design for Wiser Action” enables us to obtain support and wise advice for the forthcoming concrete processes we need to facilitate.

Each Harvesting participant fills in a large-sized template. The question to be answered is: “How can I implement my idea later on back home?” The large-sized template allows to use sticky notes that can be changed, replaced and removed and, most of all, it fosters discussion in the group.

**The aim of the process is to unleash the collective wisdom in the room by asking questions like:**

- What is the need behind that idea?
- What is the purpose?
- What group of people need to be involved?
- What methods will most support the group to take wise action?
- What kind of results will serve this wise action?
- Who can support me, who can I partner with?
- Which support (measures) do I need?
- Which infrastructures are needed?  
Etc.



## Destiny

The Discovery, Dream, and Design phases come to a conclusion with the Destiny phase. The continuing creation of an “appreciative learning culture” begins. With new images of the future in mind, the Destiny phase is sustained by nurturing a shared sense of purpose. Wherever the workshop participant may live and work with SOS Children’s Villages, the period of ongoing learning, adjustment and improvisation (like a jazz group) takes place where he or she works for our shared ideals.

The momentum and potential for innovation are extremely high by this stage in the process. In the Harvesting process, when the workshop finishes every participant shares their positive image of the future with their colleagues at home. They discuss what they can and will do to contribute to the realisation of the organisational dream as articulated in the dream phase – jointly we co-create the future of SOS Children’s Villages.

Action commitments then serve as the basis for ongoing activities. These action commitments start at the Harvesting workshop when each participant makes a “Future backwards journey”. This means we define a certain place in the room as the future. From there the participants walk back to the present. On the way, they present their planned milestones to the group. “Their key to sustaining the momentum is to build an ‘appreciative eye

into all systems of the organisation, procedures and ways of working’.

For example, one organisation transformed its department of evaluation studies to valuation studies (dropping the e). Others have transformed surveys, performance management systems, leadership-training programs, diversity initiatives, and so on. The areas for application of AI are far-reaching.” (Cooperrider 2011) Provocative propositions may require the redesign of an organization’s processes and systems. Provocative propositions are

*“Statements that bridge the best of “what is” with the organisation’s vision of “what might be.” It becomes the written articulation of the organisation’s desired future that is written in the present tense to guide the planning and operations in the future. Also known as possibility propositions, possibility statements, or vision statements, they create a positive image or images of the ideal organisation” (The Centre for Appreciative Inquiry)*

The Destiny phase is incomplete and ongoing. It brings SOS Children’s Villages back full circle to the Discovery phase. Appreciative inquiry may result in new affirmative continuous dialogues and continued learning.

# Knowledge-sharing opportunities

One of the aims of Harvesting is to ensure knowledge-sharing with more co-workers beyond the workshop group. In the International Offices Vienna and Innsbruck, more colleagues participate in storytelling sessions with the workshop participants. While listening to participants' stories, the audience focuses on one of these questions:

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

The knowledge gathered from this exchange will be made available separately.







# Fruits of the Harvest

Before we present the individual stories told during the Harvesting workshop 2019, let us focus on the “fruits” of the Harvest. See below the outcomes of the workshop – the insights and knowledge the Harvesting participants distilled by analysing all stories. The following questions guided them:

- What works well in SOS Children’s Villages’ daily activities?

- What gives strength to SOS co-workers?
- What can SOS Children’s Villages build on?

The ‘harvesters’ categorised their insights according to these dimensions. We summarised them on a meta-level to offer the following development opportunities to our organisation:

## What Harvesting Participants learned through storytelling

As explained (see p. 21) Harvesting is all about knowledge sharing through storytelling. Each individual learns something different from each story we hear. What we learn adds to our own experiences, to our environment and beliefs. This leads to a variety of findings that can be derived from one story.

This year we had a “World Café” conversation after two storytelling rounds. We had three rounds of conversation in this knowledge sharing café. In every round harvesting workshop participants as well as colleagues from the International Offices Innsbruck and Vienna tried to answer the questions mentioned above.

The results of the three conversation rounds were then shared in a circle with the Chief Executive Officer Norbert Meder who listened deeply to the findings of the experienced group of co-workers.

## What works well

in SOS Children's Villages' daily activities and organisational process cycles

**All the efforts of SOS Children's Villages are concentrated on the best interest of the child.**

If it is possible to work with the child's extended family, then that is an enormous resource. Often, however, this is not possible.

**SOS Children's Villages values** – trust, commitment, accountability and reliability guide all to reach for the same goals.

**SOS Children's Villages puts children's rights at the centre of their actions.**

**Regional Offices and Member Associations join forces across different departments to achieve better results together.**

Their motto is "Working together instead of working beside each other"

## What gives strength

to SOS co-workers

**SOS Children's Villages values – trust, commitment, accountability and reliability** – help in building trust and relationships with beneficiaries and programme participants. They inspire commitment and motivation in SOS co-workers and guide all to reach for the same goals.

**SOS co-workers across all levels of the organisation are united in taking on responsibility for children's well-being.**

**SOS co-workers across all levels of the organisation are willing to contribute to good teamwork and appreciate a positive work environment.**

**Involving stakeholders through dialogue creates strong partnerships**

# What can we build on

within SOS Children's Villages

**SOS Children's Villages can rely on many resilient co-workers who never lose hope even in tough times.**

**SOS Children's Village's values – trust, commitment, accountability and reliability** – inspire strong commitment and high motivation of SOS co-workers. SOS Children's Villages can stay true to its mission and values while innovating and changing the services.

**SOS Children's Villages can build on a strong alternative care model** that allows many programme participants to live a self-reliant life after leaving care.

**SOS Children's Villages has strong partnerships with communities and stakeholders.**

Member associations' co-workers are able to count on wide networks and on the help of local communities, so that programmes can even be run with local support. This is possible because of the impact of the SOS Children's Village's work, which is widely acknowledged.

**SOS Children's Villages can build on a great wealth of experience, looking back at the roots of the organisation and the challenges of that time.**

Then and now SOS can build on a solid foundation in terms of well-qualified staff and a good reputation in many countries.

# What works well within SOS Children's Villages



**All the efforts of SOS Children's Villages are concentrated on the best interest of the child. If it is possible to work with the child's extended family, then that is an enormous resource. Often, however, this is not possible.**

- "With National Direction, we decided to start a deinstitutionalization process, working in the prevention of the separation of children from families and in the family reintegration of the children who were already separated. Deinstitutionalization, for us, mainly means to improve and strengthen the work with families. This work is essential to ensure the children's right to family life." **Samuel Diogo, Page 67**
- "We are prepared for a long term care if necessary, but before that, we have to do everything possible to achieve family reintegration. If the children only stayed a short time with us, because they went back to their family, it is much better!" **Samuel Diogo, Page 68**
- "Considering [her, is a young girl who was being cared for in the SOS Children's Village] total resistance to adults and their attitudes and requirements and to her SOS mother, who was totally helpless and desperate, I decided that we had to take a step we did not want to take and find her a different care setting. At the same time I saw a twelve-year-old girl (who was pretending to be much older), who was growing up in SOS but outside the SOS Village had nobody to care for her. I asked myself how I was going to tell her that she had to leave. She was just an unhappy child who responded to difficult

circumstances in the only way she knew." **Višnja, Page 51**

- "Strengthened by team support, with sincere empathy and care, confidence and resolution, I talked with Anna and the SOS mother and prepared them for the upcoming leaving. It was very hard for both of them, also for me. But in this situation somebody had to take responsibility, be brave and purposeful, which was me." **Višnja, Page 52**



**SOS Children's Villages values – trust, commitment, accountability and reliability**

**– guide all to reach for the same goals.**

- "We talked about trust: trust has a great significance, trust in colleagues, also trust in the future. As 'Harvesters', it can mean a lot and has a great significance for SOS Children's Villages because, together, we can reach our goals and do everything and our best for the children." **Jeyhun, Video\***
- "I was aware that the village needed the contributions of sponsors in these difficult times to continue providing quality care for the children. With these in mind, I muster the courage and continued working to ensure that my team achieves its goals." **Miatta, Page 112**
- "I am sure our common vision, mission, and values at SOS Children's Villages guide our actions, decisions and relationships if we are to achieve our common goals." **Ahmed, Page 119**

\* Unpublished Harvesting 2019 interviews, video recording, raw material, Hermann Gmeiner Academy





## SOS Children's Villages puts children's rights at the centre of their actions.

- “On the one hand, it is about prioritizing the right to grow in safety and avoiding a life of vulnerability. On the other hand, it is about the possibility of Mariana to finish her growth and maybe one day to be a lovely mother. What this story is trying to convey is that sometimes we have to make difficult decisions to create new possibilities.” **Ximena, Page 41**
- “Every day I try to have a voice for the children and family needs, and to spread out and to live for these rights. I try to convince every person, stakeholder and colleague in order to get more and more support and also to enable our children to enjoy the rights that they have according to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and The Universal Declaration of Human Rights.” **Remzije, Video**
- “You must be really really patient and take your time to understand each and every person. Don't be told about the person, take your time to know the person yourself.” **Parthenope, Video**
- “Fuad's situation was a little bit different because his mother was alive. Despite this factor I decided to try and collected all necessary documents describing the young boy's biography and made an appointment with the college director. I had to travel three times for 200 km from the hometown to that college with Fuad trying to make a number of appointments with the college's director and the Human Rights Department. Our goal was to inform them that we were unaware of where Fuad's mother was and what she was doing at that moment. Every time during meetings they told us „We can't accept Fuad, we need confirmation proving that his mother passed away”.  
...  
“In some moments, I wanted to give up and leave everything on his own way. Although, by knowing Fuad and his ambition, determination to get an education and his heart-lighting words

made me change my mind and try again. Fortunately, for us, during our final visit, Fuad and I managed to convince them that we neither had any information about Fuad's mother nor about his relatives. We also produced a statement proving that he was really living in SOS Ganja Village for over 7 years and that his mother has never visited him during that period”.

**Jeyhun, Page 141**



## Regional Offices and Member Associations join forces across different departments to achieve better results together. Their motto is “Working together instead of working beside each other”.

- “Fortunately, we received a kind support from the International Office Region Asia and our colleagues from SOS Children's Villages Nepal, who had experience in ERP before and would help me and the team in implementing the programme.” **Sinnasone, Page 45**
- “The time came when everyone „together“ had to establish a strategic objective and actions. Regarding the management system given at that time that went beyond their toughest positions. It was about joining forces to improve the quality of life of children / girls, adolescents and families and not allow them to be affected by this process.” **Daniel, Page 136**

# What SOS Children's Villages can build on



**SOS Children's Villages can rely on many resilient co-workers who never lose hope even in tough times.**

- "This was my first experience and I managed to stay strong and support my clients through the difficult times, starting from Teddy until her death and after her death, supporting the family. I felt I needed to be strong for Teddy's sake, as she had shown me a lot of trust – we had shared information that she had not shared with her family."

**Thokozani, Page 35**

- "I met Mariana when she was 13 years old. She was not an easy person. She always had problems with someone, sometimes she stole and sometimes she hurt herself or even others. It was difficult for her to have a relationship. She did not trust anyone and I had to work every day to earn her trust. Being with her was always a challenge. I felt frustrated so many times. I tried again and again to help her."

**Ximena, Page 41**

- "I was feeling so discouraged and sad when many flood-affected children stood around me as soon as I reached the temporary shelters where children and people were located in Sanamxay District. They ran to me in hope to receive food and some donations. The tragedy occurred in early evening on 23rd July in Attapeu Province. I was assigned by the National Director of SOS Children's Villages Laos, Mr Soumata Dengchampa, to lead the team and our SOS youth volunteers in implementing the Emergency Relief Programme. It was my first experience with ERP and it was great for me to do something to support children in this tragedy."

**Sinnasone, Page 45**



**SOS Children's Village's values – trust, commitment, accountability and reliability – inspire strong commitment and high motivation of SOS co-workers. We can stay true to our mission and values while innovating and changing the services.**

- "Besides trust, commitment is a key element, which gives strength in our daily work, something that has once again become clear in conversations with colleagues from around the world during Harvesting." **Elisabeth, Page 125**
- "Anyway, the main message of my story was not about getting income or money. It was mainly about how important it is a person to be trusted, appreciated and acknowledged. These feelings will give a positive impact to one's personality, improvement and performance, the feeling to give the best they can for their job." **Veronica, Page 149**
- "I believe young people from alternative care need empowerment and support from all stakeholders in order to start independent lives. The most sustainable approach, from my point of view, is to educate them for a fundamental mindset and behavioural change, providing them with soft skills more than any sort of financial support." **Omar, Page 96**
- "As I now serve as the Fund Development and Communications Manager, my personal commitment to ensuring that every child succeeds in life continues to inspire me. My goal is to develop and implement several innovative approaches to mobilize resources locally and grow SOS Liberia's local income to reach many more needy children." **Miatta, Page 113**



## **SOS Children's Villages can build on a strong alternative care model that allows**

**many programme participants to live a self-reliant life after leaving care.**

- “Slowly she learnt how to interact with other people. She even stopped getting into fights and was more involved in physical activities. Mpho started to change even more when she began going to church. Today as I speak, Mpho is married and has a child she adores. She is leading an independent life and living her dream. At times when we are not busy with work or school, we meet up for a walk around the shopping mall or for ice cream.” [Parthenope, Page 57](#)
- “Tan went on to study table tennis after the entrance examination, which was quite easy for him. Later he came back to me with the good news that he had passed all the English tests at his university no matter how difficult they were. I wish I could have a picture of him to show you. It is a picture of a very nice young man who is now a table tennis trainer, full of energy, enthusiasm, love and happiness. Happiness, yes, because he also got married last June.” [Ly, Page 63](#)
- “Sreya is now studying in the 2nd semester of a BSc degree in Electrical and Electronic Engineering. She passed her Secondary School Certificate Examination in 2013, gaining GPA<sup>1</sup>-4.63. After passing the SSC Examination<sup>2</sup> she was admitted to a college for general education. [...] I personally called on her and asked to know about her career planning. She told me that she did not find studying interesting. I realised that she would find nothing of interest in general education. Then I suggested that she attends a technical training course and

1 Grade Point Average

2 Secondary School Certificate, also called SSC or Matriculation examination, is a public examination in Bangladesh

gets admitted to an engineering college. So she was admitted to an engineering college to study a 4-year Diploma Engineering Course. She happily took up the opportunity! [...] We counselled her as per our capacity. She received our counselling and started to lead a normal life.” [Islam, Page 129](#)



## **SOS Children's Villages has strong partnerships with communities and stakeholders. Member**

**associations' co-workers are able to count on wide networks and on the help of local communities, so that programmes can even be run with local support. This is possible because of the impact of the widely acknowledged work.**

- “New challenges help us grow. At the same time, they are an opportunity to broaden our skills to advance values and principles we work for and build new networks. This is why I like taking on new challenges.” [Elisabeth, Page 123](#)
- “My dream is about generating and widening the “product” of sponsorship to give the child sponsors contact and the organisation stable income; widening sponsorships to family strengthening and children and young people in reunification or autonomy; introducing also the local sponsorship for all these children; always listening to my heart, creating a stable, beautiful future.” [Michael, Page 156](#)
- “Fortunately, we received a kind support from the International Office Region Asia and our colleagues from SOS Children's Villages Nepal, who had experience in ERP before and would help me and the team in implementing the programme. In addition, we also received a good cooperation from the Governor of Attapeu Province, especially the Social Welfare Department, who always provided us with information and gave us authorization in

working with the flood-affected people and children.” [Sinnasone, Page 46](#)

- “My dream is to become a stable organisation that works hard on the children’s rights and well-being which could be achieved by working with many partners.” [Remzije, Page 90](#)



**SOS Children’s Villages can build on a great wealth of experience, looking back at the roots of the organisation and the challenges of that time. Then and now SOS can build on a solid foundation in terms of well-qualified staff and a good reputation in many countries.**

- “SOS as an international charity organization is well known all over

the world as well as in our country, Azerbaijan. It is also famous and highly respected. As far as I’m concerned, I have always dreamed about working in a charity organisation and being able to support and contribute in helping people and children in need.”

[Jeyhun, Page 141](#)

- “The origin is very inspiring for us, as we’ve seen in Imst and also in Innsbruck, but I still think that we need to do more for all SOS co-workers in order to keep having strong people that help children and families in need. There is a need to invest in capacity building and in opportunities to share experiences, learning, good practice and the challenges that we face every day.”

[Remzije, Video](#)

## What gives strength to SOS co-workers



**SOS Children’s Village’s values – trust, commitment, accountability and reliability – help in building trust and relationships with beneficiaries and programme participants.**

- “Over time, my relationship with Mpho grew stronger and she began to trust me a bit. I was able to correct and guide her in dealing with communication and interpersonal relations with other children and elders. Once the trust was there, my advances were welcomed and embraced by her.” [Parthenope, Page 59](#)
- “It was very rewarding for me to support and care for her until her last breath. It was more than what a salary gives me. I

felt I had done the right thing in relating to her the way I did.” [Thokozani, Page 37](#)

- “My dream is about every children experiencing true love in an SOS Village environment. The true love means the children will get what they really need – not only about “outside need”, but mostly the inside, which covers being trusted, accepted and appreciated.” [Veronica, Page 150](#)
- “As I was going home, I was deeply touched by our conversation and how brave she was to talk to me about something that she said she had never told anyone before. This made me appreciate her even more, for the trust she showed in me.” [Thokozani, Page 36](#)



**SOS co-workers across all levels of the organisation are willing to contribute to good teamwork and appreciate a positive work environment.**

- “The harvesting team helped me a lot. I built confidence because of the group.” **Ximena, Video**
- “It was the happiest day in his life and in my life because, together we did it, we achieved our goals.” **Jeyhun, Video**
- “I am grateful to all of my colleagues who were involved in my teamwork to achieve the goal, National Director and other line managers who supported me and finally the Honorary President, Mr. Helmut Kutin by whom I was inspired to work with SOS Children’s Villages.” **Mohammad, Page 132**
- “At the end, I saw signs of deep gratitude for the work done and recognition, even from the Regional Director who, after his initial distrust, was able to close that gap with a sincere hug.” **Daniel, Page 135**
- “Even if a situation is crazy or horrible and you do not know what to do, and even when you start to panic, you can turn this into positive energy to take action by doing the right thing at the right time. Just keep your courage, be strong and never give up!” **Petra, Page 108**



**Involving stakeholders through dialogue creates strong partnerships**

- “Afterwards, I went back to the companies that had rejected my proposals to explain to them how SOS Children’s Villages operates and why it has that beautiful infrastructure. We invited them to some SOS events, such as Hermann Gmeiner’s birthday on 23rd June, so that they could really get to know what SOS Children’s Villages is all about. Some now sponsor the events that we host, while we are still lobbying some others to support us.” **Mapaseka, Page 76**



**SOS co-workers across all levels of the organisation are united in taking on responsibility for children’s well-being.**

- “My story is about helping a child that had a lot of anger. At first it was difficult dealing with the child, but the more I made the child able to trust me, the easier it became to help.” **Parthenope, Video**
- “I think this harvesting workshop will inspire me to work more for the children.” **Renu, Video**
- “After twenty-two years, I am still here in SOS, trying to help children with the little that I can and participating in their graduation and wedding ceremonies. For most of them, I am their big sister, their confident. For me, most of them are my best friends, my big children.” **Afef, Page 103**
- “In all the processes, we put the fulfilment of children’s right to family life in the national programme planning as a strategic pillar.” **Samuel, Page 68**
- “It is my personal commitment to invest my skills and learn from colleagues, to broaden my skills, to contribute as best as possible to reach our target audiences through the communications we do; to raise awareness of the children and young people we work for; to convince decision-makers that change is needed.” **Elisabeth, Page 125**

# Stories and Dreams

Storytelling is an act of trust – it takes courage from participants to open up and share their experiences with others. It is therefore important for us to honour this act and treat each story in a respectful way. In order to respect the privacy of people mentioned in the stories, names have been changed to maintain confidentiality.

We also aim to present each story in an authentic way. For most Harvesting participants, English is not their mother tongue. Therefore, to maintain the original character of their stories, editing was conducted in a minimal form.

This year, 21 colleagues from 19 countries gathered in the Harvesting workshop 2019. Participants came from different organisational levels and functions, as well as from various backgrounds. The backgrounds of SOS co-workers are so varied that it is often hard for us to imagine what the (work) lives of our colleagues might be like. In order to immerse ourselves in these diverse worlds, a short “bio” of each participant can be found in the banner at the bottom of each story.

The following stories are about the “flow moments” of experienced SOS co-workers, accompanied by their dreams for a flourishing future for SOS Children’s Villages.

# Quality care in the best interest of the child

Being capable of developing strong feelings of belonging and giving someone a strong feeling of connectedness is essential for the development of children and young people in our care.

Our vision at SOS Children's Villages is that "Every child belongs to a family and grows with love, respect and security" (SOS Children's Villages International, Who we are). Our efforts are focused on creating the conditions to make this development of unconditional strong relationship(s) possible.

The following selection of stories contain the above-mentioned aspects in one form or another and describe what SOS Children's Villages stands for and how it provides the best care for children and young people who have lost parental care or are at risk of losing parental care. This includes children whose parents are currently incapable of caring adequately for them for whatever reason.

You will read about how an SOS co-worker supported a sick child until her last breath and you will find out

more about how difficult it can be to make the right decision in different care situations. Another story will lead you into the situation of an emergency relief programme. Read what it takes to support children in these specific circumstances.

Quality care is only possible if there is a relationship of trust. You will read how trust is created and how it functions as a strong enabling component for development but also for academic success. Finally, you will also find a story, which describes the limits of institutional care and how the reintegration into the biological family became an organisational goal in the best interest of the child.







# Thokozani Maphalala

Programme Director,  
SOS Children's Village Mbabane, Eswatini



# Maturing over death

Once upon a time, when I had only been with SOS Children's Villages for a year, there was a moment where I needed to mature and face the death of someone who was very close to my heart. Teddy was a 9-year-old girl who was very reserved and kept to herself most of the time. She was supported by SOS Children's Villages through the Scholarship programme, which was before the introduction of Family Strengthening. She lived in the community close to the SOS Children's Village.

Teddy had poor health due to a chronic illness. This made her skip classes at times, as she would sometimes be very ill. However, she was a very clever and smart girl who, in spite of missing classes, would still pass her class tests as if she had not missed any lessons. Her mother had died from the same illness and she was left with her grandmother and her two elder sisters.

One day Teddy became very ill and she was taken to hospital where she was admitted for treatment. Her elder

sister stayed with her in the hospital and was supporting her, because children are allowed to have someone to help them during their stay in hospital. However, the elder sister struggled with Teddy, because sometimes she would not want to listen to her, like when it was time for Teddy to take her medication she would refuse. They fought like most siblings do when the smaller one is given something to do. This further complicated Teddy's medical condition and her health deteriorated.

When I came to check on her I was told by her sister, Sarah, that Teddy was giving her a hard time, as she was refusing to take medication. When I looked at her, she had an angry face. I greeted her. She didn't respond, trying to frown at me, but she failed as she melted into a smile. We had developed a very good relationship even before she was very ill, so that I would sometimes visit her at her grandmother's place.

I talked to her about taking her medication and she told me, "I am not

“Thokozani joined SOS Children's Villages at a time when he was younger and full of energy. The work with children has made him want to try new and challenging roles. He has since learned to settle in different positions and different environments without fearing the change. The most interesting part for Thokozani was seeing the first children he met when he joined the organisation and how they have made their own successes in the outside world.”



interested and I want to die. Sarah, please give us privacy I need to speak to uncle alone.” She then told me that her mother had died from the same illness that she had, and that was what her mother had told her. The mother had also told her that she might not die, because doctors were working on getting the right medication. She said, “I know I am going to die anyway,” so for her it was useless to take the medication. I managed to convince her to take the medication and she finally did.

### Trust comes in small steps

As I was going home I was deeply touched by our conversation and how brave she was to talk to me about something that she said she had never told anyone before. This made me appreciate her even more, for the trust she showed in me.

At some point, she got weaker and I kept on remembering our discussion. This time she could not even manage to get out of her hospital bed, so she could not go to the toilet and was given nappies to use. This made her very angry and now she did not want anyone next to her because she felt ashamed and was using aggression as a defence. When I came, she had

chased her sister away but the nurses explained the situation to me. When she saw me, she faced the other way and told me, “Please leave me alone.”

I sat next to her and talked to her, even though she was not talking back. I kept at it for some time and then I asked her if she would be happy if I went away and never came back to check on her. She then turned towards me and said, “NO”, with emphasis, and I could see her face melting into a smile again. I asked her if she wanted any assistance at the time and she said, “Yes, please get me the nappies, I am dirty now.” I asked her if she would be comfortable with me cleaning her up and she said she was okay with it. I cleaned her up and she was very happy and we stayed together for a while. Then I left her with her sister.

A few days down the line, she got even weaker and the nurses put her on oxygen, as she was now struggling to breathe. The hospital called me from the office to come quickly, as Teddy needed to see me. When I got there, they told me that she had been calling for me since morning. I went to her and the smile was not there anymore. All I could see was that she was now in severe pain. She stretched her

As an African man, Thokozani has a strong attachment to his immediate and extended family. He now has a family of his own, with four wonderful children. They are his strength and his reason to face each day as it comes, no matter how difficult it may be. In his free time, Thokozani enjoys telling his children stories from his childhood. He also

right hand towards me and in a low voice asked me to hold her hand. I did so and I could tell that this was a really bad time for her.

When I asked where her sister was, I was told that Teddy had asked her to go to town and get her some Kentucky Fried Chicken, as she was craving it. I held her hand and prayed silently that she would not die in my hands. She struggled more to breathe. I called the nurses. The nurse came and she told me that Teddy was dying and I could not let go of her hand until her last breath, and I closed her eyes. I felt a few drops of tears run down my cheeks and quickly tried to stop crying.

### **Taking on responsibility and supporting where we can**

At that moment, I had to be brave and mature very quickly. I also thought about the sister who had gone to town. The sister came back from town with the goodies. I took her to a counselling room in the hospital and told her what had happened. She was very hysterical, as she said this had been her greatest fear. I supported her and she calmed down after a while, and we made telephone calls to the closest mortuaries to store

her sister's body. I took her to her grandmother's home. I then informed everyone of what had happened and this was a very sad moment.

This was my first experience and I managed to stay strong and support my clients through the difficult times, starting with Teddy until her death, supporting the family. I felt I needed to be strong for Teddy's sake, as she had shown me a lot of trust – we had shared information that she had not shared with her family. It was very rewarding for me to support and care for her until her last breath. It was more than what a salary gives me. I felt I had done the right thing in relating to her the way I did even though, when it all started, I had no idea that it would take the direction it did.

Although Teddy passed on, the fact that she felt loved and cared for and that I was someone she could trust, was a big lesson for me. For colleagues I wish that everyone could build a relationship with at least one child that will make an impact in the child's life. I felt I had to go all out to provide care and support, even when faced with my greatest fear.

supports and provides counselling to other individuals who need that service, for the mere satisfaction of helping other people. Thokozani lives in the Kingdom of Eswatini, which is a small landlocked country with beautiful scenery, green vegetation, good nature reserves and various wild animals.



# My Dream

## Sustainability and Stability

My dream is about stable and sustainable programming, where the three balls represent the three stones that create stability in our culture in the Kingdom of Eswatini. This relates to focused programming that creates stability for children, where the team is highly effective and responds to the needs of children and the needs of other stakeholders, such as PSAs. The core care workers and other support staff make a very secure environment for the children.









## Ximena Fernández Andrés

Care Giver Coordinator and Child Protection Focal Point,  
SOS Children's Villages Montevideo, Uruguay

# The Baby

## Changing Lives

I worked with this adolescent for many years... Mariana\* entered the Children's Village when she was a little girl, the elder sister of four brothers. She had no family and she had nobody. Her world was the Village.

I met Mariana when she was 13 years old. She was not an easy person. She always had problems with someone, sometimes she stole and sometimes she hurt herself or even others. It was difficult for her to have a relationship. She did not trust anyone and I had to work every day to earn her trust. Being with her was always a challenge. I felt frustrated so many times. I tried again and again to help her...

### An additional challenge to handle

When she was 16, she became pregnant. I knew that it was not going to be easy but that I had to give her strong support. Sometimes she wanted to have the baby, sometimes not. I went through the process with her, always thinking, "What is the best

for her?" Eventually, we became very close.

Mariana chose me to be with her during childbirth. That day, I was driving to the hospital when the car broke down on the highway. Nobody helped me. I could not be there for her. When I arrived, the baby had already been born. Even now, remembering that moment makes me feel a little sad...

The baby was beautiful. We were all fascinated by him. Every participant in our Village wanted to hold him. However, Mariana could not connect with him and started hitting and rejecting him. The team and I tried so hard to help her be a mother but she could not do it. The risk to life for the baby was very high... I asked the team for help and together we looked for a way to help her, which gave me the strength to make some decisions.

“Ximena works as a psychologist at SOS Children's Villages in Montevideo, Uruguay. She considers the work with people and children as a privilege and strongly believes that professional help can make a difference to all children who have suffered some sort of violation. As many people are involved in the SOS community, she believes that everyone contributes with a “grain of sand” and that this makes their work valuable. In order to



## About finding the right solution and creating new possibilities

We decided to give the child up for adoption for his safety. That was the hardest part. Separating a baby from its mother? Repeating her own story? I knew what the consequences could be, for both.

I was the person to whom she gave him before seeing her baby for the last time. “Okay Mariana, it’s time to say goodbye to Diego\*.” She kissed him, told him that she loved him and gave him to me. It was the first time I saw her cry in silence. I grabbed him in my arms and handed him over to the organisation responsible for the adoption. It was the last time we saw him.

Without a doubt, it was one of the most difficult decisions I had to make but I really believe it was the best for Diego. I think that when we make decisions of that kind, something in us dies but I also think that it gives rise to new possibilities.

On the one hand, it is about prioritising the right to grow in safety and avoiding a life of vulnerability. On the other hand, it is about the possibility of Mariana to finish her growth and maybe one day to be a lovely mother.

What this story is trying to convey is that sometimes we have to make difficult decisions to create new possibilities.

Diego was adopted by a family six months later.

achieve this professional care, Ximena tries her best to make SOS mothers and aunts aware of that.

Growing up in a patchwork family in northern Uruguay, Ximena was taught to tolerate and to belong to a team in good and bad times. Today she has a family with two daughters

# My Dream

## Do Not Give Up on Children's Rights

My dream is about continual fighting for children's rights. To continue with the daily commitment to fight for the right of children and adolescents to grow up and flourish in a safe and protected environment. Don't give up!

In my picture you see that, no matter where that child belongs, growing up in a safe environment is everyone's right.



on her own and is amazed at how life can turn into such an unpredictable adventure. In her spare time she enjoys going to the movies, meeting friends and sharing a meal or drink. She appreciates the wide range of conversation topics in her circle of people and is grateful for every encounter.

”





## Sinnasone Nadonhai

National HROD Director,  
SOS Children's Villages Laos



# Effort makes a difference

The collapse of the dam caused thousands of children and people to become homeless, go hungry and lose their families. SOS Children's Villages Laos, in co-operation with the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare, set up the Child Care Spaces to heal their minds and return the smile to children during this hard time in the southern part of Laos.

## My first vivid experiences

I was feeling so discouraged and sad when many flood-affected children stood around me as soon as I reached the temporary shelters where children and people were located in Sanamxay District. They ran to me in hope to receive food and some donations. The tragedy occurred in early evening of 23rd July in Attapeu Province. I was assigned by the National Director of SOS Children's Villages Laos, Mr Soumata Dengchampa, to lead the team and our SOS youth volunteers in implementing the Emergency Relief Programme (ERP). It was

my first experience with the ERP and it was great for me to do something to support children in this tragedy.

During the time I worked there, I had an opportunity to talk to one old woman named "Pheang". She smoked a homemade cigarette. She explained how the water had come fast and destroyed everything, such as houses, trees and domestic animals. The water was 10 to 15 meters high and nobody knew where it came from and what had happened. She tried to call for her family and looked for a safe place to escape the water. Luckily, she was able to climb up into a tall tree and hang there for the night. She could not find her family members and in her mind she feared that they were no more.

Pheang also saw a poor little child fall out of her mother's arms into the fast strong current and her mother immediately decided to jump down in search of her child. She saw some old people fall out of the tree into the wa-

“Sinnasone started his career with SOS Children's Villages in 2006 as a Junior Sponsorship Coordinator. Since then, in order to keep expanding his knowledge, he has worked hard to improve his English, accepted assignment tasks from the ND and the office, and asked for support from his supervisors and colleagues about what he did not know or did not manage well. As a result, Sinnasone is now in the NMT, was promoted to HR&OD >



ter due to tiredness and exhaustion. Many people died because the rescue team got to the area late. Pheang had to hang on in the tree feeling exhausted and hungry until the next day when the rescue team arrived.

For the first few weeks the situation was very tough and bad. People had no place to live and there was not enough food, drinking water or medical care. There were also not enough toilets and water supply for using them. Many people looked sad, hopeless and hungry, especially the children because everybody was just waiting for help. The Government only had helicopters and some military trucks to transport food, water and essentials to the inaccessible areas to help the victims. Many villages were affected by the dam collapse and there were still many adults and children who were unable to move out of the areas due to the high level of the water. So they had to stay on the high hill and wait for help.

### **Immediate support from locals and neighbours**

Fortunately, we received a kind support from the International Office Region Asia and our colleagues from SOS Children's Villages Nepal, who

had previous experience in ERP before and would help me and the team in implementing the programme. In addition, we also received good cooperation from the Governor of Attapeu Province, especially the Social Welfare Department, who always provided us with information and gave us authorisation to work with the flood-affected people and children.

As children were the most vulnerable during this emergency, SOS Laos implemented the Child Care Spaces programme in two affected areas in the Sanamxay District where the temporary shelters were located. Our objective mainly focused on providing care for affected children, as well as assisting in their psychological recovery, building confidence and providing education.

Every day children were taken care of by our SOS young people and participated in our daily activities such as positive caring, learning, playing games, drawing, drama, physical exercise, entertainment, and sanitation and hygiene education. More importantly, we also provided some snacks, food, rainproof boots and hair cutting, which were managed by our young people. We had around 220 children who joined our activities every day.

Director, and is also in charge of child safeguarding. Sinnasone lives with his wife and daughter in their small house on the outskirts of Vientiane city. He describes Vientiane as a small and peaceful city where people are very friendly and kind.

## My personal objective and achievement in such a situation

The challenges that I faced and what I wanted to change in the children's mind-set was to teach them about keeping the environment clean and how to protect themselves from diseases and abuse. My team and I had to make efforts to engage and influence them by conducting various activities to raise their awareness – for example, on the sanitation issue. We tried to show them the negative impact of not washing their hands before or after eating and gave them information on how to prevent diseases. We also ran activities that they could participate in, such as drawing and sharing ideas. However, things did not change immediately. It took time and we needed to walk the talk day by day.

We also took advantage of the health staff to join us in providing information and in teaching the children. Significantly, we were able to get the World Food Programme to cooperate with us by providing lunch for the children who joined our programme during this difficult time. For me, I think it is a big achievement that we could make a positive change for the children.

Our Child Care Spaces programme ran until October 2018 and I can say that the programme was implemented successfully. Many children had happy faces and self-confidence. They looked lively and interacted with their peers.

It is such a great experience for me to be on the ground with my team, playing with children, interacting with them and hearing their stories. I felt proud of what I was doing for the children, even if it was a small thing. There is a saying: "You cannot be if you cannot see." It means you will never know what to do, unless you get onto the ground and see it with your own eyes and deal with the situation.

In his free time, Sinnasone likes reading, listening to his favourite music and being with his daughter. He also enjoys meeting friends and talking about various issues. It helps to release his stress and so for him, being social is a healthy activity that gives him energy to work. ”

# My Dream

## A Good Team Makes a Strong Organisation

My dream is about building a strong team by providing orientation and training for co-workers. If we are a good team and know what we want to do, one of us can defeat ten of them.

In my picture, you see happy children and a loving home for every child. The stone represents the root of the organisation. You see a good environment for flourishing.









## Višnja Matić

Family-based Care Leader,  
SOS Children's Villages Ladimirevci, Croatia

# The sense of responsibility helps to reconcile the opposing heart and mind

Recently, we had a birthday celebration in our SOS Children's Village. It was a special day for all of us and we prepared for it with joy and devotion. And when it came, all was perfect: the sun was shining, the grass and trees were green, the children were happy and the adults were joyful and relaxed. Our houses and courtyards were decorated and prepared for various events. I was walking around meeting guests, friends, colleagues, children known and unknown, sharing the magic of that day with all of them. I was really enjoying it with all my heart and the family-based care leader in me was satisfied and proud.

Then came the moment when I saw her. I knew she would be there and even though I was not prepared for an encounter, I approached her warmly

and with positive energy and hugged her. She leaned over and I could see her tears. I was touched but still in a happy mood.

## A moment full of memories

To explain what happened, I need to go back a few months and explain the circumstances that are relevant to this story. Anna grew up in our care. I remember the time she learned to take her first steps: so small and so cute, she was a favourite child in the SOS family. The SOS mother worshipped her. Despite this, her childhood was not carefree and easy, mostly due to the negative impact of her biological mother.

Problems began on entering puberty when the close relationship with

“Višnja works as a family-based care leader. In addition to her work at SOS Children's Villages, Višnja teaches, does therapy and supervision. She values dedication and always being fully present and interested. She enjoys the creativity her work inspires in her, but believes the best part of it is the contact she has with every single person in her job. >



the SOS mother deteriorated, even becoming pathological, because Anna began to project her anger at the biological mother onto the SOS mother, and she often did not know how to react in such situations. Verbal aggression toward the SOS mother happened on a daily basis, and Anna often attacked her physically.

Sometimes there was a day when Anna was gentle, careful and cooperative with her SOS mother, and the latter started to hope that everything could be all right again. We organised all possible support for both of them, but nobody was happy, neither Anna nor her SOS mother. Four other children in the SOS family also suffered. Then one day she escaped from the SOS Village to meet a young man she had got to know on Facebook. We found her and there were no serious consequences.

### **Seeking the best option for the child, even if it is not through SOS**

Considering her total resistance to adults and their attitudes and requirements and to her SOS mother, who was totally helpless and desperate, I decided that we had to take a step we did not want to take and find her a different care setting. At the same

time I saw a twelve-year-old girl (who was pretending to be much older), who was growing up in SOS but outside the SOS Village had nobody to care for her. I asked myself how I was going to tell her that she had to leave. She was just an unhappy child who responded to difficult circumstances in the only way she knew.

Such situations make me angry and sad at the same time. What had we missed, what did we do wrong, why didn't we succeed? I felt it was easier to continue to rely on the faint hope that things would become better (in the same way as the SOS mother was surviving every day). We discussed all the options in our team and decided to ask the Social Welfare Centre for different accommodation for Anna, and this became available very soon.

Strengthened by the team support, with sincere empathy and care, confidence and resolution, I talked with Anna and the SOS mother and prepared them for the upcoming leaving. It was very hard for both of them, also for me. But in this situation somebody had to take responsibility and be brave and purposeful, which was me. It was especially important to me that the SOS mother had the opportunity to mourn without the burden

Višnja has explored her family history, and that has led her to a better understanding of herself and her parents. In her spare time, she likes relaxing, reading or watching TV series, and cooking. She also enjoys going out with friends, but most of all she likes being outside, biking and hiking. She finds peace and energy in the natural world around her.

of making decisions and this made my task easier.

Both of them were happy because Anna would be moved to a small group home for girls in a nearby village, so they could stay in contact. They were shocked when the carers said that all contact with the outside world was forbidden for the first six weeks. There were also very strict rules about everything and a lot of physical work. Every privilege should be hard to earn. It was totally different from the SOS family and it seemed very challenging for our girl, so we remained quite worried.

Six weeks have passed and Anna asked if she could come with other girls to the birthday celebration and participate in it with a dance performance. She came, without any anger, just with a sadness for a home that she had to leave. Watching her so vulnerable and at the same time so brave and determined to show the best of herself, I told myself that we had done the best to help her. With the conviction that we have done what was in her best interest and with faith that she will succeed, I continued to enjoy the magic of a communal celebration.

Višnja lives in Slavonia in Eastern Croatia, a quiet region with a growing opportunity for rural tourism. Many families emigrate in search of a better life, but Višnja loves living there. She lives in Osijek, a beautiful town on the banks of the river Drava, famous for its old buildings.



## My Dream

# Promise to Ensure Safe Care for Every Child and Support to All SOS Mothers

My dream is about providing a safe home for every child, including children in crisis and, at the same time, strengthening SOS mothers' care capacities. This will allow us and the organisation to save more children in crises.

In my picture, you see safe support full of love and a solid foundation, representing all the different levels in our organisation that hold and support it.







## Parthenope Tshipinare

National Sponsorship Coordinator,  
SOS Children's Villages Botswana

# With trust, stronger relationships are built

A few weekends before my departure to Austria, I went out for a drink and walk around the shopping mall with my little friend. There was a lot of laughter in what was shared. A lot of reminiscing about her new baby and about how time was limited now that we have to make time for family, work and school.

While we talked and laughed, I recognised how we had both grown and developed, and how strong our relationship had become. This took me back 15 years to when I first met Mpho<sup>1</sup>.

You see, I met her 15 years ago when I started working as a Youth leader in SOS Children's Village Tlokweng. I had recently left my teaching profession to continue doing what I loved: working with young people.

## Should I stay or should I ...?

My first few weeks at my new work-place made me think twice about my recent change of career. I encountered some challenges I had not expected. One challenge in particular made me think twice.

I was in my little house in the youth compound and the children were playing outside as usual. Suddenly I heard a shower of insults and sounds of stones hitting the roof of the house. For a minute there I froze and did not know what to do. I had mixed emotions of fear and so many questions were running through my head. I finally silenced all the questions and gathered the courage to go and see what exactly was causing all the commotion outside. To my surprise there was a young woman by the gate of the compound, hurling insults and screaming.

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<sup>1</sup> Name changed for privacy reasons.

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Parthenope started working for SOS Children's Villages Botswana as a Youth Leader in 2004. In 2011, she was promoted to Sponsorship Coordinator, which was very different and involved less direct work with young people. However, Parthenope enjoys reading and compiling the different letters about the different children. It gives her great satisfaction to get a letter from a sponsor appreciating the work they do.



As I opened the door to go outside, I was nearly knocked down by another young woman running towards where the insults were coming from. Before I could even see who it was, she had quickly grabbed the other young woman who was insulting her. The young person who was causing all the ruckus was Mpho and now she was being brutally beaten by an older girl by the name of Peo from the youth house.

Luckily, just nearby the youth house there were some boys who were playing soccer. When they noticed that Mpho was getting a serious beating, they quickly came to her rescue by pulling Peo off her. Instead of Mpho being grateful and relieved, she continued insulting Peo while the boys escorted her back to her house in the village.

That day, I chose not to pursue the girls to find out what was going on because tempers were still high and I was bemused as well. The following morning I called the young women to find out what was going on. At that moment, I realised that Mpho was harbouring so much anger and this caused her to overreact in different situations. Mpho had a very strong personality: she was loud and spoke her mind. Many in the village feared

her, not only children, but some of the elders also avoided her or dealt with her as if they are walking on eggshells.

After this encounter with Mpho, I felt that the best way to deal with her was to avoid her. I knew that in a few weeks she would join me to stay in the youth house. A few months with Mpho in the youth house were a tug of war. She was always getting into fights with other girls in the village. Mpho's older sister and the village father were the only people who could get through to her. I remember that, at one point, Mpho annoyed me so much that I ended up telling the Village Director that I was going to stop trying to help her. Things got a bit worse when Mpho's older sister moved away to attend a vocational training school a few kilometres from the village.

At home, Parthenope is the go-to person among her four siblings when they need someone to talk to. Playing this role can sometimes be difficult but, with time, she is learning to still be that person for her siblings while also finding out more about herself.

## Leadership and guidance

I then decided to get more involved in Mpho's life. I figured it would not hurt to try, to lead and guide her here and there. I started to make small advances such as inviting her to get involved in more sporting activities. I also invited her and the other girls on outings and to go shopping for the house. At times my advances were rudely turned down but I kept on, difficult as it sometimes was. There was a point when I was even accused of favouritism towards Mpho. Some people even thought that I was doing all this because I was scared of her, not knowing that I was just trying to win Mpho's trust.

I wanted her to know that I cared, although I realised that some reality and tough love worked better, especially as she wanted everything to be done her way. I remember one point in particular when I had to bluntly tell her that she should stop calling me 'Ausi Parthy'. In my country when you attach the word 'ausi' to a person's name, it is mainly to show respect. With Mpho, the respect was not there to start with, so I figured that it would be better if she dropped the 'ausi' and just called me by my name.

## The importance of trust

Over time, my relationship with Mpho grew stronger and she began to trust me a bit. I was able to correct and guide her in dealing with communication and interpersonal relations with other children and elders. Once the trust was there, my advances were welcomed and embraced by her. Slowly she learnt how to interact with other people. She even stopped getting into fights and was more involved in physical activities. Mpho started to change even more when she began going to church. Today as I speak, Mpho is married and has a child she adores. She is leading an independent life and living her dream. At times when we are not busy with work or school, we meet up for a walk around the shopping mall or for ice cream.

There is a saying that goes, "People's paths cross for a season, a reason or a lifetime." I feel I came into Mpho's life not only for the reason of providing support and guiding her, but also to help her to grow and develop. In return, she did the same for me. She helped me develop not only professionally but personally as well. Our relationship has taught us valuable life lessons.

Parthenope lives in Tlokweng with her husband. She loves her country, where a person has respect for the next person, and where people treat others the way they want to be treated. Growing up in an environment like this taught her to cherish these values. Parthenope also loves to dance and spend some time alone to just chill and rest.





# My Dream

## Bringing Up Strong Happy Children

My dream is about bringing up strong happy children. We need understanding and ownership from the people who are doing it. It takes people who are also happy: happy mothers, other care co-workers, supervisors, managers, the whole village – workers who trust and know what they are doing. For a person to do that, they need support from all levels. Bringing all the factors that give life together and knowing what works well for those who will help in the bringing up of happy strong children. Not only happy strong children from Botswana, Southern Africa, but happy strong children from all regions.

In my picture, you see children from all the different regions. Children smiling and children who are strong.







## Ly Quynh Nhi Nguyen

Assistant to the Village Director,  
SOS Children's Villages Dalat, Vietnam

# With the right ingredients, you can bake any cake

Have you ever tried to change someone's mind? I did, many times in my work. Let me tell you about one of them. It was my second year at SOS Children's Village Dalat as the sponsorship secretary. Since I was an English teacher before, the Village Director asked me to help the 18-year-old children to be well-prepared for their English test in the high school graduation examination.

English is our foreign language and most students find it too difficult as a subject to deal with in the examination because it focuses so much on grammar rules and writing skills. In our country, the graduation exam, in which the tests are on mathematics, English and literature, is compulsory for every student at the age of 18. Without passing this examination, students cannot have higher education (i.e. at a college or university) for their future career.

My English class at that time was a small one. There were only about 8 students. As the graduation examination had proved to be very challenging in previous years, I asked my students to memorise the grammar rules in class and at home. In the next class, I spent time checking if they had learned them by heart or not, and then asked them to do the exercises.

## Challenging situations and rejection

Things went well for two months and then one day, one boy – Tan<sup>1</sup> – failed to come to class. When I talked to him later, he said, "I don't want to come to your class any longer because it won't help. I just feel the heavy pressure you put on us and I don't like it at all." It was like an icy shower over my head and also something came into my throat. I just told him, "OK. First go home for lunch and we will talk about it later."

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Ly trained as an English teacher but got her first job as a secretary for the Hermann Gmeiner School in Dalat, Vietnam. A few years later, she became the high school English teacher, then the secretary of SOS Children's Villages Dalat and, in 2018, she was appointed as assistant to the Village Director. Four jobs in 25 years with the same organisation required Ly to learn a lot.

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After two days, I met him again and tried to tell him nicely to come back to class, but he still said no. Two more days passed and I hadn't slept for four nights. I was fighting about whether I should continue to persuade Tan or not. If I did, it wasn't what he wanted. But if I didn't, his chance to become a table tennis trainer would be impossible. But there was definitely something I could do and I had to do it.

### About the deep will of guidance

Two days later, I stopped him on his way back home from school. "What have you decided?" I asked. "It is better for me not to go to your English class," he said. I tried to stay calm and told him, "If you don't go to my English class, your bad result in the graduation exam will lead you nowhere. You will not be a table tennis trainer, which is what you've dreamed of. Please think about it carefully. The examination is drawing near, it is only two months, which fly by so quickly. I can only help you in these two months. After that, I cannot because it is not necessary. I am here for your benefit only, not mine. The good result in the graduation exam is also for you, not for me. If I do as you wish, it is much easier for me but it isn't a wise choice."

Two days passed, and Tan came back to my English class. I was also aware of the pressure he had mentioned. So I tried to minimise it as best I could. The best moment for me was when Tan, overjoyed, announced the graduation result to me. All 8 students passed the English test and Tan got 7 marks out of 10. To him it was a new record because he had only got 4 or 5 marks for any English test before. I was happy with this of course.

The Village Director thanked me for the good results of the 8 children, especially Tan. I told him without hesitation that the children had made the difference, not me. I just gave them the ingredients: flour, sugar, butter, eggs... and showed them how to bake the cake. They were the people who made the delicious cakes, not me.

Tan went on to study table tennis after the entrance examination, which was quite easy for him. Later he came back to me with the good news that he had passed all the English tests at his university no matter how difficult they were. I wish I could have a picture of him to show you. It is a picture of a very nice young man who is now a table tennis trainer, full of energy, enthusiasm, love and happiness. Happiness, yes, because he also got married last June.

Ly believes that family is the root of society. When she was growing up, her parents taught her a lot about responsibility, care and love, and now it is her turn. She tries to fulfil her everyday duties as a wife and as a mother of two adult sons. In her free time, she enjoys spending time with family, whether it is cooking, playing sports, reading or watching movies together.

# My Dream

## Heart to Heart

My dream is about heart to heart connections in our work. I am dreaming about the way we join hands, cooperate with each other in our work. It is based on trust and love, from the heart, not from the mind. And our connection in our work is from heart to heart. We will stay connected, yes, because we all have the fire in our hearts. It is the core values, the beautiful precious values of the SOS Children's Villages organisation.

In my picture, you see many hearts standing for trust and love, the core values of our SOS Children's Villages. The big heart is the SOS organisation. The red heart symbolises the beautiful precious values of our organisation, which are still alive today. The different coloured hearts symbolise the different fields of work we have. Their sizes

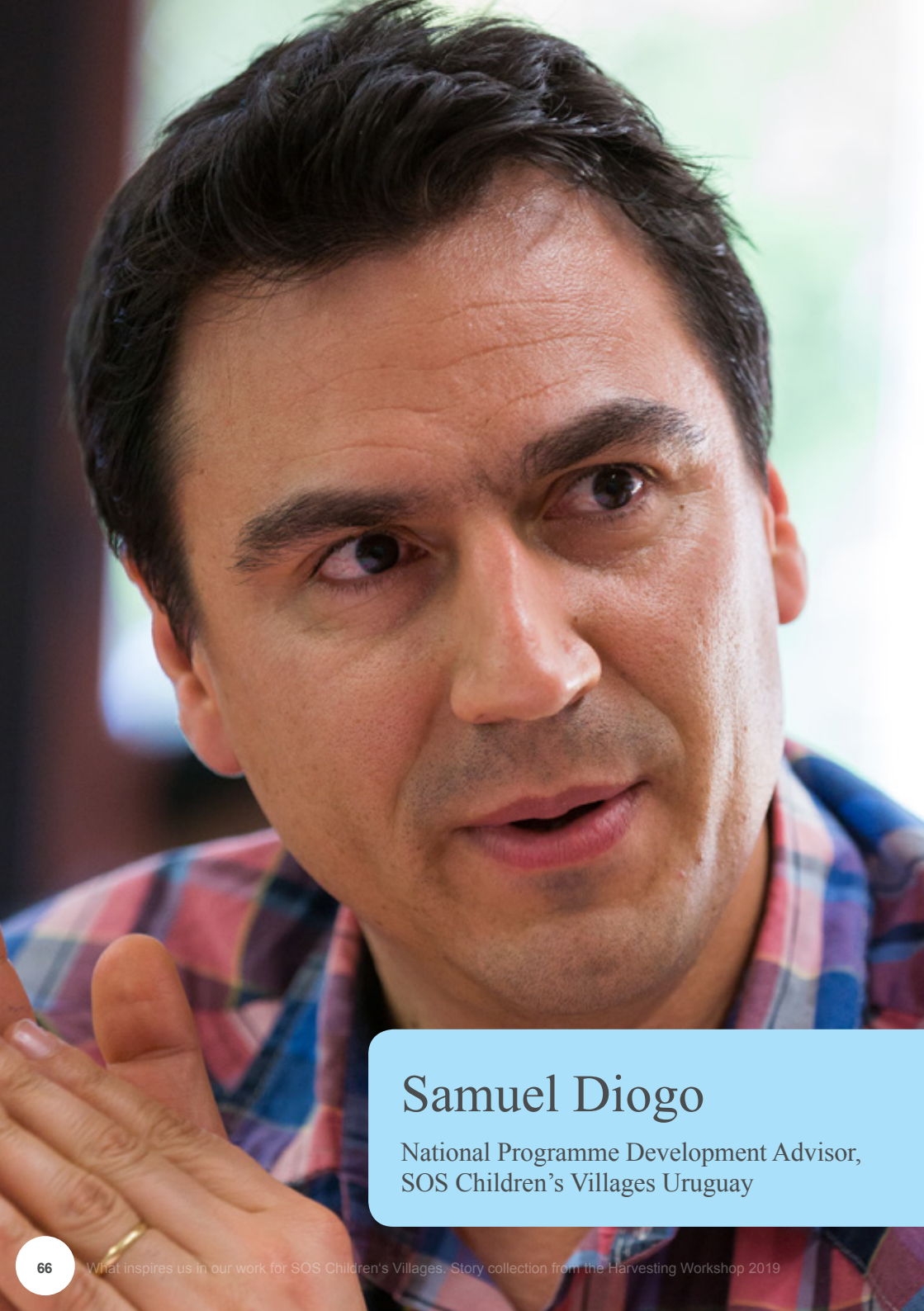
and colours are different but always the same shapes, the heart, love and trust. The most important thing is the flame (the tiny red dot in each heart). The flame is always there to guide us in our work.



Dalat, according to Ly, is the most beautiful part of the earth that she knows. It is located on a plateau in the south of Vietnam, with a cool climate that enables many kinds of trees, vegetables and flowers to grow and blossom all year round. Ly hopes that one day, each of you can come and find out yourselves. It is her pleasure to accompany you there..







## Samuel Diogo

National Programme Development Advisor,  
SOS Children's Villages Uruguay

# Innovation to fulfil the children's rights to family life

SOS Children's Villages Uruguay is going to be 60 in 2020. It is one of the oldest and largest social organisations working for children's rights in the country. We have high public recognition and are an organisation with a long tradition.

## Starting up with a voice of conviction

I started working for the organisation in 2012. From the beginning it was clear that this was a time for change. In 2013 we started a long transformation process, which is still continuing today. As a National Programmes Development Advisor I led the programmatic changes. The challenges were enormous but I felt the call with conviction. The changes were for the best interests of the child.

With the National Direction, we decided to start a deinstitutionalisa-

tion process, working on preventing the separation of children from their families and on the family reintegration of the children who were already separated. Deinstitutionalisation, for us, mainly means improve and to strengthen the work with families. This work is essential to ensure the children's right to family life.

In 2013 we had to make a decision about our specific SOS Policy Programme implementation. We discussed it in several management meetings. I remember the moment that I said: "OK. The Policy Programme talks about children's rights, programmatic innovation and making suitable responses for the children. Right now, we only provide the traditional model of SOS care in Children's Villages. We need to make an innovative plan to fulfil the children's right to family life." In 2016, the national Policy Programme implementation

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Samuel joined SOS Children's Villages Uruguay in 2012 and describes his work as challenging and rewarding at the same time. As the National Advisor for Programme Development, Samuel has had to lead programme changes for the fulfilment of children's rights and quality of attention. His greatest goal with the national office and program teams was to achieve the family reintegration of more than 300 children over the last 4 years. >



became a framework for the deinstitutionalisation process in SOS Uruguay.

Take note that we don't have orphans in SOS Children's Villages Uruguay. We have children separated from their families. All children have a family! Our first commitment was to start the work with families.

### More work with families

Our starting point was very challenging. In 2012, we didn't have any technical teams to work with families – only two social workers in all the programmes for 370 children in alternative care. In 2013, only 37 children (10% of all beneficiaries) lived with families after family reintegration, and there was no appropriate technical assistance.

The first step in the process was to build a common understanding with all co-workers of the children's right to family life and how we can make this possible. We introduced a radical change of approach. I remember so many meetings with programme managers and co-workers talking about it. I would always say: "We are prepared for long-term care if necessary but, before that, we have to do everything possible to achieve family reintegration.

If the children only stay with us for a short time because they go back to their family, it is much better!"

We understood three important things: first, family reintegration must be an individual child project; second, we do not work only with the parents of the children: we must work with the larger family too; and third, the search for the family members and the evaluation of the larger family is not a once off action. Because the situation is dynamic and changes, searching and evaluation must be done periodically.

The next steps were to hire a lot of professionals from social areas and make strong technical teams to work with families. We strengthened our alliance with the state and worked hard to increase the government subsidy to finance this work. We made SOS national frameworks and specific guidelines for co-workers to do our work properly and with high quality standards. In all these processes, we put the fulfilment of children's right to a family life in the national programme planning as a strategic pillar.

In the beginning, I felt that everything had to be done and that progress was slow. However, we moved forward, step by step, and then the whole pro-

2012 was also the year his only daughter was born. Samuel describes being a father as a daily challenge that is renewed with the growth of his child. Everyday there is something new to learn and improve. Thankfully, working in SOS Children's Villages has helped him a lot as a father. Outside of work, music is always present in Samuel's life. He has played

cess moved really quickly. It felt like a big ship that needs a lot of energy to start and move a little bit, but then it starts to move faster and faster with less effort. Nothing would have been possible without the commitment and tireless work of our program teams.

### **Courage to defend our values and goals**

Of course, we had to deal with opposing forces in the process. In some cases from traditional positions: “We have done the same for 55 years and have done it well, why change it?” Or, “How can I provide loving care if the children are with me for only a few months and then go to their families?” There were also fearful attitudes such as: “This is new, I don’t know how to do it.” Or: “We can’t do it.” Or, “This will destroy all that we are.” We had a lot of meetings with programme management teams, care-givers and all the co-workers to convince them with head and heart that the changes were necessary. The best argument was always: “What is best for the children? We must do it!” It is important to mention that the National Child Protection Authority in Uruguay was pursuing a child protection system reform in the same direction at the same time as our reforms.

Today, we can show our great outcomes with pride. We now have 30 social workers in all the programmes. Our technical teams are strong and experts in the field. We have done the work well. So well, that the National Child Protection Authority in Uruguay is now asking us to carry out the family reintegration process of the children from other institutions.

At present we have 214 children living with their families in our kinship care services. This is 42% of all our beneficiaries in alternative care. We provide professional assistance to all the families in their own houses. The average process duration is 2 years. Our greatest achievement has been the family reintegration of more than 300 children in the last 4 years. And not one child has come back to alternative care!

In my position, it was impossible to know all the 300 children, but can you imagine the big impact in the lives of all these children? Can you imagine the happiness of all these children when they went back to their families? I remember some particular stories.

I remember the family reintegration of eight siblings from SOS Children’s Village Montevideo. After three years

the saxophone since he was 12 years old. Music is what unites him with his family and most of his friends, and is also his greatest creative force when he’s not working. Samuel lives in Uruguay, a small country between two giants: Argentina and Brazil. The people of Uruguay have three great passions: soccer, politics and carnival.



in our alternative care programme, the technical team, care-givers and all the co-workers worked hard to prepare the family to receive them. When the family and the children were ready too, the team made a plan for a progressive reintegration one by one, because there were so many children. Do you know what? When the first child was reintegrated, the other siblings said: "We want to be back together with our family immediately!" This family reintegration case was closed after two and a half years. The eight siblings are happily living with their mother and stepfather.

We are an organisation working toward the children's right to family life. It is part of our mission to assess our work every day and to look for the most innovative and suitable options for each situation, so that we can reach the highest standards in children care.

# My Dream

## To put the Children in the Centre



My dream is about an organisation that always puts children in the first place. It means more child participation at all levels, especially in daily decision-making, and more participation in decisions about their lives. I also dream about an organisation that listens to the child. An organisation that has the courage to cross new paths if it is in the best interest of the child and that is not afraid to make changes; that faces the challenges to make a better plan for children with a brave spirit and innovation.

In my picture, I see SOS Children's Villages playing a fundamental role to put children in the centre. It builds stairs (a new structure) to make it possible for children to come in first place. I also imagine children that are participating at all levels. The organisation has open ears and always listens to the children, working in the best interests of the children.





# Overcoming misconceptions for fundraising opportunities

The world constantly increases in material wealth while more and more children, young people and families become more vulnerable than ever. Hundreds of thousands of children worldwide drift to the brink of risks of all kinds.

SOS Children's Villages has put the most disadvantaged children at the heart of its Strategy 2030, with the central message: 'No child should grow up alone'. The strategy relates directly to the Sustainable Development Goals in key areas such as poverty, inequality, education, health, social, child protection, and decent work.

Successful fundraising creates motivation for joint responsibility and a feeling of recognition and value. This includes undertaking fundraising activities, keeping in mind that a broad base of supporters ensures stability, enables innovation and facilitates learning, thereby leading to better results.

In the following story you read about raising awareness of the work of SOS Children's Villages as a first step in fundraising at the national level of Lesotho.



## Mapaseka Matekane

Fund Development Communications Committee,  
ICT Trainer Hermann Gmeiner Primary School Maseru,  
SOS Children's Villages Lesotho



# Achievements through goals

It was five years ago when I was nominated to conduct a fundraising event in the education programme for the primary school. I planned a big fundraising event, with no idea of how it was going to succeed. I had no connections of any kind as it was new for me.

I had to come up with the kind of event I was supposed to organise, because I was given a target to achieve. I looked into different ideas for several days and came up with a fashion show event for both boys and girls. I went to my supervisor to sell the idea to him but he did not like it, as he believed that it would not generate the targeted amount. For my part, I had already pictured it and imagined what it would be like. After three days, I approached him again, showed him the plan of what the event would be like and he agreed, even though he was not totally convinced.

## The art of convincing, carrying out and succeeding

This gave me a chance to write proposals to different companies and to individuals to support the event. I recruited the children who were interested in performing in the fashion show. After getting the participants, I looked for the trainers within the school who would train the children in their different roles. The fashion show was divided into 4 categories: modern, traditional, eco-friendly and colour blocking.

While preparing the children, I also had to organise the venue, persuade the judges and the DJ to help us and hire a sound system. I called the parents of the children who were going to take part in the show to give them a picture of what was happening, and to ask for their support for their children in whatever was required. Most of the parents attended and were very positive in supporting their children, while others could not make it.

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As an educator, Mapaseka trains new SOS co-workers and pupils in Information Communication Technology at the Hermann Gmeiner Primary School in Maseru, Lesotho. Teaching motivates her! Her students teach her too. Through them she learns e.g. about different cultures, religions and abilities. Mapaseka loves her job as a child advocate and in helping the children realise their own potential. >



The time came for me to submit my event proposal to my finance office and it was turned down because it was not in the budget. My supervisor wrote a motivational letter to support my proposal but the proposal was still not approved. I told my supervisor to work on my proposal because it was now out of my control.

Little did I know that trouble still awaited me. I went to follow up on the proposals I had submitted to different companies and I heard more shocking news. Of the five companies I had submitted proposals to, three did not go well, including two beauty salons, which were going to support the participants with hair and make-up. They told me that they were unable to support SOS Children's Villages because it is one of the richest organisations, with its good cars and beautiful buildings.

### **A reputation that did not favour this project**

I was so disappointed. I foresaw the failure of this event. Fortunately, some companies and individuals responded well by giving foodstuffs and drinks to be sold to generate more income and prizes to be presented to the winners. One company also paid for the sound

system. In addition, my supervisor, with the help of the National Director, assisted in the approval of the event proposal I had submitted and it was approved. The event was successful after long perseverance and stress.

Afterwards, I went back to the companies that had rejected my proposals to explain to them how SOS Children's Villages operates and why it has that beautiful infrastructure. We invited them to some SOS events, such as Hermann Gmeiner's birthday on 23rd June, so that they could really get to know what SOS Children's Villages is all about. Some now sponsor the events that we host, while we are still lobbying some others to support us.

It is because of these kind of events that I host annually that, in 2017, I was appointed by the National Director to assist in the National Fundraising team. Even though we need funds locally, the greatest challenge we face is that people perceive SOS Children's Villages as rich and therefore cannot support it. This made me realise that publicity campaigns and awareness are essential. As for the government, it is very difficult to get support for the organisation because of the political instability in the country.

Mapaseka is convinced that family life contributes to our personality. She thinks that family offers support, love and a feeling of belonging to someone. She believes that a strong family can help in making the correct decisions in life, no matter how the family is made up. In her view, "God gave us families to help us become what he wants us to be."



# My Dream

## Understanding is Easy

My dream is about raising awareness and running campaigns for individuals, companies and the government about what SOS is, who the beneficiaries are, and why there is a need to support SOS Children's Villages.

In my picture, you see a person holding a loudspeaker, delivering a message to companies, the government and individuals.



In her spare time she likes to serve in her church, which makes her happy and relaxes her. Mapaseka is also a Sunday school teacher. This work and the chance to spend time with the kids on Sundays as well, makes her very happy.

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# Consolidation of consistent information

An organisation is like a clockwork. There are many parts that work together and interlock. This is also true for the SOS Children's Villages Federation and its member associations. All the different parts of the organisation and their co-workers contribute to fulfilling the common mission. Each co-worker, in whatever position, plays a role in enabling the clockwork to run smoothly. There are co-workers who work directly with the children and others who are in charge of administrative or financial processes.

What is important, however, is that the different parts work together as one and respect each other's efforts and expertise. This includes the awareness of differences and the ability to function as a bridge between the different levels of the organisation and to translate the different perspectives.

In the following stories you will read more about the challenges that come with the complexity of a global organisation that functions in very different contexts and political environments. The stories show how innovative ideas can lead to new developments and how important it is to patiently search for joint sustainable solutions. The stories exemplify how the strategic goal of simplifying processes and systems is implemented at the different levels, what the challenges are and how they can be tackled.



## Renu Sharma

Member Support Advisor,  
SOS Children's Villages International, Regional Office Asia

# Investing in people's capacities can change the way we work

Even when all SOS programmes are running very well and SOS co-workers are working hard to see the smile on children's faces, at the end of the day, we as SOS co-workers are all accountable to someone. "Someone" are the donors who provide the money or funds to support children and programmes. We need to inform the donors through journals, newsletters, reports, etc. The sharing of information with shareholders helps to let them know that the hard-earned money that they have donated is used in an efficient and effective manner and for the purposes for which they have given it to SOS.

## The hard work behind the actual work

I am located at the Regional Office, which is responsible for providing information to various stakeholders, including Promoting and Supporting

Associations (PSA). This is where my challenge starts. The information to be provided must be correct, on time, maintain quality and authenticity, and be useful and understandable. There are different platforms in our system for feeding in the information and data. The main concern is that the information on each platform should say the same, it should not be different.

In past years the International Office (IO) was responsible for providing the answers to the PSAs' queries. This communication with PSAs has now moved from the International Office to the International Offices in the Regions<sup>1</sup>. I am also the one co-worker in my office dealing with responses to PSA requests.

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1 IO ASIA, IO Central & Eastern Europe – CEE CIS, IO Eastern Southern Africa, IO West Central Africa, IO Middle East and North Africa, IO Latin America and the Caribbean

“**R**enu lives near New Delhi, the capital of India, and joined the SOS Children's Villages in 2005 as a Finance Coordinator. After moving to another department, she has been making many positive experiences within her role and responsibilities as a Member Support Advisor. Renu is happy to work for the development and growth of children in need. ➤





All PSAs are requested to enter their queries in the software called INFO HUB. Sometimes the challenges that I face include a lack of clarity in the request, the questions entered are not clear or deadlines are too short. In addition, the information is sometimes available in one or another document, but they still ask again. This leads to duplication of work.

### **The constant state of being under pressure**

Sometimes the deadlines are so short that it becomes difficult for me to collect and compile the information. Yes, I respect the needs of PSAs, but at the same time we have to take account of the Member Associations (MA) as well. I remember I once received a request from a PSA with a very short deadline. It was a holiday in the Member Associations at that time, but the PSA said that if we do not get back to the donor on time we might lose them. I therefore got some information from the MA by phone, compiled it and shared it with the PSA on time. I felt really good when I heard from the PSA that the donor was happy to see the report and we were able

to get the donation. At that moment I forgot the hurdles that I had had to overcome to get the information.

There are moments when I am really challenged by working with MAs, making the needs clear, making them understand what is required from them and how to compile the information in the most efficient and effective way. It is the capacity building of the MAs. However, with the ongoing efforts and building the capacities of MAs, we are able to achieve it. I hope in the time ahead that the small hurdles will also disappear.

She has a family on her own, which consists of her husband and her two kids. The family enjoys having discussions and likes to talk about their day. Renu is a good listener and the person to find ways for resolving a problem.



# My Dream

## Shine like a Sun

My dream is about seeing each child shine like a sun. Each child should dream big to achieve his or her goals in life. A child is like a sun and space should be given to achieve their goals. If a child is able to achieve their goals, we can see the smile on their face. Making a child like a shining star, providing good education and a better living space. In my picture, you see a child and a sun.



In her free time, she likes to spend time with her family. Renu likes traveling, especially with her loved ones. Cooking as well as experiencing new things in the kitchen can be counted among her hobbies. Nevertheless, if there is no work to do, Renu enjoys to rest as well.

”



# Take action in crisis situations

Even if crisis can be defined in different ways, those who occur in the context of an humanitarian and social service providing organisation like SOS Children's Villages are to be handled with care. A wrong operation can have a significant threat, which possibly can bring negative consequences and is no more in the best interest of the child.

Since 2016, a special crisis management team trains SOS co-workers to manage situations before the beginning of a crisis and especially to prevent stakeholders and children from suffering in a crisis. To be more precisely, the organisation tries to respond to a range of different situations through emergency plans and the focus on the needs of the child in such situations. As we can assume, it is on the SOS co-workers to act and react, which means that they are all an integral part of crisis prevention.

In the following part, some SOS co-workers share their story about their action in a crisis. It is all about being positive, even if we do not see a way out, about telling the truth and keeping promises, about doing the best for the child and to gain or re-gain trust.





## Remzije Krasniqui

National Advocacy Advisor & Educational  
Advisor, SOS Children's Villages Kosovo

# The journey to self-reliance!

**A story that made me strong and did not stop even when there was no sign of hope!**

2015 was the final year when we had SOS subsidies for operating the SOS Kindergarten as part of SOS Children's Village Kosovo. By the end of 2015 it was necessary to find other resources to ensure the financial sustainability of the SOS Kindergarten. To ensure this sustainability, we had three options for finding the best way to continue the work of the SOS Kindergarten. Two of the options were to transfer the kindergarten premises to another service provider or to hand the kindergarten over to the municipality. Both options were unacceptable to us as SOS, so we decided to keep the kindergarten and to take action to find financial resources from the municipality or other sources.

Naturally it took many years, many endeavours and efforts to achieve this sustainability. Negotiations with municipal authorities started over a year

ago and were not easy as the political structures changed twice. In 2013 we were very close to an agreement with the Municipality Education Directorate but, unfortunately, the Education Director died and this returned us back to point zero. We had to restart negotiations with new people in these positions.

## **Back to point zero**

At the beginning of 2015, a new government was formed in the municipality whose programme included supporting marginalised children and families. This gave us hope that we could reach an agreement with the municipality. At that time I was very optimistic that within a few days we would manage to have a meeting with the mayor that would soon lead to an agreement. Our request to the mayor was clear and very straightforward. We needed support from the municipality to cover the expenses of marginalised children and the kindergarten had more than 30 such

“Working in SOS Children's Villages Kosovo for so many years now has become a very important part of Remzije's life and professional growth. When she first started, she felt like a child of a big SOS family that gave her a great number of opportunities to learn and develop as a human being. As a trainer and consultant, Remzije gets to see and be part of the changes that people make for themselves and others, and to find





children out of a total of 130 children who attended kindergarten. With their support, we would be able to impact children's lives by helping them to develop, socialise and integrate with other children.

### A light of hope

The meeting with the mayor gave us some hope that we would find a way of getting support, based on the earlier negotiations we had had with the Education Directorate. However, the meeting went in a different direction and getting support from the municipality was difficult because they have many other priorities. This is because the SOS Kindergarten is able to provide its own funds, as it has many donors and is one of the best kindergartens in the country. However, they promised that they would review their budget plans at the end of the year to see if they could provide any funds.

We spent months exploring other funding options but it was difficult to find something stable and sustainable. The end of the year was almost there and we had still not had a response from the municipality. December became more uncertain and worrying, as we had 25 days to find funds or to sign an agreement because, from

January 2016, the SOS Kindergarten would not be supported financially by SOS Children's Villages. Those days were very stressful and difficult to face, physically as well as emotionally. We spent the days trying to find solutions of how to cover the costs and even how to provide the salaries for the staff.

### Positive side-effect of TV campaign

While attending a conference, I met the Minister of Finance who had a son who had attended kindergarten several years previously, and told him about the financial difficulties the kindergarten was having. He promised that, by the end of the week, he would look into the possibility of finding a fund that would overcome this situation. After 10 days, I still had no news. As usual in December, during those days we started a Christmas campaign and released an awareness-raising video to collect donations. We also had a high presence in some TV programmes in that period.

After a few days, the Minister of Finance called me and told me that he had seen a video that SOS had broadcast on TV and this video had reminded him of the promise he had given me to find a fund for the SOS

motivation and courage for work that is not always easy.

For Remzije, family is life itself. She is one of four children in her family, where they were taught the values of kindness, generosity and self-respect. Remzije lives in Pristina, the capital of Kosovo, which she describes as a very loud but attractive city. Kosovo has a

Kindergarten. Fortunately, after a few days, financial support from the ministry was obtained. However, this was just a fund to cover some expenses and did not provide any long-term financial sustainability.

There were 10 days left before the end of 2015 for the final efforts to find funds. I met the kindergarten board and some kindergarten parents to discuss how we could do this. We also decided to hold a meeting with the President. At the meeting, it was mainly the parents and the board who presented our request. My petition was that the municipality is obliged to provide education and support for the children who need it and that children who are in the SOS Kindergarten should receive this support.

### A twinkle and a tear

The meeting went on a long time with lengthy discussions which, this time, ended with an agreement. The SOS Kindergarten needed to be registered as an NGO separately from SOS Children's Villages in order for the municipality to cover the expenses of marginalised children. This agreement also led to the subsequent changes for the SOS Kindergarten to be established as an NGO and to be

monitored by SOS Children's Villages Kosovo. The period of registration as an NGO, as well as the beginning of the legal separation from SOS were difficult. We had emotional memories of our 16 years as part of the big SOS family and now a new path as an organisation in its own right was beginning.

Being involved since the opening of the SOS Kindergarten, which offered quality education and had a good reputation in the country, means that I saw it as a growing child that was now ready to become independent.

This brought me many mixed feelings. On the one hand, I felt lonely and challenged, and on the other hand very proud. When I saw the SOS Kindergarten three years later, self-reliant and strong, my eyes filled with tears of joy and happiness for the fact that this had happened.

population with more than 65% young people.

Outside of work, Remzije loves walking in the mountains and forests. Reading by the sea also gives her tremendous joy. The exploration of nature in different parts of Kosovo has become a new inspiration for her life and work.



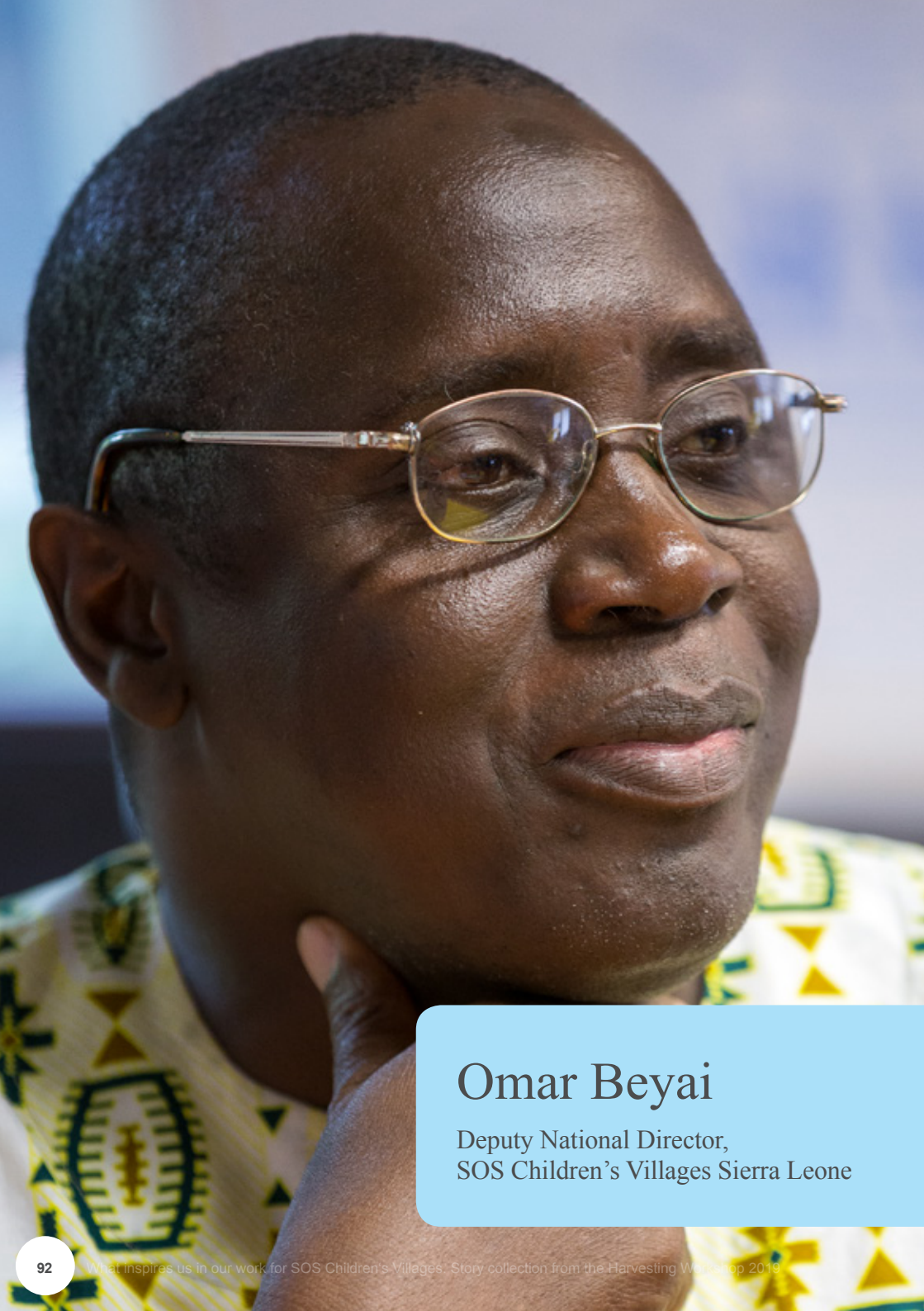
# My Dream

## A Land of Happiness

My dream is about building an organisation that provides safety, protection and pleasure for every child, by providing different programmes or units to reach children and family needs. My dream is to become a stable organisation that works hard on the children's rights and well-being which could be achieved by working with many partners.

In my picture, you see a stable land that gives a safe and protective environment to staff in all countries in order to provide different and diverse programmes with more and more partners around, with a common vision, and children who receive quality care.





## Omar Beyai

Deputy National Director,  
SOS Children's Villages Sierra Leone



# The smile has returned to the mothers, children and youth!

**Seeing yourself working in a crisis country as a foreigner can be very challenging, and it is only courage and constant willingness to go the extra mile that can make you succeed.**

In March 2018, I found myself in one of the crises-affected countries in West and Central Africa: Sierra Leone. This crisis resulted from a ten-year political and then civil war<sup>1</sup>. A long period of killing, looting, vandalising and burning houses left people traumatised and had many other bad effects on the country, the most important one being the endemic corruption that often leads to fraud in companies, non-governmental organisations and almost all sectors. Although the political situation has stabilised, people in Sierra Leone still suffer from and struggle with the economic situation<sup>2</sup> that has led to skyrocketing prices.

Consequently, job insecurity is enormous, prices for housing unaffordable and if you fall sick, you have to face a very weak health care system. The education system and quality has dropped significantly, leading to capacity issues in the workplace.

**Care promises that could not be realised ...**

Dealing with an internal crisis in SOS Children's Villages in Sierra Leone, we battled huge financial gaps, historical child safeguarding issues and educational challenges in our programmes. With a very heavy heart, we must admit that for a period of time, we were not always able to offer a loving home to all children and young people being cared for within our programmes. Care and love were compromised, and the quality of our

“Omar worked as a primary school teacher for 21 years, teaching all levels from class one to class six. He joined SOS Children's Villages in 2008 as an Assistant Village Director at SOS Children's Villages The Gambia, working for and with children and young people. In 2016/17 and 2018, he was sent to SOS Sierra Leone to give technical support to the Logistics and Procurement Office. After that, he became a National Alternative Care Coordinator and continued later on as a Program Director. Omar is now the Deputy National Director of Sierra Leone.”



programmes dropped as a result of lack of commitment and carelessness.

Personnel changes were necessary as our beneficiaries and caregivers had been deeply affected by the crisis. In fact, when I started, there was a big bond gap between administrative staff, SOS mothers and beneficiaries. Trust had declined at many levels and there were many interpersonal conflicts.

Since then, huge efforts have been made to rebuild trust, deal with staff welfare issues, strengthen internal control mechanisms and compliance to policies and guidelines, fight against all forms of abuse in order to overcome the internal crisis and remove institutional features such as gate-passes to control the movement of children, young people and mothers.

### **Our path to re-build and re-gain trust**

It was not easy for me as a foreigner to gain trust after what had happened. Being the Acting National Alternative Care Coordinator, my primary responsibility and task was to restore and bring back programme quality as well as the lost smiles of the children,

young people and SOS mothers. Indeed, this was a very big challenge as I was asking myself: How to build and gain trust and have their confidence in such a difficult context? How to establish a new working environment and organisational culture that allows co-workers and beneficiaries to express their needs freely?

I knew I had to go on the ground and listen to our co-workers. I therefore implemented an “open door policy”, since in former times, one had to book an appointment to meet the department head. In fact, it was not possible to just drop in to talk about your question or issue. Nowadays, everyone can come in and I reassure him or her by asking simple, but comforting questions: “How are you doing?” “What can I do for you?” It was important to help our team understand that we are here for them and that this is part of our mission, that there is no problem for which a solution cannot be found and that together, we can address any issue.

In the conflictual and distrusting situation of those days, staff developed habits of staying in their offices and doing the minimum. Seeing how this impacted negatively on programmes, mothers and beneficiaries, I coura-

Omar has six children of his own and cares for another seven children of relatives who are unable to offer care. Omar himself was born in a family of eight and, despite coming from a struggling background, his parents made sure they instilled positive morals and the values of love, sharing, generosity and respect for others and elders.

At home in The Gambia, he is fondly called OB. Omar likes taking care of his pets with his

geously asked all co-workers to leave their offices and increase their field presence in order to support the mothers, help the children, bond with them and also bring back the lost TRUST.

I also organised series of meetings and held sessions for the children and young people in all three programme locations<sup>3</sup>. With the team, we also made regular programme monitoring visits, including for those young people who had been reintegrated in the communities with their relatives. In many meetings, especially with the SOS mothers, I tried to integrate myself, spending time with them to understand the Sierra Leonean local culture, their challenges and past sufferings so I could provide adequate responses. In order to eliminate cultural barriers, I always used examples to empower them, explain my approach and our goals. Slowly, they started opening up. This gave me courage to continue, and every time I saw them, I told them: “We must always go the extra mile for the best interest of the children!”

Before, there were not many recreational activities in the villages. It broke my heart to see that children didn't have the simplest tool like a football, when playing football could cheer

them up and bring them together again. One afternoon, I decided to buy footballs out of my own pocket. I joined them and we played together: the joy and smile on their faces was indescribable and unforgettable!

### **Empowering young people for mind-set and behavioural change...**

Sierra Leone was declared a State of Emergency for rape and sexual abuse by the President. Crime rates are generally high due the above-mentioned socio-economic factors, and approximately 70% of youth are underemployed or unemployed, while an estimated 800,000 youth are eligible to join the job market every year. As they are the most exposed to drug and alcohol abuse, community cliques, prostitution, HIV and other diseases, insecurity, tribalism and violence, empowering young people is one of the government's top priorities. At SOS Children's Villages, we also prioritised the third strategic initiative of our 2030 strategy<sup>4</sup>, namely “Empower young people”. With a youthful population, we concentrate our efforts on the transition of young people (18 to 23 years) from our programmes into the communities, which is often a challenging and traumatic experience, as many do not attain self-reliance by

two little daughters. He has goats, sheep, pigeons and rabbits. He also enjoys watching TV with his children or taking them to his orchard garden, which they love so much. Omar's biggest passion besides his work is reggae music. Everybody who spends time with him will quickly learn this as OB does not go anywhere without listening to his beloved music. He says “It helps me to relax.”



the time they leave our programmes. Getting close to young people in the care of SOS Children's Villages Sierra Leone helped me understand their fear and battle between wanting to be out of the programme with no adult supervision and fearing to get out of their comfort zone by reintegrating in communities. An enigma, they have not been prepared early enough and we are trying to address this.

With the above mentioned, I believe young people from alternative care need empowerment and support from all stakeholders in order to start independent lives. The most sustainable approach, from my point of view, is to educate them for a fundamental mind-set and behavioural change, providing them with soft skills more than any sort of financial support. That is why I am very optimistic about their situation, especially with the impact of youth empowerment sessions, civic education and health talks we often organise with both internal and external speakers.

With regular and appropriate support from our social workers, psychologist and child protection advisor, we were able to provide our programme participants with all necessary support. Still facing setbacks from the crisis, we now strive to stabilise the national association SOS Children's Villages Sierra Leone by implementing the Care Promise. This means high and steady performance from all teams as well as warm and consistent parenting where parents and in our case, SOS

mothers, have good relationships with their children and youth supervisors with young people, using non-violent forms of discipline, and exercising appropriate and tailored supervision over beneficiaries, based on their developmental stage.

### **Passion, empathy, love for children and courage, my driving forces...**

Looking back at where we were a year and a half ago, I can say that YES the smile has returned to the children, the young people and mothers of SOS. Being a change agent, living the SOS values, promoting teamwork, enhancing compliance to policies and seeing the results on the ground give me hope and encourage me to keep up with the good work despite the challenges we face on a daily basis.

# My Dream

## Renovation of SOS Children's Village Bo, Sierra Leone

My dream is about seeing a renovated village with happy children with smiling faces. In my picture, you see a renovated house that symbolises a safe home for the SOS families.



1) Sierra Leone was a British Crown Colony from 1808 to 1961 when it achieved independence, but periods of political turbulence have marked its recent history. In 1971, the parliamentary government system was abolished and Sierra Leone declared a presidential republic, creating a one-party state from 1978 to 1985. The current multiparty democratic constitution of Sierra Leone was adopted in 1991, just as the rebel group Revolutionary United Front launched a brutal civil war. Sierra Leone was under military rule from 1992 to 1996. It returned to a democratically elected government when the military junta handed the presidency to Ahmad Tejan Kabbah of the SLPP after his victory in the 1996 Sierra Leone presidential election. However, in 1997, the military overthrew President Kabbah. In 1998, a coalition of West African Ecomog armed forces led by Nigeria reinstated President Kabbah and executed the leaders of the coup after a trial by military court. In January 2002, President Ahmad Tejan Kabbah announced the ending of the civil war with the help and support of Ecomog, the British government, the African Union, and the United Nations. Sierra Leone has had an uninterrupted democratic government from 1998 to present. (Wikipedia [Sept 2019])

2) According to World Data Lab: "Currently 2,778,927 people in Sierra Leone live in extreme poverty, that is 38.6 % of Sierra Leone's population of 7,194,719 persons". World Data Lab, [www.worldpoverty.io](http://www.worldpoverty.io) Lindengasse 56/18-19, 1070 Vienna, Austria. [Sept 2019]

3) The distance between our programme locations and the Capital is approx. 200 and 300 km

4) <https://www.sos-childrensvillages.org/who-we-are/strategy-2030>





# Personal commitment in difficult situations

Working for an organisation with a focus on children and young people in need often leads to strong commitment from co-workers, especially in situations where all other options seem to be out of reach. “Going the extra mile” is therefore a reality for many SOS co-workers and it is impressive to hear how resources are mobilised in difficult situations.

The personal commitment is often driven by strong joint and individual values. Difficult situations mobilise the co-workers to invest all their efforts to change a situation that is out of the ordinary. All the following stories talk about such situations that lasted for longer or shorter periods, but are always linked to difficult situations of different sorts and at different levels, be it personal, organisational or a health crisis like an Ebola outbreak.

The stories talk about the personal commitment, but also about the responsibility of the organisation to enable the co-workers to contribute their skills and resources.



## Afef Boughzala

National Sponsorship Coordinator,  
SOS Children's Villages Tunisia

# From a frightening situation to a long time commitment

or destiny can play tricks on us

In order to get my graduation certificate, during the summer holidays of 1996 I had to do a summer internship. The closest organisation to my parents' home was SOS Children's Villages Tunisia. After an interview with the Association President, I was accepted to be the National Director's assistant for the months of July and August.

Everything was good in this Association: not far from home and the team was very supportive of me. As I was the youngest, everyone called me "the little one" and for many years, this was my nickname.

However, during the last week of my internship, I witnessed a frightening situation.

It was after 5 pm. Everyone had gone but I had to stay because I had an urgent job to finish. It may not have been so urgent or important to finish it the same day, but as I was young and new, any delay was catastrophic for me. So I stayed alone in the office to finish my work. It did not occur to me to check if the last colleague who left locked the door or not.

Absorbed in my work, I was surprised by a woman who entered the office with a child of 3 or 4 and started shouting: "I do not want this child anymore. Take her or I will throw her in front of the wheels of the first car I see!"

A woman who screams? Who asks me to take the child? Who wants/is thinking about throwing her child into the road? What is this? I have always

“

Afef joined SOS Children's Villages Tunisia as an intern in 1996 as part of her degree in International Business. She has now been working for SOS for more than 22 years! Over this period, she has seen many children grow up and fly on their own. After attending their graduation ceremonies, weddings and other private invitations, the children often see Afef like a big sister. Having their trust is her greatest satisfaction.

»





been taught not to speak loudly so what about someone who is shouting? She asked me to take the child but how and why? I am a member of the administrative staff for an internship and I do not even visit the children's village. Is this woman crazy? And what if she has a knife and is going to hurt me or kill me? If so, will no one know until the next day? What will my mother think if I do not come home at night?

### Listen deeply to understand

At this moment I was in a panic, frightened, and terrified. I was shaking like a leaf with fear. However, at the same time, I wanted to calm the mother because the little girl aroused my pity.

My brain was burning with the effort of thinking and I was trying to find a solution. All my colleagues lived far away and I thought that if I tried to call the police, the woman would react badly.

I started talking to her. I learned that her name was Sonia and that she was raising her child alone. Even though I am not a psychologist or similar, I could see that Sonia was desperate and in need of care and that the child must be saved and put in a safe place.

Fortunately, I had the idea of calling the nearest SOS Children's Village's Director, about 5 or 10 minutes from my office, and I begged him to come while continuing to talk to Sonia.

When she saw the director, Sonia resumed her hysterical cries and tears and told him the same story: to take the child or she will kill her.

More experienced than me, the director managed to calm the mother while explaining that he could not keep the child without a legal decision.

After talking to the child protection officer by phone, the director confirmed that he was going to take the child to the safety of the village and that the mother should be ready to complete the administrative file for the child with the help of an SOS co-worker.

Finally, the mother was gone and the child was saved. I was still shaking. It was the first time I had been part of a scene where a mother wanted to get rid of her child at all costs! For me it was impossible. I had got used to seeing and living life, believing that everything is well in the world.... But I had never got around to the problems of other people before that night.

Afef is the youngest in her family, and is a mother of two girls herself. She raises her daughters based on the values of respect, sharing and autonomy. Every morning before dropping her kids off at school, they go to the beach and collect shells. Afef also loves reading in her free time. She has a digital library with over 1,000 books!



## A moment of growing up

I was tired. I could not even walk. The director dropped me off at home after putting the child in the village. I thought that my terror was visible on my face because as soon as I walked in the door of my house, my mother came to ask me what was wrong.

After taking a hot bath and calming a bit, I told my parents everything. Do you know what my mother's reaction was? "Never again will you set foot in that office! I do not want to be worried every day or get bad news about you!"

I was so tired I did not bother to answer but I slept badly that night. I was very confused and lots of ideas jostled in my head. SOS had been the saviour that night. So, am I going to flee? If I was not there tonight, maybe the mother would have thrown her girl in front of a car. I was in bed thinking but, before falling asleep, I knew something: this evening, I have turned from a late teenager to an adult and I have found myself.

## An experience that got anchored in my life

After twenty-two years, I am still here in SOS, trying to help children with the little that I can and participating in their graduation and wedding ceremonies. For most of them, I am their big sister, their confident. For me, most of them are my best friends, my big children.

Tunisia, where Afef lives, is very multicultural because of its history, having been conquered by the Carthaginians, Romans, Ottomans, Spanish and French. It has been mostly peaceful since being the cradle of the revolution of the Jasmine, until recent years when the wave of terrorism affected many countries. However, Afef knows they will have no place in Tunisia as it struggles to achieve its transitional evolution towards democracy. ”

# My Dream

## The Seed Becomes a Tree

My dream is about fundraising. SOS Children's Villages Tunisia committed itself to become a "sustainable path country".

I dream that SOS Children's Villages Tunisia succeeds on their path and becomes a Promoting and Supporting Association, supporting other member associations in the region.

In my picture, you see a big tree as an umbrella for the SOS Children's Villages in the region. Behind these SOS Children's Villages, you can see seeds. One of these seeds is flourishing because SOS is a continuous action, always in movement, always flourishing and shining. You can also see the SOS logo because, even after the sustainable path, we belong to the federation, to the big family.







## Petra Jakovac-Bohnenschäfer

Co-worker Finances / Insurance / Translation,  
SOS Children's Villages Germany e.V.

# Positive Panic

It was in 1994, when I had just been doing my job with SOS for a year and a half, when I had a colleague from SOS Burundi as a guest at my office in Munich.

We had sat down at the table to have coffee and chat about our work. The atmosphere was relaxed and good.

At that time, I had the habit of having my office radio switched on the whole working day. It was turned down low, so only I could hear the music and news without bothering other colleagues in their work.

## A message with an impact

Then the news came on and I froze!

They were reporting that a civil war had broken out in Burundi and that the country had closed all its borders and the airport of Bujumbura.

I was staring at the radio, then at my colleague and then back at the radio again. All I was able to say at that moment was “Attends un moment, s’il te plaît.” (Please, wait a moment.)

I felt the adrenalin kicking in and a feeling of panic was slowly rising inside me. My thoughts began to race. How could I possibly get my colleague back home to his family? With the borders and airport closed, he would be trapped here not knowing whether his family was safe.

I know what war means and what it does to families and individuals finding themselves in it on either side of the lines. I am half-Croatian and there was war in our country from 1991 to 1995. I know that the biggest concern

“Petra’s job involves administrative work in a PSA, where she interacts with colleagues from all over the world on almost a daily basis. Intercultural communication is therefore very important to her. She likes her job because of this and is very grateful for the experience.”





for a civilian during wartime is the well-being and survival of their close ones. So I was determined to bring my colleague home at any cost.

When I told my colleague what I had just heard on the news, he was completely shocked and the very first thing he asked me was: "How am I going to get home to my family?"

We immediately left the office and went to the next travel agency close to my office and I asked the lady there whether it was true that there were no more flights to Bujumbura? She checked this on her computer and confirmed.

My next idea was to contact the Regional Office for Burundi which, at the time, was located in neighbouring Rwanda, and I asked her to book the next possible flight that would take my colleague to Kigali. Luckily, we were able to get a flight to Kigali for the same day and, only a few minutes later, I was able to send my colleague to the airport by taxi.

I went back to the office to tell the colleagues in Rwanda that their colleague from Burundi would be arriving at Kigali airport.

## Taking a breath after some moments of emptiness and fear

I was very relieved when the Regional Office in Rwanda told me of the arrival of our colleague in Rwanda the next day. They also told me that they managed to get him across the border into Burundi to be reunited with his family. It had literally been "last minute" as only one day later Kigali airport was also closed for several days.

I was so glad to have been able to help my colleague return to his family, and the lecture I learned that day was:

Even if a situation is crazy or horrible and you do not know what to do, and even when you start to panic, you can turn this into positive energy to take action by doing the right thing at the right time. Just keep your courage, be strong and never give up!

In her personal life, family is everything to Petra. This does not only comprise her husband and son, but also a whole lot of relatives and all her good friends, whom she treats like family members. Her perception of family, which is not so common in German society, comes from her Croatian heritage. As Petra is half-German, half-Croatian, there is

# My Dream

## Meaningful Work

My dream is about working in an organisation where every staff member is allowed to work according to his/her knowledge, capacity, ability and talents in order to be able to give his/her best in their work. If everyone is employed this way, then contribution and commitment are at a maximum and outcomes will be near to perfect. But this requires that superiors care for their staff members, know them well and are willing to see the chances in this dream.

In my picture, you see a representation of me, spreading out in all directions to help wherever my knowledge, passion or talent are needed. The white sphere in the middle symbolises my energy which can be tapped and turned into whatever is needed from me. The colours, blue and green, are my favourite colours and that's why I chose them.



more than one place that she calls home. Her background means that she can bring together the best from both worlds and make it work for her and her environment. In her free time, Petra likes to read everything connected to languages – be it linguistics, semantics, writing/literacy, dialects, language endangerment, etc.





## Miatta H. Sherman Jallah

National Fund Development and Communications  
Manager, SOS Children's Villages Liberia

# Personal Commitment in difficult times

I would like to tell you a little about my journey at SOS Children's Villages Liberia. Six years ago, I joined SOS Children's Village Liberia as a volunteer. It did not take too long until I was appointed as Assistant National Education Advisor. Near the end of 2014, I was then appointed as Sponsorship Officer because the National Sponsorship Coordinator at the time was near retirement. Upon taking over my new role, it was a bit of a challenge to adjust. My responsibilities were hugely different and demanding. However, I accepted the challenge and began to contribute meaningfully by working with SOS mothers, social workers and other colleagues at the village level. I started collecting material to compile stories of the children and young people who were in the sponsorship programme. My supervisor provided a few weeks of training and I quickly mastered working with the sponsorship software (SPS), now the Donor Services Application (DSapp). I began to love my new role and started building strong relationships with my

colleagues as well as the children and young people.

## When circumstances change ...

A few months later, the Ebola Virus Disease (EVD) began to spread rapidly in Liberia. This was a difficult moment for SOS Children's Villages Liberia and the entire country. During this Ebola outbreak, several preventive measures were put in place in the village. SOS mothers, children and young people stayed inside the village to avoid contact with people from outside and regular hand washing became a routine. All educational facilities, including the SOS Hermann Gmeiner International Schools, were closed by the government primarily as a means of preventing the spread of the virus. The SOS Family Strengthening Programme was closed and several staff members were asked to stay at home until further notice from the management. During this period, SOS Children's Villages Liberia provided medical services to a lot of

“ There are two things Miatta possesses, which serve as motivation in her work life: the love for what she does and her commitment to improve the lives of others. Working as a Fund Development and Communications Manager enables Miatta to lead a team of six people and perform several duties, such as securing funding for SOS Children's Villages Liberia, managing small grants, organising and hosting fundraising events, etc. >



people at the SOS medical centre. The village also started an emergency programme to help affected children, families and communities. The Ebola Virus Disease claimed the lives of many Liberians, leaving several children as orphans.

### Keeping the focus in challenging times

In the midst of everything, I continued working with the National Sponsorship team preparing reports on the children and young people in the sponsorship programmes. This was a challenging period for me. Every day I travelled to work from the outskirts of Monrovia, about 16 kilometres from my home. Using public transport at the time was a risk because the cases of EVD were increasing on a daily basis. Regardless of this situation, I put the interest of the children first. I believed that it was important to contribute to keeping sponsors informed about the welfare of the children and young people in SOS programmes. I was aware that the village needed the contributions of sponsors in these difficult times to continue providing quality care for the children. With these in mind, I mustered the courage and continued working to ensure that my team achieved its goals. Through

the support of the senior management team, all the necessary logistics were provided and we kept the sponsors updated about the situation every step of the way.

### My special moment

Have you ever overcome a great obstacle in your life? I guess you have experienced such a fulfilling moment before. It feels like all of your troubles have suddenly disappeared. This was how I felt when the spread of EVD ended in Liberia. Everyone was excited on the day Liberia was declared free of the Ebola Virus Disease. You can imagine the joy on people's faces. The children, young people, mothers and staff braved the storm and together we conquered Ebola. We were happy to have survived those difficult days. Finally, the children could go back to school, play with friends and interact freely in the environment. Shortly after, other staff members resumed work and things got back to normal.

A few months later, I served as a member of a team put together to carry out an assessment of the cases of children referred to SOS Liberia by the government Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection

Miatta grew up in a small family on the outskirts of Monrovia, Liberia, where many girls did not have the chance to go to school. Her single mother sacrificed everything to ensure that Miatta was educated. As a young mother, she wants to continue showing that light, not just for her children but for all children living in poverty.

Liberia is located in West Africa and shares borders with Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea and Sierra



(MOGCSP) to join Family Based Care, now called SOS Family Care. At this point, I felt it was another magical moment to make a direct impact on the life of a child. It was a chance to be a part of restoring the hope of children who were vulnerable as a result of the Ebola outbreak in Liberia. A series of meetings were held with MOGCSP and we started the assessment. We walked long distances, from one community to another, talking to community leaders and inhabitants to determine if the children were in the SOS target group.

### Welcoming 60 children in one year

With the support of other colleagues such as the Village Director and social workers, we assessed all the cases referred to the village and welcomed over 60 children that year. My participation in this exercise was a great accomplishment for me. I was happy to have been involved in a process which eventually gave hope to children who came from a desperate situation. Today, you can imagine the joy it brings seeing these children grow up in a loving home with SOS mothers, brothers and sisters to call their own. Never again do they have to remember their horrible past.

As I now serve as the Fund Development and Communications Manager, my personal commitment to ensuring that every child succeeds in life continues to inspire me. My goal is to develop and implement several innovative approaches to mobilize resources locally and grow SOS Liberia's local income to reach many more needy children.

Leone. After 14 years of civil war, which ended in 2003, and the recent Ebola outbreak, the country is still in a recovery process. However, Liberians are working hard to overcome those challenges and better their own lives. Miatta likes to do her part for the community, spending her free time teaching and coaching girls to become change-makers in their communities.



# My Dream

## A Brighter Future for Many More Children

My dream is about an SOS Children's Villages that helps many more children have a brighter future. I imagined an SOS where my MA will mobilise resources locally through fundraising and IPDs among others, to expand its programmes in communities. I also dream about SOS being more visible and becoming the strongest partner to the government for children's rights and protection.

In my picture, you see a brighter future for children which respects cultural diversity, represented by the different colours, a flower and a big smiling sun.







## 4 Levels of Listening

Downloading  
Habit of judgement

→

RECONFIRMING  
opinions & judgements

# Challenge to grow

Growth is a process that often happens by itself, but also includes pain and challenges. As humans, we sometimes resist change and perceive it as a challenge. On the other hand, growth often makes us proud and happy after we have lived through it. Only then can we see the growth that we are often unable to see while it is taking place.

Organisations like SOS Children's Villages also experience changes and challenges to grow. These processes happen on the level of the individual child and in the relationship with the care professionals and the SOS-mother but also in the peer group.

Growth also takes place at the organisational level of the national associations and the federation. The implementation of systems and processes can simplify an organisation's life and support growth if well thought through and implemented in a participatory way.

The following stories demonstrate the challenges of growth in SOS Children's Villages, but also for individual co-workers. They also talk about how to support the development of individual children and how the personal story of co-workers motivates the pedagogical work and can lead to taking on different roles in the organisation. One story also shows how systems that enable proper planning and implementation and that monitor the impact of SOS Children's Villages' work on various levels, can support the development of children and the independent life of young people who have left the care of SOS. Furthermore, these lead to the functions of SOS Children's Villages being viewed as a role model by other organisations.





## Ahmed Abdelkhalek

National Human Resources Manager,  
SOS Children's Villages Egypt

# A Goal without a Plan Is a Wish

## When work-life turns 180°

I joined SOS Children's Villages Egypt in 2012 as a follow-up specialist. After one year, our board in Egypt promoted me to an HR supervisor. In my new position, I faced many challenges related to the human resources cycle: the government had replaced the board except the chair, which meant that three board members and the national director had left. In 2014, we received an operational plan from the regional office, but unfortunately, the HR director at the Middle East and North Africa office soon left as well. The situation was chaotic, and no one seemed to be in charge.

Since I was still trying to do my job by keeping the values of our organisation in mind, I started by examining our HR manual, which was very useful for me in overcoming all issues related to the HR cycle. For me, this was about improving the working conditions for our staff in Egypt.

## Dealing with change and challenges

When the HR director at our regional office left, the regional finance team supported me in implementing the operational plan. Soon we realised that we could not make it in time. Since it was about the compensation system, it was very important, especially for our staff. Finally, we decided to change the deadline but not our target. We kept on trying to achieve our goals even if the initial situation was chaotic. This means that if your plan doesn't work, change the plan but never the goal. One of the outcomes of our cooperation was adapting the salary scales to meet the local market requirements. This achievement makes our co-workers and us feel satisfied and successful.

I am sure our common vision, mission, and values at SOS Children's Villages guide our actions, decisions and relationships if we are to achieve our common goals.

“Improving working conditions is very important to Ahmed, as he believes it is essential to motivate and develop our co-workers. It encourages them to innovate and think outside the box in a positive environment, making us stronger together. The vision, mission and values of SOS guide our actions, decisions and relationships. For Ahmed, SOS Children's Villages is not only a place to work, but it is a “loyalty school”.





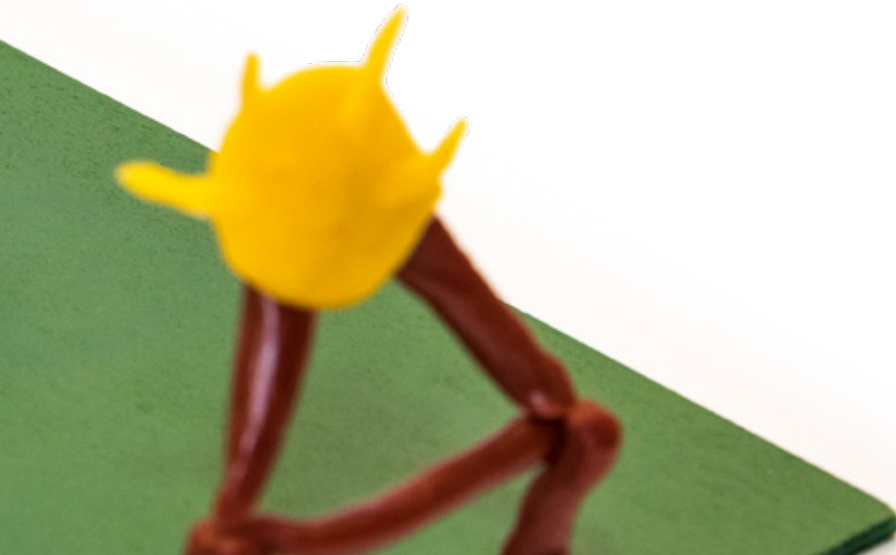
Ahmed is the sixth and youngest child in his family, and he is thankful for having grown up in a family filled with love, care and joy. His parents always taught him the value of education and said to him, “Never too old to learn”.

# My Dream

## Positive Environment

I dream of a positive and creative work environment, which will help us as Human Resources Team to build capacity and encourage development for achieving our organisation's goals.

In my picture, you can see a sunrise, a green tree and an office.



In his free time, Ahmed likes to meet relatives and friends. He likes going on walks to refresh his mind and listening to music to relieve mental stress and physical exhaustion.

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## Elisabeth Schmidt-Hieber

Communications Advisor Advocacy,  
Communication and Brand,  
SOS Children's Villages International, Vienna Office



# Taking up New Challenges to Grow

New challenges help us grow. At the same time, they are an opportunity to broaden our skills to advance values and principles we work for and build new networks. This is why I like taking on new challenges.

However, the longer we stay in a familiar setting, the less we might be willing to get out of our comfort zone, especially if we are in a good situation. I clearly was in a good situation with a job I loved at a migrants' rights NGO, a constantly busy work environment in Brussels with nice colleagues and friends around.

Nonetheless, this inner feeling of moving on, exposing myself to a new environment with the aim of growing and further developing strategies to work effectively for the values I stand for, stayed with me. I was therefore very excited to take up a position as Communications Advisor for advocacy work at SOS' international office in Vienna.

I arrived in my new city and at my new work place on the 2nd of January. Outside, it got dark early, lightened up a bit by the snow on the ground. Inside the office, it was also still pretty quiet with most colleagues out for the holiday break. It made me feel a bit impatient for the following Monday to finally meet my entire new team.

## Finding your place and building trust

The first weeks in my new role passed. I got to know so many colleagues and new processes. It gave me a true impression of the enormous size of the organisation which, at times, also comes with complexity.

I received a lot of very valuable input from colleagues who took their time to sit down with me to explain things. Sharing their work tasks and ideas, they often also told stories about the people who all contributed to shaping the organisation and its identity

“ Elisabeth’s mission is to speak up for those who have no equal representation in our societies, who are excluded from full participation, or whose voices are intentionally silenced. She is grateful that working as a Communications Advisor allows her to do this. Communications also plays a role in her free time: she loves languages and can speak German, English, Spanish, Portuguese, French and a little Arabic. Apart from this, she loves dancing, volunteering and watching Netflix in the evenings. >



through their work expertise and their personalities. However, there were also moments where I felt some discontent, knowing it would still take more time to get to understand things in depth.

Unpacking the boxes in my new home was not the final step of my move. I considered the whole move to be successful at the point at which I could feel that I am fulfilling my new role, when my colleagues no longer address me as someone who is new but as an established and needed team member.

To start a new role is a bit like a free fall. While so many nice colleagues are there to answer questions, you have to try out for yourself what proposals resonate with the team, what steps you can implement. Having worked in Brussels in a politicised environment for a smaller organisation and on an issue often confronted with a hostile climate, I was used to a quite outspoken work environment. Being in a new environment and working with colleagues across teams also required me to take a step back, observe and rethink my own working habits.

## Self-reflection and open mindedness

Adjustment requires a process of self-reflection and careful balancing of your own approaches and the dynamics and processes in the new environment. Relationship building and open-mindedness are key.

I consider myself very lucky to work in the area of communications and advocacy with colleagues from around the world. It is inspiring and shows a multitude of practices. It is like a colourful patchwork quilt, which would fall apart if the pieces were not properly sewn together.

It meant a lot to me to receive encouragement and positive responses after putting some of my initial proposals and plans into place. New colleagues approaching me, asking for advice or offering to brainstorm ideas and strategic approaches was probably the turning point when I felt that my role had become an essential part of my team and our planning.

If I had stayed in my comfort zone, I would likely not have been forced to undergo this process of self-reflection, which is key for personal and professional growth.

“Family” for Elisabeth is living in settings with a community spirit where people share time and thoughts and encourage each other. In addition to her own family, she therefore has an extended family of friends and colleagues from around the world.

## **We have a common denominator: commitment**

One clear common denominator we have across the whole organisation is our commitment to our target group. We might at times have different views but commitment connects us and can help build bridges. Besides trust, commitment is a key element, which gives strength in our daily work, something that has once again become clear in conversations with colleagues from around the world during Harvesting.

Commitment is closely linked to the wish to make an impact ourselves. Our organisation depends on fundraising support to sustain itself but to fulfil the promise to our target group, we have to advocate for structural change, meaning that policies and measures are put into place which positively affect the lives of the children and families we work for.

It is my personal commitment to invest my skills and learn from colleagues, to broaden my skills, to contribute as best as possible to reach our target audiences through the communications we carry out; to raise awareness of the children and young people

we work for; and to convince decision-makers that change is needed.

However, my aim is also to advance the synergy of strategic communications and advocacy within the organisation: to show through success stories as well as through potential failures that investments into strategic communications and advocacy bring us closer to our goals and have an impact on our target group in the long term.

## **Making sure gains outweigh struggles**

The exchanges I had with colleagues from all over the world at Harvesting have been truly enriching. Sharing our stories was not only inspiring but made me rethink the whole adaptation process of the past months. The process of movement and development has not finished.

Although I feel well immersed in my new role and in the organisation, challenges will keep arising. All of the colleagues, no matter how long they have been in the organisation, face challenges and have to constantly find ways to master them.

Similar to family, the concept of “home” for Elisabeth is not only the southern German city where she is from. She also considers Brussels, where she lived for 9 years, as one of her many “homes”. There are probably some more...



We have a huge treasure box holding the impact of 70 years but we also have to openly share and further develop our personal resources to address and overcome the conflicts that sometimes arise internally as well as the external threats that can impede our impact.

As a colleague from Liberia, who supported children and families throughout the Ebola crisis, stated: “We can make the gains outweigh the struggles.”

## My Dream

# Achieving Equality

My dream is about more equality at different levels:

- At decision-maker level: give equal attention to our children
- Often the most vulnerable children end up in SOS programmes. Structural changes to close the gap and achieve more equality among children
- Public awareness: strong communications raise more awareness
- Within SOS: equality among levels and regions

In my picture, you see our planet with children in an equally positive situation. They have different backgrounds, different ethnicity and live in different places but their chances to grow and strive are equal.









## Mohammad Shahidul Islam

Project Director,  
SOS Children's Villages Khulna, Bangladesh

# Treasure comes through hard work

## Learning from personal life

I am Shahidul Islam, the eldest of the six children of my parents. I was not lucky enough to grow up in wealth and I faced poverty, which stood in the way of my education. Passing my secondary school leaving exams in 1981, I came to town from my village to continue my studies. As our family was in financial crisis, I went into a lodging house and was admitted to a Government Polytechnic Institute in Diploma Engineering. However, due to lack of money, the following year I switched to another technical institute run by an NGO where I got an opportunity of free food, free accommodation and completely free studentship. Suddenly my father became paralysed and, being the eldest son, I was tense about when and how I would have to shoulder the responsibility of my family and educate my younger brothers and sister. In 1985 I successfully completed my three year Technical Course. I then had to com-

plete an Instructor Training Course at the same Institution for another year. In view of my results, performance and sincerity, the Institute authorities offered me the post of Instructor of their Training Centre. On the very day of the completion of my Training, I joined the Institution as an Instructor. Besides maintaining my family, I started contributing to educating my younger brothers and sister with the money I could get from my job. Despite being trained in Technical Education, I completed my Master's Degree in Education.

## My journey with SOS

It was 1988 when SOS Children's Villages in Bangladesh took the initiative of setting up a Vocational Training Centre (VTC) in Dhaka. The authority appointed me as the Principal to start a new vocational training centre. I took the challenge and started my journey with SOS on 1 June 1988. I dedicated myself to establishing a

“**M**ohammad joined SOS Children's Villages Bangladesh when he was 22 years old. He established and nurtured the growth of a new Vocational Training Centre (VTC) and eventually became the Director. Currently, the SOS VTC stands as a model training centre in Bangladesh that has successfully delivered thousands of graduates to the nation. Mohammad is working as the Project Director in SOS Khulna at present. Mohammad is eager to learn new things in workshops and forums and to implement the idea in his



model vocational training centre and, within a few years, SOS VTC Dhaka stood as a model training centre in Bangladesh that has successfully delivered thousands of potential skilled employees to the nation. They became self-reliant through the training they received and succeeded in their lives. In 2006 the SOS authorities promoted me to Director of SOS Vocational Centres in Bangladesh to look after them. The SOS Vocational Centre Dhaka celebrated its 20 year anniversary in 2008. A get-together of ex-students was organised. Mr. Helmut Kutin, being very impressed and satisfied with my dedication and enthusiasm, said, “There are one thousand and one hundred students who have gone through his hands, who attended his training and who now have great success in their lives. The success has been achieved due to his persistence and insistence.” Later on, at its 25 Year Celebration, Helmut Kutin was so overwhelmed that he suddenly presented his own SOS Ring to me for a few minutes, although he presented me with the SOS Ring on another occasion.

## Accepting a new challenge

In September 2013, the SOS Authorities transferred me to SOS Children’s Village Khulna, the largest Children’s Village in Bangladesh, to take over the responsibility of the location and I started my work there. I found a very undisciplined children’s village and tried to find out the root causes of the problems. I strongly felt that the children, mothers and co-workers needed a person to share their problems and to get better solutions for problems. I started listening to the children, mothers and co-workers, giving time to them, and prepared a priority-based work plan and took all possible initiatives to solve the problems and meet their listed expectations. The destructive activities of the village children have now been fully routed out. There were children who mischievously made a noise during study times during the day and in the evening; who got involved in destructive activities such as stealing coconuts, different scrap goods, electric lightbulbs etc. and selling them in neighbouring shops or the market; children who ran away, threw fire crackers, sat on top of the roof of the different buildings in the Children’s Village. Some of the boys and girls who were living in the

workplace to ensure quality work. He believes that sharing is the best method of learning! Mohammad has five siblings and, from an early age, took responsibility for his brothers and sister. For him, the essence of family begins with care and responsibility. He is now a father of two children – one, a successful university student, and the other, a successful banker.

different boarding houses thought that they had the right to get everything they demanded. If the authority failed to satisfy their demands immediately, they started misbehaving and putting on pressure. They never appreciated the reality. Now most of these things are under control. Most of the children are well-disciplined. In recognition of my activities, the SOS Authorities promoted me to Project Director on 1 January 2015.

### From despair to inspiration

Sreya<sup>1</sup>, a girl from SOS Children's Village Khulna, is now studying in the 2nd semester of a BSc degree in Electrical and Electronic Engineering. She passed her Secondary School Certificate Examination in 2013, gaining GPA<sup>2</sup>-4.63. After passing the SSC Examination<sup>3</sup> she was admitted to a college for general education. Although she was provided with adequate support, she did not concentrate on her studies but lost one year achieving nothing. She got involved with the Bangladesh National Cadet Core (BNCC) and would often

spend days in the BNCC camps. She also fell in love with a young man and would spend time with friends from outside and her boyfriend. She enjoyed her time, leaving her books aside. She did not attend classes or tutorial examinations. She even failed to sit the Final Year Examination. Once she was caught by local police while on a date with her boyfriend. We managed to rescue her from the police station. After this incident, I personally called on her and asked to know about her career planning. She told me that she did not find studying interesting. I realised that she would find nothing of interest in general education. Then I suggested that she attends a technical training course and gets admitted to an engineering college. So she was admitted to an engineering college to study a 4-year Diploma Engineering Course. She happily took up the opportunity!

### A path can have many turns

Unfortunately, she again fell in love and into the trap of a married person with children. She was at a loss and became desperate. When this information reached me, I personally talked to her. She confessed and made a commitment to return to

1 Name changed for privacy reasons.

2 Grade Point Average

3 Secondary School Certificate, also called SSC or Matriculation examination, is a public examination in Bangladesh

He lives happily with his wife in the SOS Children's Village residence. Khulna, where Mohammad lives, is the third largest city in Bangladesh. It is famous for the Sundarbans, the world's largest mangrove forest, and its royal Bengal tigers. In his free time, Mohammad likes to play all kinds of sports: cricket, volleyball and table tennis. He also likes to spend time with the children in SOS or with his family.



normal life and concentrate on her studies. I supported her decision. We counselled her as per our capacity. She received our counselling and started to lead a normal life. “Uncle (me) received me after committing such an offence, in a way that only a father can do. It was an accident as well as a turning point for me. I got a great lesson and I was resurrected like a phoenix bird from a ruin,” said Sreya. However, she was kept under close monitoring and all kinds of mental support were provided. I personally counselled her to restart her studies and concentrate on building her career, and to forget the dark chapter in her life. My counselling really worked well! She made a sharp turn and, within a short time, positive changes in her behaviour started to be visible. She completed the Diploma Course in 2018 with CGPA-3.40 on a scale of 4.00. After completing the Diploma Course, she was afraid that she would not get a chance to study BSc Engineering. However, I called on her and asked her about her career planning. She expressed her desire to study a BSc Engineering. I supported her decision. As per her wish, she was admitted to a renowned University for a BSc in Electrical & Electronic Engineering. “Everything seems like a dream to me! I just can’t believe that my cherished dream of studying BSc Engineering has finally come true!! Thanks to God and Uncle for pulling me out from my hellish fall,”

Sreya said, sharing her feelings after being admitted into the BSc Engineering. Now Sreya is dreaming of a new start in life with renewed hopes and dreams.

### Acknowledgement

I am grateful to all my colleagues who were involved in my teamwork to achieve the goal, National Director and other line managers who supported me and finally the Honorary President, Mr. Helmut Kutin, by whom I was inspired to work for SOS Children’s Villages.

### Happy life

I am now also a father of two children. My brothers and sister are happily married and settled. I feel very proud of myself that my son is a successful University student and my daughter is a successful banker (by the by, she is married too and lives with her husband in the capital city). Finally, my wife is a housewife and her contribution helped me to surmount many challenges. I am very happy to work with SOS where I have been given the opportunity to help children in need.



## My Dream

# Happy Family for SOS Beneficiaries

My dream is about working for the children in need. My dream is that all of our beneficiaries will be self-reliant and have a happy family of their own.

In my picture, you see parents and their two children. There is a family bonding with each other. Children are under parents' hands, which means love, care and protection is there. You can also see two colours, red and green. As I am from Bangladesh and the Bangladesh flag has red and green colours, I am representing Bangladesh here.





## Daniel Alarcón Verdezoto

National Strategic Planning, Monitoring and  
Evaluation Advisor, SOS Children's Villages Ecuador

# If you try, you can be the person you believe yourself to be

My story begins a year after I joined SOS in Ecuador. I was initially the strategic planning national coordinator of my country and I was trained for that purpose by the SOS Regional Office in Latin America. I remember being very excited to apply all the knowledge acquired in the first planning workshops in my country.

I noticed that when I did the first planning workshop in my country there was a lot of expectation about what I was going to do: everyone was staring at me and trying to tell me something ... now I understand what it was!

Despite my efforts, there was little acceptance of the contents I had presented in the first two planning workshops as a workshop facilitator. But I continued in my “wrong persistence”, persistence in trying to convince everyone to do something different to what was really needed. There was

some acceptance, or at least I thought there was at some point.

It was the year 2013 when my Regional Office requested my support as facilitator of the strategic planning workshop and a process called RAP (Rapid Assessment of Programmes) for another SOS Member Association in South America. Without much information, I had the option of not accepting it or continuing and answering my e-mail with a YES. A couple of colleagues from my office, including my National Director, trusted that I could and, after talking with them and discussing it a bit, I decided to press “enter” for my email with an “I do accept”!

Once I was in that country, I remember seeing myself standing in front of a group of 30 people, all part of the management team of that SOS Association, staring at me. Oh, I knew

“ Daniel, or Dani for short, strongly believes that every plan is possible if you have deep commitment and it can be visualised. Different points of view enrich our planning, and some people use different language to express the same objective. As a workshop facilitator, Dani has been able to reinvent himself. Every time he stands in front of a group, he tries to reset his brain and be open to the group’s energy and creativity. >



that look: who is this, what are his intentions, why is he here? As well as the inquisitive looks from the back of the room. Behind a desk were also the new Regional Director of that continent and the new Regional Management Advisor, also staring at me ...

### Understanding little by little

That day I understood that there was a complicated economic and political situation within that SOS Member Association, since the RAP process could mean the closure of SOS programmes due to the economic situation, as well as power struggles that I could see behind certain faces. So I thought: "Daniel you're here and there's no turning back." The first day was difficult as many let out their harshest criticisms, even towards me. I remember that the first day everyone wanted to express anger, some people even approached me and demanded that I stop someone from talking more, and cut the workshop short. The pressure was high and my shoulders, feet, face and body felt it. The second day got better as the morning passed and with two or three facilitation techniques that I knew at that point, I was able to understand little by little that everyone needed to participate in their own way, to be

listened to. So as not to disappoint the confidence gradually placed in me, I initiated a facilitation between both sides involved and, in an environment of equality, everyone could speak and express their expectations, so reducing the tension.

### Trusting the process

The time came when everyone "together" had to establish a strategic objective and actions. Regarding the management system that went beyond their toughest positions. It was about joining forces to improve the quality of life of children/girls, adolescents and families and not allow them to be affected by this process, in addition to strengthening collaborators who were not present in the workshop but were the responsibility of SOS. In the middle of that workshop I could release the pressure on me and, for several moments, flow and feel the freedom and confidence that we were ready to propose the right thing. At the climax of the second day, the energy of all could become one and carry out what was proposed by the group, a national goal built and validated by all, all as one team. Now everyone was by my side, participating, and not facing me.

Dani grew up on the coast of Ecuador but now works in Quito, in the Ecuadorean Highlands. Near Quito are some of the most beautiful volcanoes, Cayambe and Chimborazo. Ecuador is also famous for the Galapagos Islands and its Amazon rainforest.

At the end, I saw signs of deep gratitude for the work done and recognition, even from the Regional Director who, after his initial distrust, was able to close that gap with a sincere hug.

### Generating greater impact

Upon my return, with the satisfaction of having achieved a challenge of that nature, and taking into account that my job description did not include workshop facilitation, I returned to reality and understood that this was only the beginning. This would be complemented by the process that my country began in 2013, a process of structural change in which the situation of each child in SOS Ecuador should be analysed to establish the best response based on their right to live as a family, strengthen family reunifications and diversify the modalities of attention. Of course the great challenge was that this change should become more economical and generate greater impact. By 2020, SOS Ecuador should be 100% self-sustaining.

### Exploring the reality of children

This change lay in being able to identify new ways to care for each child and I was required to assume a new

position as a Monitoring & Evaluation advisor and design a monitoring system that allows us to visualise the process of analysing the best answer for each child within SOS.

This is why I undertook a second trip, this time in my own country and thanks to support from the person responsible for Child Protection at the time, who guided me in a 6-month long process of visiting each SOS Children's Village programme in Ecuador where I could see each child's realities and circumstances that I would have misunderstood from my desk or from workshops with senior managers. These realities touched me so much that I understood what was really needed and had to be done. This insight was not based on an external guideline, as I mentioned at the beginning, but is based on the experience and knowledge of every human reality, on the life story of every child and young person and on the expectations of a co-worker in front of me.

Today I can see their needs in their eyes. There is the need to listen to them and the need for concrete actions that are useful and the need to not disappoint their faith even if they don't know me.

However, Dani loves returning to his hometown in Guayaquil when he can, and spending time with his sister and nieces. He also likes to relax at home and watch TV series, or enjoy the company of his friends and partner.





## “ARIEL” is born

Thanks to that experience, I was able to propose an idea and create a virtual monitoring system for this purpose called the “ARIEL” system. This system, in addition to helping to optimise resources, simplifies and automatically establishes individual development plans for each child. We are currently negotiating for its acquisition with the Ecuadorian state whose approach is to reduce unnecessary institutionalisation, in order to improve the quality of care of around 2,500 children who are in different institutional care systems in the country.

## Becoming a different person

So far I have been able to support other countries by facilitating strategic planning workshops and other processes, including supporting the World Movement for Children in Latin America, which would not have been possible without experiences like the one described above and which now becomes another professional and personal facet thanks to SOS, but mainly thanks to the people who could convey to me by their look what was really needed... trust.

Currently SOS Ecuador has 97% programmatic and financial self-sustainability and, since 2015, has been in the midst of a strategic planning process built through the collective efforts of all. I can focus my efforts on doing monitoring and tracking from the individuality of each child, the integrity of an SOS programme and of an entire National Association. On the other hand I am no longer the same person who joined SOS, thanks to the contribution from and admiration of those who are or were in the organisation and the mutual transformation which continues.

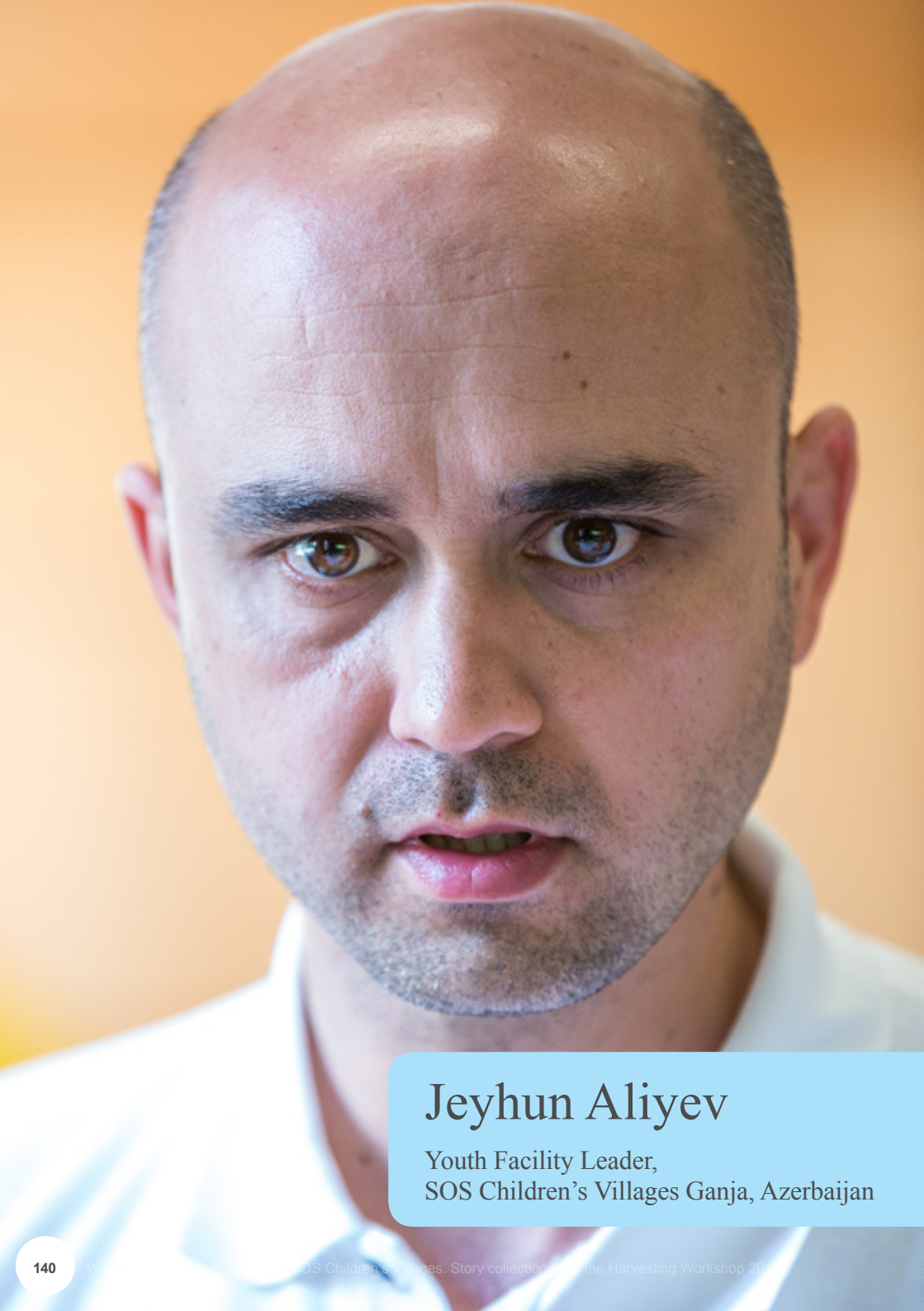
# My Dream

## Show the Impact of a Protective Community

My dream is to show the approach that SOS Children's Villages Ecuador is trying to put into practice. Being part of the "One Team – One Mission" team, I want everyone to support what we in Ecuador are striving to do: to show the difference that we can make together!

In my picture, you can see different levels of work that safeguard children's rights and prevent children from being separated from their families unnecessarily. You can see SOS Children's Villages staff, different forms of alternative care for children, and families at risk of separation that are supported by SOS Children's Villages teams. You can also see a magnifying glass that shows the results, and a star (the goal).





## Jeyhun Aliyev

Youth Facility Leader,  
SOS Children's Villages Ganja, Azerbaijan

# Never give up on your goals and believe in yourself

SOS as an international charity organisation is well known all over the world as well as in our country, Azerbaijan. It is also famous and highly respected. As far as I'm concerned, I have always dreamed of working in a charity organisation and being able to support and contribute to helping people and children in need.

So, on one of my lucky days, I had the chance to apply for the position of social worker in an Family Strengthening Programme project linked to the SOS Village Ganja, my hometown. I still remember the question that I was asked about how I would manage to work in this position since my previous one was an insurance agent. My response was short and direct: "Just give me a chance and you will see."

About one month later, I received a phone call from the local SOS office that I was accepted for this position. Those were the most wonderful and

happiest moments of my life. I just told myself, "Yes you did it."

My first weeks and months as a social worker were very hard, disturbing and sometimes exhausting. As I often had to meet, collaborate and negotiate with people who demanded more without being willing to do anything. All in all, my role as a social worker was to support and help the families and children in need living in our society and in neighbouring districts. I had to travel a lot around the city in search of such families and I had to arrange meetings with people from the authorities and so on.

My family and friends gave me enthusiasm and energy and always supported me in my work saying, "We believe in you, it is your dream work." As a social worker I always tried to do my best to be helpful and supportive for the families in need by offering my help with all necessary building

“

As the Youth Facility Leader, Jeyhun is constantly striving to listen patiently, to support and to actively participate in solving problems on various subjects. Co-workers need to be more sensitive and attentive, especially with young people and teenagers. ➤



materials, medical needs, food and so on. To my great joy, two years later I was promoted to the position of Youth Facility Leader.

I have been working as a Youth Facility Leader for six years now. For me it is a very enjoyable and leading position. Young people as a whole are very sensitive and often a group in the society that change their minds. Nevertheless, in spite of hard and at times stressful moments during the work, I have never given up trying to reach my goals by solving young people's problems and organising trainings, meetings, sport games and a lot more activities for my target group.

Now I would like to tell a story about one of my youths, Fuad<sup>1</sup>, who I supported to get an education in a free department a year ago. Fuad was very responsible, reliable and problem-solving and one of the active young people in our project. He was very determined to enter a college that would allow him to gradually improve his educational skills throughout the year. Finally, after hard-working preparations, Fuad succeeded in passing an exam and entered a college in a fee-paying education department. Unfortunately our budget

could not offer to pay \$700 per year for Fuad's education and there was also no time to find a donor.

Moreover, due to our country's educational law, only young people with no parents are allowed to get a free education. Fuad's situation was a little bit different because his mother was alive. Despite this factor I decided to try, collected all the necessary documents describing the young boy's biography and made an appointment with the college director. I had to travel three times for 200 km from my hometown to that college with Fuad trying to make a number of appointments with the college's director and the Human Rights Department. Our goal was to tell them that we were unaware of where Fuad's mother was and what she was doing at that moment. Every time during meetings they told us "We can't accept Fuad, we need confirmation proving that his mother passed away."

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1 Name changed for privacy reasons.

Jeyhun practices this patience and care at home as well. He is always ready to support and care for his family, play with his children and encourage them to take part in the community. Ganja, where Jeyhan and his family live, is the second largest city in Azerbaijan. It is a very ancient and historical city surrounded by forests and mountains and divided into two



## Keep on trying until you succeed

In some moments, I wanted to give up and leave everything on his own way. Although, by knowing Fuad and his ambition, determination to get an education and his heart-warming words made me change my mind and try again. Fortunately for us, during our final visit, Fuad and I managed to convince them that we neither had any information about Fuad's mother nor about his relatives. We also produced a statement proving that he had really living in SOS Ganja Village for over 7 years and that his mother had never visited him during that period. In the end, the college director agreed that the facts were true and accepted the documents submitted. After accepting his documents, I was very happy about the work I had accomplished and about myself, so much so that I jumped for joy right there in the college hall. Fuad was glowing with happiness and even burst out crying with joy. Later he admitted that if he had been refused he would have committed suicide. Since he spent months on preparation, studying and writing pre-tests, he didn't want to look humiliated and broken in front of his friends. These words gave me a huge shock and I thought for a

moment about what would have happened if I had decided to give up.

In conclusion, I would like to add that whatever we do and whenever we do it, the most important thing is to believe in yourself, in your power, and to aim for your goals.

parts thanks to the Ganja River.

As Jeyhun spends most of the working week sitting at the computer, he prefers to spend the weekends in nature with his friends and family. Nature helps him gain energy and gives him support to continue the next week with fresh ideas.

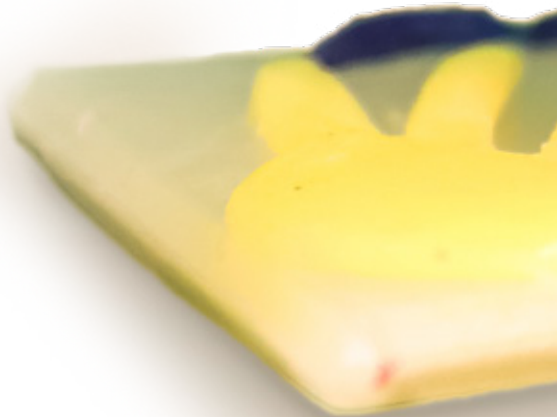


# My Dream

## Safe Place for all Children in Need

My dream is about the future perspectives, plans and aims of our organisation. SOS as a whole will take all children and families in need under its protection. To provide them with a home (shelter), food, warmth, care and love and to protect them from any kind of violence and assault.

In my picture, you see an earth, food and water for all children in need. The trees around mean love and care. The sun means safety, warmth and the support of the caregivers. The chimney means burning out all problems, disturbances and concerns out of all the SOS Children's Villages. Moreover, the green colour is a symbol of a bright future and reliable environment.







## Veronica Prehatiningsih (Balulewa)

National Sponsorship Coordinator, SOS Children's Villages Indonesia

# Struggles changed my destiny

## I want to join the dancing ...

“Please, raise your hands, those who want to join the dancing for welcoming the special guest next Sunday,” asked the dancing teacher. Of course, I raised my hand as high as I could. She then mentioned the names of those who had raised their hands, except my name... I knew right away why she had not chosen me. I understood so well. She only chose the pretty ones or she did not see my hand... At that time I was 12 years old when I started to lose my self-confidence. I liked taking part in various activities but I would become very shy. I even began to tremble when it came to perform or talk in front of many people. To sum things up, I completed my high school well and, as was the rule, I had to do a one-year internship before continuing to college.

## What a nice feeling!

After doing two years of internship as a kindergarten teacher and substituting mothers at the SOS Children's Village Lembang, along with an SOS sister who grew up in the same family house, in 1988 I got an offer to learn some administrative work at the SOS Children's Village Davao, Philippines. Realising how people were always comparing me with her, I really did my best to follow all the work and lessons. I was proud to finally “beat” her in both performances. What a feeling! Returning home after 6 months of training, instead of going to college, I was recruited as one of the administrative staff of the SOS Children's Village Lembang.

“

One thing that Veronica has learned from her work is that technology is unavoidable. She admits to being a little “old-fashioned” and enjoying her comfort zone. However, working with much younger colleagues with their far-reaching vision helped her learn new computer skills and not be left behind. She now enjoys working with technology and can feel the advantages: her work is now easier, faster and more practical. >





## Learning by doing, why not?

I used all the practice from the administrative work that I had done in the Philippines. Except for my English skills that were very bad. I felt I had made no progress at all! Unfortunately, English skills were needed for my work in the future. I found it complicated, especially the grammar. I attended a course but could not succeed. My first job doing English communication was retyping letters written by my supervisor Mrs. Prawoto, the wife of the late founder of SOS Children's Villages Indonesia. The retyping work finally gave me an interest in having better English skills. I then started the task of translating children's letters from Indonesian into English. I made many mistakes even in a very short letter. Mrs. Prawoto patiently did the corrections. Going from the short letters until I finally dared to translate much longer letters, there were still a lot of mistakes but I liked it. Why? Because through the corrections I learned so much and even made significant progress! Even if my mistakes decreased, I was still not good at grammar, but at least my English skills improved. I think I gained a little self-confidence thanks to Mrs Prawoto who has always been very supportive.

## From a village staff member to the National Office

In early 2000, my office moved from Lembang to Bandung, about 13 km away. I made a lot of progress with my work. I was given the responsibility of writing the mid-year and end-of-year letters, which I considered as a complement. Mrs. Prawoto used to be the one doing the letters and was still doing it even after retirement. For a few years, she still checked and corrected my writing, however, she could not always do this because she had many other activities after having retired. It made me feel bad when she apologised for being late checking the letters. This finally gave me the idea to propose myself for attending the three-month English course in Cambridge, one of the SOS International programmes for students. I really wanted to do the letters independently and not rely on others. Why did I want to join the lessons in Cambridge and not in my own country? For me it would be more effective to have the lessons there since I would have a bigger chance to practice in both communicating and writing. Even thinking in English would happen when I met native English speakers.

Veronica is married with three children and lives in Bandung, Indonesia. The city, where the climate is described as the best in the country, is surrounded by dormant volcanoes and dotted with art deco buildings that are a legacy of Dutch colonial times.

## The burning spirit recedes ...

Time went by... I was hoping to get good news about my proposal. However, one morning I heard a loud rush calling my colleague's name. I was wondering if something had happened. She went to the person who had called her and it took quite a long time until she returned to our room. "Hi, what happened?" I asked her when she came back. "Hem...hem...hem..." she answered me reluctantly. She looked uncomfortable. I did not force her to tell me. I tried to be ready to listen to any bad news, as it could clearly be seen from her 'guilty feeling' looks... I did not know how to describe my feelings, my body language or even my look! I tried hard not to cry and to keep being tough... It was not because she was the one who would go to Cambridge but the way I got the news. I really did not understand why he had told this secretly. All the spirit I had gained all this time receded. There were few more bitter experiences of not being trusted and appreciated, and this made me feel inferior. It was very unfortunate, because it happened at my work place, which is at SOS Children's Villages Indonesia. I was acknowledged and trusted when I was outside the SOS Village, especially when it related to the church's

activities. However, of course, this was not the place where I could earn a living!

## Main message of the story

Anyway, the main message of my story is not about getting income or money. It is mainly about how important it is that a person is trusted, appreciated and acknowledged. These feelings will give a positive impact to one's personality, improvement and performance, the feeling to give the best they can for their job.

Veronica enjoys her "lazy" weekends watching movies and TV, or reading. Her hobbies include singing and listening to music, and she is an absolute dog lover. She hopes to have her own dog one day.



# My Dream True Love

My dream is about every child experiencing true love in an SOS Children's Village environment. The true love means the children will get what they really need – not only about “outside need”, but mostly inside, which covers being trusted, accepted and appreciated.

In my picture, you see a girl with a big smile because she has the most important thing in her life, which is true love.







## Michael Kirchmair

International Sponsorship Coordinator,  
SOS Children's Villages Ecuador



# A challenging 40-year cycle ... and still committed and passionate

## History meets the present and will continue into the future

The Story from being a visitor at an SOS Children's Village in Austria, to being an SOS sponsor of Hermann Gmeiner Fonds Deutschland, and finally the highly committed coordinator of international sponsorship in Ecuador

When I saw the women, the sponsor from Norway, hugging her sponsored girl Rosa<sup>1</sup> (17 years old), the bright eyes and shining faces of the two, then I think I also showed a beatific smile. I'm sure I felt fulfilment and contentedness, on this hot and sunny November afternoon 2018.

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<sup>1</sup> Name changed for privacy reasons.

### Being a visitor

Allow me to go back to 1972 (one year earlier or later, this is approximate). I remember that it was during the Advent season in December, possibly a cold Sunday afternoon when we, my parents, sisters and I, visited the SOS Children's Village Seekirchen, close to Salzburg. During those years in the 70s it had been a tradition in my family to share happy moments with the children living there and the people working there, in summer and before Christmas. I always gave two or three of them, boys of my age, some of my toys: plastic soldiers, Lego or cars. At the time I did not re-

“As International Sponsorship Coordinator, Michael is convinced that his job is one of the most interesting jobs in SOS Children's Villages. It allows him to immerse himself in the world and daily life of the children, to know where and how they are living, and then to communicate this to our sponsors all over the world. He likes sharing stories about the children, villages and programmes to make sponsors understand what we are all doing to make life a bit better.”



ally understand why all these children lived there, but my parents mentioned that they needed aid and care, support and affection. We undertook these visits over a few years. Later my dad was an occasional donor of SOS Children's Villages Germany.

### Being a sponsor

I grew up, meanwhile doing different volunteering and social work in the Catholic Church, for the local fire brigade, the Red Cross and the Caritas amongst others, until starting my studies on international economy at a German university of applied science. As a student, I had the chance to visit Guatemala for two months in 1993, to learn Spanish. There I made contact with an SOS Children's Village in another continent, which impressed me a lot and widened my horizons. After my return to Germany, I decided to start with an international SOS sponsorship – and obviously, I asked for the opportunity to sponsor a girl in Guatemala, living in the village of Santa Cruz. It was so brilliant to support her! ...and it didn't matter that I didn't have much money as a student. For me it was important to continue what my parents taught me, to be a good, helpful, social and caring human being – especially for

those who don't have the same living conditions as I have. Later, after my studies, working in a bank, I widened and spread my support for SOS, sponsoring a girl in SOS CV Vietnam, amongst other contributions to some other NGOs in the world.

### Being a National Sponsorship co-worker (NSPO) from MA Ecuador

Advancing along my life's path, due to different but interesting circumstances, in 2006 I came to Quito, Ecuador (which is another story to tell at another opportunity). Since then, I have been married to an Ecuadorian woman. At this moment there was another change, coming closer to my personal dream, commitment and destiny: along with my wife, we decided that it wouldn't be a bad decision to change my professional orientation. Rapidly I was able to enter a street children's foundation, coordinated by the Salesians of Don Bosco, in the capital Quito. The experiences I had there as the coordinator responsible for local and international projects were a real gain for me. To work for the neediest, the children, made me very content.

One day at the end of 2011 my wife found an advertisement in the news-

In his leisure time, Michael, together with his Ecuadorean wife, enjoys life in nature whenever possible. Ecuador is the ideal and best location in the world for this, with its volcanoes in the Andes, the Pacific Coast, the Amazonian jungle and the Galapagos Islands. You can find more plants, orchids, insects and birds in this little country than in any other.

paper from SOS Children's Villages Ecuador, looking for someone with experience working in a non-governmental organisation in the social sector, requiring knowledge of English, German and obviously Spanish. "This job is really made for you!" she said – and after a process of selection, I finally got it. Thus, a new challenge started as a sponsorship coordinator for the international SOS sponsors. "Wow, back to where I was 40 years ago, when I and my parents visited this village in Salzburg, playing with the boys," was the first thought that came into my mind. I think, working here, this was really my destiny, wasn't it? First, I knew the SOS children, I played with them in the village, I have been an SOS sponsor and now I am the connecting point between the two!

### The challenging sponsor's visit

Back to this sponsor's visit to Rosa, mentioned at the beginning. Like every visit we receive, I accompanied it, but in this case it was something more challenging and special: the same sponsor had visited her sponsored girl six years before, in 2012, in the SOS house inside the village. However, now the living situation had changed: I had to explain why Rosa\*

is living with her siblings and SOS mother outside the traditional village, in a house in the community. Due to programmatic changes in SOS Children's Villages Ecuador, most of the children no longer live in the traditional villages. Although I had explained to the sponsor beforehand that Rosa\* and her five sisters and brother are now living far away from the former village, I found it challenging and perhaps felt some fear to go to the SOS family's new home with her, more than 100 km away from the village office.

Obviously, during the trip by car the sponsor asked with curiosity, or perhaps annoyed: "Why does Rosa live so far from the town? Was this really necessary? What is the reason for it?" Due to my experience as a former sponsor, I knew what sponsors want and what I would have expected in this situation: a good explanation and, much more important, making these changes visible. We came to the house, where Rosa was already waiting and immediately hugged her, saying: "I am so happy that you're here and that I can show you my new home! It is so great to live here with my siblings, close to my daddy's home!" I could see that she now understood ... After the visit she expressed her thanks very enthu-

As a German living in Quito, he enjoys spending time with his wife in Ecuador, dancing salsa, listening to "pasillo" music and advocating for the environment. However, Michael also misses ski races and all winter sports, especially as a former active biathlon athlete. He also has family back home in Germany, whom he tries to see at least once a year.



siastically: “I am very content and I feel more encouraged and motivated, thank you for making this visit possible!”

My history is present now and will still continue. All that I have experienced during the last 40 years, my visits, my sponsorships and my social work help me to do a good job. I am sure that there are many more interesting and challenging things waiting for me, in the very near future.

## My Dream

# Sponsors for all Children in all Programmes

My dream is about generating and widening the “product” of sponsorship to give the child sponsor contact and the organisation stable income; widening sponsorship to family strengthening and children and young people in reunification or autonomy; introducing also local sponsorship for all these children; always listening to my heart, creating a stable beautiful future.

### In my picture you see:

- SOS logo and child – coming from the past, now in the present and going into the future. Do not forget our roots.
- Heart – always listen to it, to the children, to your family.
- Dollar symbol – stability and self-sustainability. We need to widen our funding products, sponsor family strengthening, local sponsorships
- Sun, sky, green land – generates a positive, great future for the children and the organisation.





# Supplementary information

## Literature

- **Art of Participatory Leadership Slovenia:**  
[aoplslovenia.weebly.com/uploads/2/6/1/5/26152526/\\_\\_\\_\\_\\_description\\_of\\_designing\\_wiser\\_action\\_2.0.pdf](http://aoplslovenia.weebly.com/uploads/2/6/1/5/26152526/_____description_of_designing_wiser_action_2.0.pdf) [12 July 2019]
- **David Cooperrider, Diana Whitney, Jaqueline M. Stavros (2008):**  
Appreciative Inquiry Handbook. For Leaders of Change.  
Second Edition, Ohio and San Francisco.
- **Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi (1990):**  
Flow, The psychology of optimal experience, Harper Perennial Modern Classics, New York
- **The Center for Appreciative Inquiry:**  
[www.centerforappreciativeinquiry.net/more-on-ai/glossary/](http://www.centerforappreciativeinquiry.net/more-on-ai/glossary/) [24 July 2019]

## Harvesting short films

<https://www.youtube.com/user/HGAlnnsbruck/videos>

- **Trust within SOS Children's Villages - Harvesting Workshop 2019:**  
[youtu.be/VVVhZP2TvNY](http://youtu.be/VVVhZP2TvNY)
- **Harvesting Workshop 2018 - SOS Children's Villages co-workers share their knowledge:**  
[youtu.be/2thB0PiXYfM](http://youtu.be/2thB0PiXYfM)
- **Harvesting 2017 - Experience Exchange and Knowledge Sharing:**  
[youtu.be/169VLOZb7sU](http://youtu.be/169VLOZb7sU)
- **Harvesting 2016 – SOS Children's Villages co-workers share their experiences:**  
[www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLqfzESCEqBWaseUZ6b06MMktBB1lbSMnu](http://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLqfzESCEqBWaseUZ6b06MMktBB1lbSMnu)
- **Harvesting 2016 - Experience Exchange and Knowledge Sharing:**  
[www.youtube.com/watch?v=LWpuY6kdn5M](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LWpuY6kdn5M)
- **SOS Children's Villages - Harvesting 2014 (Imagefilm):**  
[youtu.be/gueiN9Zw9zw](http://youtu.be/gueiN9Zw9zw)
- **The Story about Harvesting 2012:**  
[youtu.be/nCRUX42FJTA](http://youtu.be/nCRUX42FJTA)

# Harvesting workshop team



**Irene  
Gleirscher**

Team Leader  
Education, Hermann  
Gmeiner Academy  
Head of Harvesting  
project  
Tel. +43 512 3316-5671

“ 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.



**Margret  
Steixner**

External Consultant  
Process facilitation  
& analysis  
Harvesting Team  
member  
[www.intercultural-perspectives.com](http://www.intercultural-perspectives.com)

“ 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 feel privileged to be a member of the team that prepares the room for all the special stories to be told.



**Christian  
Honold**

Managing Director  
Hermann Gmeiner  
Academy  
Harvesting Team  
member  
Tel. +43 512 3316-5682

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



**Tara Nissl**

Intern Hermann  
Gmeiner Academy



**Nicola  
Seewald**

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