

What inspires us in our work

FINDINGS OF THE HARVESTING
WORKSHOP 2021



SOS CHILDREN'S
VILLAGES
HERMANN GMEINER ACADEMY

What inspires us in our work

for SOS Children's Villages

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Preface

With this booklet we would like to share the valuable knowledge of long-standing staff members. The output of this year's Harvesting Workshop comprises inspiring stories about moments of flow and the dreams of nine experienced employees about what might be even better in future. This amazing potpourri of good memories explains what gives our staff the strength to move towards the future and help SOS Children's Villages to grow. Each storyteller summarised the story in a final message that can be understood as a recommendation derived from their experience.

It was November 2021, just as the third national lockdown due to the COVID-19 pandemic was announced, that nine colleagues still made it and started another Harvesting Workshop at the Hermann Gmeiner Academy in Innsbruck, Austria. The gathering took place from 22 to 29 November and was inspiring and fruitful, although almost no normal in-person interactions with colleagues from the International Office were possible, nor could we experience the guided city tour following the origins of the organisation. Not even a joint dinner at a restaurant was allowed due to the national lockdown!

Nevertheless, these nine long-standing employees from various levels of the federation and from eight different countries used the opportunity to exchange their experiences, thoughts and aspirations and learned together. Three family-based care coordinators from Palestine, India and Zimbabwe, a teacher from Mali, a project director from Bangladesh, a human management coordinator from Uruguay and a location accountant also from Zimbabwe, along with two colleagues from programme development from the international office in the regions of Latin America and the Caribbean, and Eastern and Southern Africa were part of this year's Harvesting Workshop group.

Read about what gives life to SOS Children's Villages' staff 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.



What is Harvesting?

Harvesting time is when SOS Children's Villages employees 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 experienced staff to discover, dream and design their ideal future for SOS Children's Villages within their circle of influence. Usually, in non-pandemic times 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.

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.

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 staff 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 employees, thus making implicit knowledge explicit
 - We enable employees 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 employees 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 staff
 - 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 employees who do not participate directly in the Harvesting Workshop group
- We provide condensed knowledge to decision makers in the organisation

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 sown, planted, managed and harvested is – among many other products – knowledge.

Why do we harvest?

SOS Children's Villages is faced with questions such as: 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 employees perform essential 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, employees attain a sense of belonging to SOS Children's Villages, also as a federation.

Who participates in a Harvesting Workshop

Mandated and supported by the board of the Hermann Gmeiner Academy, the Academy and the international HROD team invite employees to the annual Harvesting Workshops. Employees 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, staff 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 staff from all working fields.

The workshop, originally planned for May 2020 had to be postponed three times due to the Covid-19 pandemic and its restrictions. The first trial was to hold it in October 2020 but still the pandemic did not allow for it. One and a half years is a long time. In that period, some participants had to accept that the impact of the pandemic, different workloads due to different processes that take place in October compared to May, private reasons and finally yet importantly, struggles in obtaining a travel visa lead to the smallest group in any Harvesting Workshop. However, the workshop process was not at all affected negatively as the nine participants who still came to the Hermann Gmeiner Academy showed full engagement and followed very committedly despite full lockdown in the host country 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 staff 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 Wiser Action and World Kitchen. For detailed information on the methods used and on the underlying approach, please find the [Harvesting Curriculum](#)¹ and [Handbook](#)² on our website.

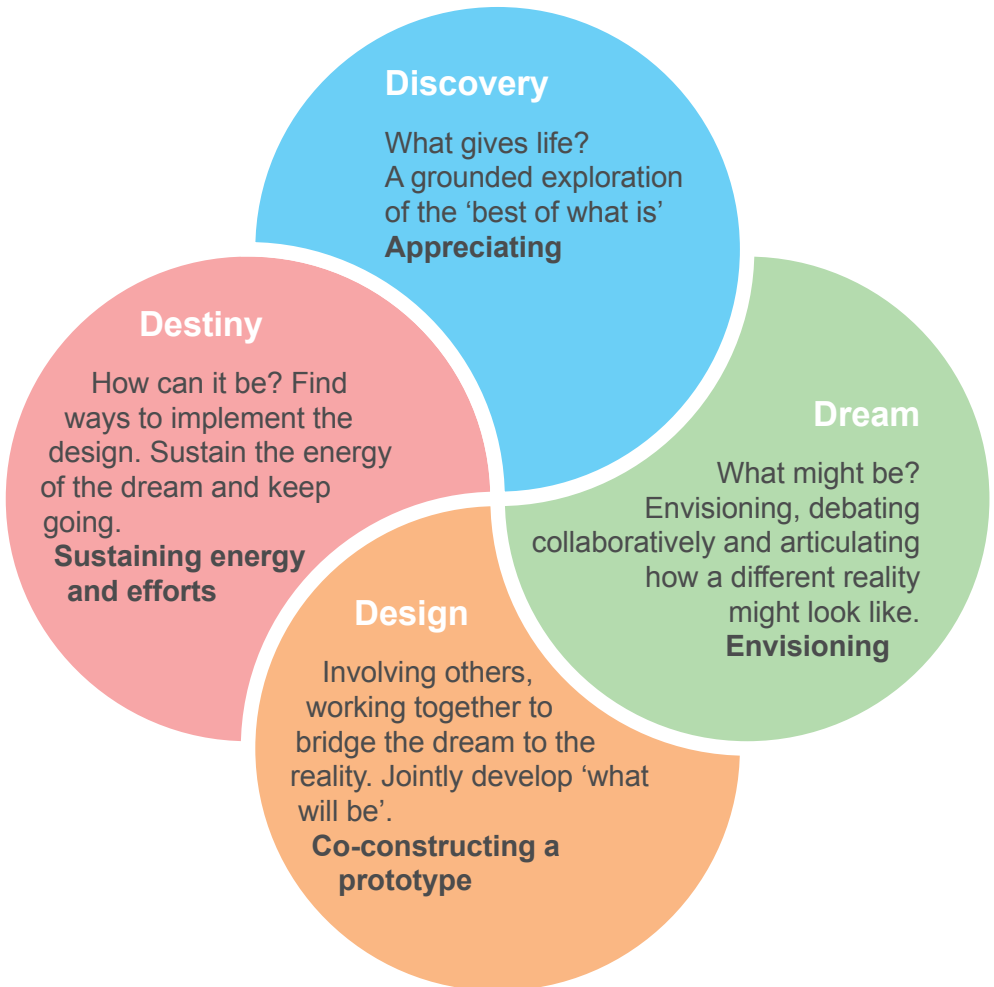
1 [www.hermannmeinerakademie.org/getmedia/08e44976-eb0d-46eb-8197-5883d25598ec/CurriculumForSOSCV-HarvestingWorkshops-PartA-\(1\).pdf](http://www.hermannmeinerakademie.org/getmedia/08e44976-eb0d-46eb-8197-5883d25598ec/CurriculumForSOSCV-HarvestingWorkshops-PartA-(1).pdf)

2 www.hermannmeinerakademie.org/getmedia/84773437-57a4-4f32-aade-3445905a0065/HarvestingWorkshopHandbook-UserGuideForMultipliers-PartB.pdf

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 employees are encouraged to act on after returning to their workplace.

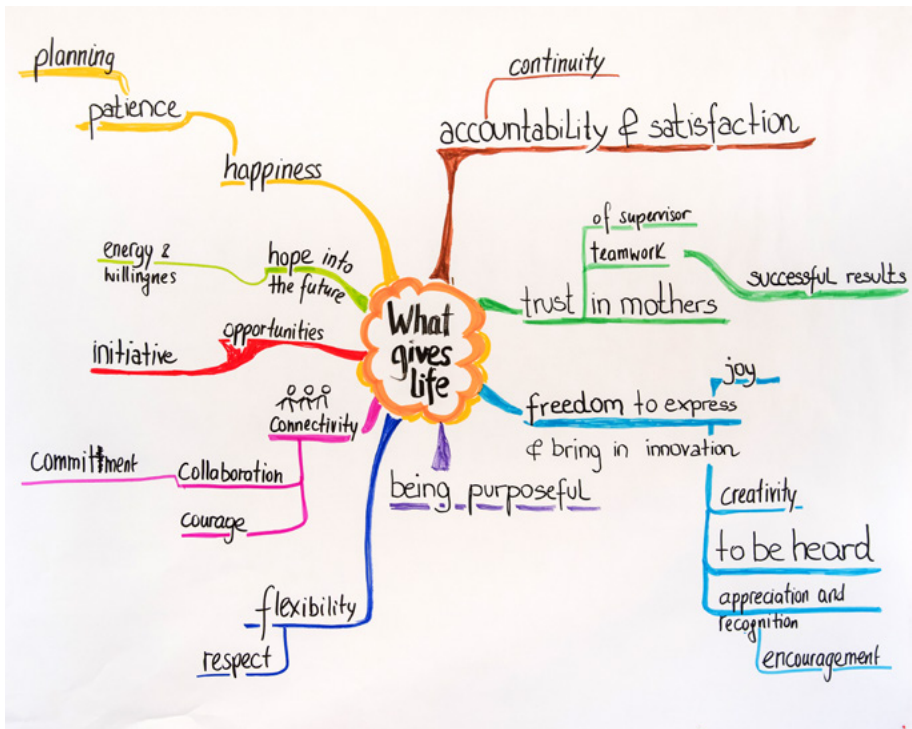
Each phase in the cycle has a leading question.



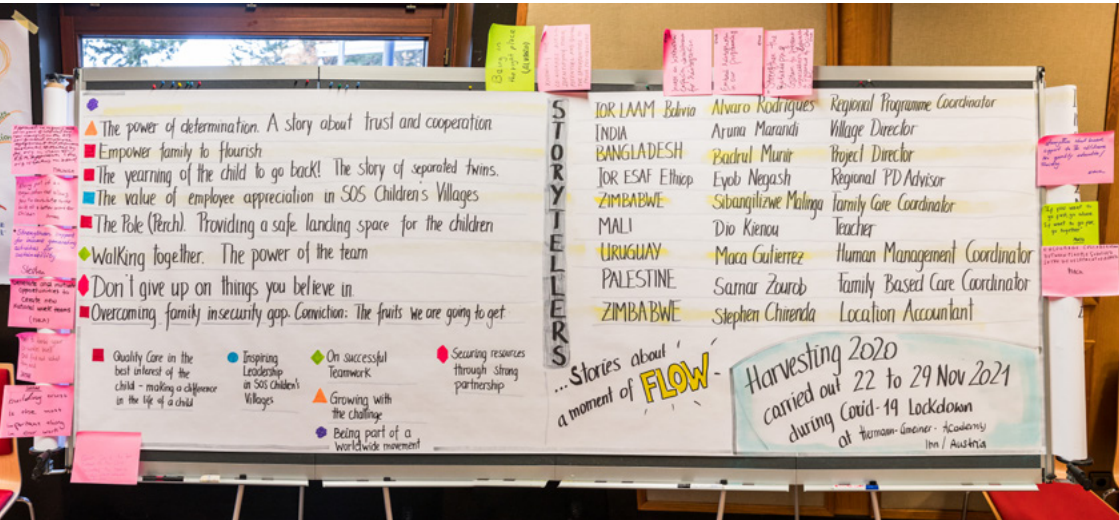
In the first phase of the workshop, participants tell a story about a “flow moment” in their SOS work lives:

“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

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 overarching topics illustrate the collective wisdom about what gives life to SOS Children’s Villages based on the specific experiences of this group of SOS staff 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. The photo below shows the allocation of the stories under the following topics:



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 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. 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. 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.

Designing like an architect

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.

The so-called "Design for Wiser Action" method involves powerful questions, deep listening and a step back from the known. Each participant develops a design that he or she can then present back home in a way that will gain approval for its implementation.

The Discovery, Dream, and Design phases come to a conclusion with the Destiny phase. The continuing creation of an "appreciative learning culture" begins.

Learning continues at home

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. Every participant shares their positive image of the future with their colleagues at home.

"The key to sustaining the momentum is to build an 'appreciative eye' into all of the organisation's systems, 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

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.



When crafting...
Individuals Making a Difference
...that such a message will lead to...
...the government...

- Be part of a courageous organisation
 - ▲ The power of determination. A story about trust and cooperation
 - Every child must get equal chance
 - The yearning of the child to go back! The story of separated twins
 - The value of employee appreciation in SOS Children's Villages
 - The Ride (Witch). Providing a safe landing space for the children
 - Walking together. The power of the team
 - ◆ Don't give up on things you believe in
 - ◆ Overcoming family insecurity gaps. Cameroon: the fruits we are going to get
- Quality Care in the best interest of the child & respecting the need of children without adequate parental care
- Inspiring Leadership in SOS Children's Villages
- On successful teamwork
- Securing relations through strong partnership
- ▲ Growing with the challenge
- Being part of a worldwide movement

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.

Nine colleagues from eight different countries gathered in the Harvesting Workshop 2021. Participants came from different organisational levels and functions, as well as from various backgrounds. The backgrounds of SOS employees 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 staff, accompanied by their dreams for a flourishing future for SOS Children’s Villages.

Being part of a world-wide movement

For many employees, the clear purpose of SOS Children's Villages is motivating and gives them meaning. We give the children without parental care a loving home and we try to help as many vulnerable children as possible who are at risk of losing parental care. This is highly motivating for many staff and vividly described by the following story.

The Harvesting Workshop with its unique setting offers a chance to step back from day-to-day working life and provides valuable time to reflect. This creates the opportunity to focus on the core of our work.

You will find a story about the continuous growth of an organisational identity and of a member of staff. The storyteller underlines the importance of innovative thinking and how it can lead to modern approaches to alternative care and prevent children losing parental care.



Edwin Alvaro Rodriguez Bohorquez

Regional Programme Coordinator, SOS Children's Villages
International, Regional Office Latin America and the Caribbean

Being in the right place

Regional Programme Coordinator,
SOS Children's Villages International,
Regional Office Latin America and the
Caribbean

Concerns for the future

When you are very young and studying at university one of the main concerns is, "What will happen in the future, and will I have the opportunity to work in a nice place?" But you also wonder if the kind of work you will do will be compatible with your personal projects and principles and how it would be possible to achieve both goals.

Since I was very young, I had two aims: to finish a university degree and to work in something I like. And because of my father's influence, my dream has always been to work in a place where I could do something for others or where I could contribute to "building a better world". My father always told me, "We should not work to make the rich richer but to help

people overcome poverty, especially children". My father believed that we could build a fairer world where there are no poor people and no children with hunger or needs. He had a great social commitment and that has marked my life.

For these reasons, when I was in high school and then in college, I participated as a volunteer in various social projects and for me it was a very nice time, but also a moment of uncertainty about my future work.

When I finished my studies I started as an assistant in several social research projects at the university, but when these finished I had to look for another job and that was a very stressful time for me. I was afraid to leave the university, not knowing what would happen and where I would be working in future.

“ Alvaro has spent most of his professional life working for SOS Children's Villages, where he has seen what a difference it can make in the lives of children when you work with love, passion and commitment so that they can live in a caring, protective environment.

Whenever he is with his family, Alvaro feels happy, full of energy and love that motivates him to keep dreaming. His mother is one of his greatest treasures and his partner shares his dreams and passion for human rights. Alvaro loves to travel at least once a year and get to know new places, cultures and people around the world, because the memories of these



Seize a great opportunity – become part of SOS Children’s Villages

I was looking for a new job and I submitted my curriculum to several places but none of them gave me a positive response. I tried to find a job for a couple of months with no positive results, until one day I saw a call for applications from SOS Children’s Villages and I thought, “This is my big opportunity”. I applied for a job in SOS Children’s Villages and one of my happiest moments was when I received the call saying, “You have been selected to work in SOS Children’s Villages. You start next Monday.”

It has been almost 12 years since the day I started this journey with SOS Children’s Villages but it doesn’t seem so long because there are always new things, new projects, new ideas or new challenges: “No day is like another”. SOS Children’s Villages is an organisation in constant movement and the best thing is that it gives you the opportunity to meet wonderful people, committed people, people who struggle every day to provide quality care so that more children can be happy and grow up in a family environment.

When I started working at SOS Children’s Villages in Latin America, there was a priority “alternative care model” of working with SOS families located in an SOS Children’s Village. This was a compound of 12 to 15 houses, often in the outskirts of a city and often surrounded by a wall and a gate. In order to avoid families from breaking up or to prevent children from losing their parental care, the “prevention model” prioritised work with the families of origin and, in a situation of social risk to children under 6 years of age, in social centres and community centres.

These responses were very important at this point in history and a relevant response for children without parental care or at risk of losing it. However, new times brought new challenges, such as the importance of expanding the range of alternative care options and implementing family-based care alternatives; reducing the amount of time children spent in alternative care and working with their families of origin for reintegration; promoting the reintegration of children so they live in their local communities instead of being placed somewhere else in an SOS Children’s Village. We diversified our responses and started working with the families of origin in their own

trips are among his greatest treasures. He also adores walking in parks or in nature. He lives in La Paz, a cold city at 3,600 metres above sea level and the seat of the government of Bolivia, a beautiful country in the centre of South America, with valleys, the Amazon rainforest and the mountains of Los Andes. The people there are warm-hearted and hardworking and dream of a developed country, but with respect for its cultural diversity and nature.

”

community to prevent children from losing the care of their parents in the first place. SOS Children's Villages contributed to the reform of care and protection system. Consequently new approaches of working with children without parental care were developed and we started a new era with the Programme Policy. We began to rethink the importance of implementing new ways of working adapted to the needs of the children and relevant to the context. We learned that "the most important thing is not a specific model but to respond in the best way to the needs of the children and their families".

We are now in the SOS Care Promise¹ era and the journey has been challenging: many things have changed, and new things are sure to come. We are now an organisation that works with many partners and in line with the United Nations Guidelines for the Alternative Care of Children². Important responses have been implemented: we improved our family strengthening approach and responses; many families who lived in an SOS Children's Village were integrated in the local communities; we implemented new alternative care responses such as foster care or small group homes; we promoted the family reintegration of many children; and our programmes supporting young people have been improved. Now "we are different but in essence

we are still the same: courageous and innovative".

Living the value of courage: being innovative in order to improve the quality of our response

SOS Children's Villages has many values, but the one I like the most is "courage", because it always challenges us to improve, to create new things, to do things differently or to permanently reinvent ourselves. SOS Children's Villages is not the same as it was 70 years ago or ten years ago, but its essence remains, and I believe that I am not the same as I was 12 years ago because I learned and grew much more as a person and through and beyond the difficulties. I believe that I am in a work environment that gives me the opportunity to become a better person.

People ask me, "How can you stay so long in the same workplace?", but for me working in SOS Children's Villages always feels that "I am in the right place", a place where I can develop professionally and especially where I can contribute to build a better world for children, as my dad used to say.

My message to SOS Children's Villages is

"Being part of an organisation that allows you to contribute to the building of a better world for children is an opportunity to be a better person."

1 SOS_CARE_PROMISE_EN_Web.pdf
[18 January 2022]

2 Guidelines for the Alternative Care of Children:
[18 January 2022]

My Dream

The new SOS Children's Villages

My dream is about SOS Children's Villages in the future: in this dreamed future, physical villages no longer exist as physical care spaces but rather diverse responses focused on the requirements of children and families. SOS Children's Villages is no longer a specific place but a set of integrated responses in society for children. In my dream the society is co-responsible and involved with the responses implemented by SOS Children's Villages and the care of their children.

In my picture you see various types of responses and various interconnected laces where children are at the centre and where they receive quality care and protection. The diversity of responses do not have hierarchies because they are based on children. Everyone contributes to their protection. Children are cared for and protected by everyone and all have equal rights. Children are cared for by SOS Children's Villages and also by members of the society they live in. In particular, they are cared for by caregivers who are provided with the best working conditions and respect for their rights in order to provide quality care.



Growing with the challenge

In the Harvesting Workshop we collect stories in which employees talk about moments of “flow”¹. The concept of “flow” builds on the idea that the experience of “flow” happens in the equilibrium between challenge and available skills. We are interested in finding out which challenges employees experience and how they unleash their potential and use their skills and talents.

The following story sets an inspiring example of how an employee flourishes under the conditions of feeling trusted by management despite facing a challenging life situation. The combination of being trusted and feeling recognition, along with the ability to take on responsibility and involve everyone, creates an environment in which the spark of motivation jumps over to the entire village team and sets a living example of collaboration. This moment not only inspires the SOS Children’s Village staff but also the partners and other stakeholders.

The storyteller’s statement, “Knowing the co-workers well, identifying their potential and giving them opportunities to prove themselves” describes the message of the story in a nutshell.

¹ Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi. (2015): Flow. Das Geheimnis des Glücks. [The secret to happiness]



Aruna Marandi

Village Director SOS Children's Village Raipur,
SOS Children's Villages India

The power of determination: a story about trust and cooperation

It was the winter of January 2013 when I – with a nine-month-old daughter in one hand and pulling a trolley suitcase with the other – stepped onto the premises of SOS Children’s Village Bhubaneswar, India. When I looked around, the environment was happy and lively with the chirping of children playing in groups. Seeing this, I had a mixture of feelings. I was happy and wanted to be part of their lives. But never having worked with children, I was scared inside too.

Initial phase

Within a very short time I became a part of the SOS family. In the role of Assistant Director, I was accepted by the co-workers and SOS mothers and,

before I realised it, I already had so many children calling me aunty and some even mummy. Being the First Instant Person (FIP) as per the Child Protection Policy and rolling out the child protection sessions for all age groups – starting from the youngest up to 23-year-olds – helped me create a strong bond with each of the children and young people. The sessions on POCSO (Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act) and CPP (Child Protection Policy), and alternative methods of discipline gave me an opportunity to be closer to the SOS mothers. I used to have weekly meetings where we discussed matters relating to child development, innovative ideas and happenings in the development sectors and even

“Who would call it work when you love being with children and get paid for it! These eight years in the Children’s Village, I have gained more than I gave. Children are the best teachers and have the power of healing. Sometimes I feel that they are the ones who help us grow each day.

Being on the Village campus, being woken up by the children for their daily jog and a round of volleyball, followed by her duties as Village Director and talking to mothers, staff and stakeholders are all part of Aruna’s daily routine. But she wouldn’t call it work



personal matters with all the co-workers (mothers and administrative and support staff helping mothers to attend to the developmental needs of the children). The continuous involvement got me absorbed in the lives of each member of the SOS Children's Village Bhubaneswar family.

Sudden setback

Everything was going on in a very smooth and vibrant way, when tragedy struck me at the end of August 2015: my husband passed away. It was devastating! I did not know what to do and I went on leave for a month.

At the end of September I returned. Soon after I was told that in November we would be having the silver jubilee celebration of the Village. The director called a meeting to discuss the preparations to be done. I was lifeless, hopeless and clueless. Nevertheless, the Village Director announced that, apart from the silver jubilee celebration, there would be the national board members' meeting, a press conference, the inauguration of the photo gallery and, on the final day, the chief guest would be the Chief Minister of the State.

And the Village Director would not be available for the last 12 days before the date of the celebration, as he would have to attend the annual co-workers meeting to be held in Delhi. So – given at my current personal situation – the Deputy National Director would send an assistant director from another village to come and help in the preparation of the event.

Now this was a wake-up call for me. All of sudden I felt, "Am I so visibly vulnerable and useless that someone else has to be called in to get the job done?" I immediately told my Village Director that I could take on the responsibility on my own and no one need be sent.

The hope

Fortunately, the Village Director as well as the deputy national director showed trust and faith in me and decided to let me take on responsibility for organising the event. That was THE MOMENT which instilled in me the feeling that the organisation had faith and trust in me. Now I just had to prove that they were right. That brought me out of the shell I had retreated into.

when you enjoy being with children and getting paid for it. In these eight years at the SOS Children's Village, Aruna has gained more than she has given because, for her, children are the best teachers and have the power to heal.

Being the youngest of four siblings, she was the most loved: one older sibling took care of her in difficult times. Even though the siblings live in different cities, they have a strong connection and meet up once a year. Right now, she has a happy family: her nine-year-old

The action

The plan of action started with taking over the preparation list from the Village Director. Since the village was 25 years old, some of the co-workers who had been working there from the start were a little demotivated and dissatisfied for their own reasons. Nevertheless, they knew their work really well and were an asset to the organisation due to their knowledge and experience. Identifying people who felt unrecognised and were low on will but high on competency, I adopted a democratic approach by showing them the to-do list and asking who would pick up what. I assigned them responsibilities accordingly and made them understand it was an opportunity to prove themselves. Having already bonded with older children, I involved them in the process and assigned them responsibilities like contacting their older settled siblings to provide testimony during the event. Older co-workers had a treasure of memories in the form of stories and photographs. They were most useful for the photo gallery. The maintenance workers were already working hard to beautify the buildings and the gardens through minor renovations, installations and new plantings.

Everyone took it as a challenge and supported each other to get the things done. Mothers provided meals for co-workers who did not get time to even go home. I had to ensure that all the prominent guests were invited well in advance. An environment full of energy and positive pandemonium developed in the village. Everyone took their responsibility seriously and no one needed reminders. As the final day approached, everyone was anxious and continued with the finishing touches. Everyone wanted the event to be the best possible as all felt as though the onus of the success of the event lay with them. All felt responsible and all were leaders of their assigned tasks – they had actually created several sub-teams consisting of other co-workers, mothers and children. It was amazing to see the vitality that was becoming contagious. We had a final meeting to tick off our checklist.

Silver jubilee

Finally, the day before the final celebration, guests from the national office and board members from around the country started arriving. By then we had ensured that everything was in

daughter is her best friend and her mother-in-law their guiding light.

In her free time, Aruna loves to try out everything heaven has to offer. She is a music lover, loves crooning, enjoys reading and pours out her feelings through her poetry. She adores football and believes that age is just a number!

Aruna is proud of the rich history and tradition of her home country India, a land of unity in diversity. She loves and enjoys the festivals and colours of each religion and culture.

place. The Silver Jubilee day finally arrived. Since morning, there had been a different kind of aroma in the air and a positive vibe. The event started as planned. After that, there was no time to reflect, it was all action. The older girls did a great job of hosting the event. The Minister came in as the chief guest. The testimony given by settled youths was a living example of what SOS does for the guests to witness. The photo gallery was a walk down memory lane. And who would have been a better anchor for the show than the oldest co-worker? The passion and affection for the children and job was visible through the way they talked. The schedule provided for the acceptance speech by me at the end of the programme. I took this opportunity to thank each and every person from the SOS Children's Village Bhubaneswar family for their contribution to making the day a success.

That night all the co-workers sat together at dinner. We were all exhausted but, more than that, happy to have successfully convened the event. Finally, by 12.30 am all the guests had been seen off. Next day appreciation poured in from all corners, which was the most beautiful reward for our efforts.

The “take away”

This event was a life changer for me, and for other older co-workers it was the restoration of lost passion. For me, there had been a moment when

I thought of giving up everything. But the faith and trust shown by the seniors, the cooperation of my colleagues and the revival of zeal among the co-workers who had been demotivated gave new life to them and the whole village. It was all possible because for the whole team the motto was, “United we stand, divided we fall”. But for me it was “Where there is a will, there is a way”.

My message to SOS Children's Villages is

“Knowing the co-workers well, identifying their potential and giving them opportunities to prove themselves.”

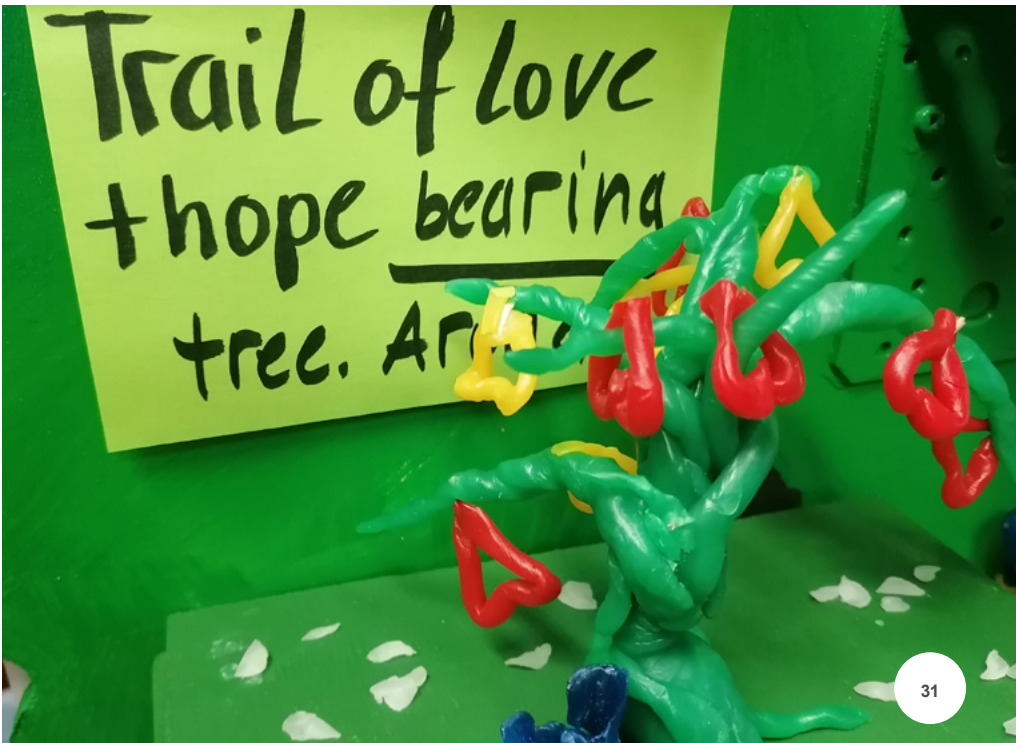
My Dream

Trail of love and hope bearing tree

My dream was about a life-giving force, a rebirth of hope, love and attachment to our children, while still being deep-rooted in our values of trust, loyalty, sincerity and faith in consonance with our mission and vision. This provides an environment of peaceful co-creation. This keeps nurturing the life-giving forces to ensure the achievement of the goal of happiness for our children, creating a better future of hope and aspiration.

In my picture you see a tree with a green colour meaning life and

rebirth of hope and happiness for our children who are represented in the form of hearts (red and yellow) which are the fruits of our continuous efforts to provide them with attachment and a feeling of belonging. The roots lead firmly to the mission and vision and the blue flowers around the roots denote trust, faith and loyalty for co-creation, thereby creating an environment of peace and harmony denoted by white. It also forms all the nutrients for growth and nurturing of the life-giving trees.



Inspiring Leadership

Leaders set an example and have a strong influence on the culture of an organisation or company. If they are able to see the varied potentials of staff members, they can create surroundings in which these skills are used and developed. Positive Leadership is a leadership approach which puts skills and available resources into the focus and uses them as a source of inspiration.

“The broaden-and-built theory provides the foundation for the proposal that positive emotions may serve to optimize organizational functioning. [...] Typically emotions follow from appraisals of personal meaning. As such, the most fruitful avenues for cultivating positive emotions may be to help others find positive meaning in their daily work experiences. Positive meaning at work can be drawn from experiences of competence, achievement, involvement, significance, and social connection.” (Fredrickson 2003: p. 175).¹

The following story serves as a living example of how the ideas of an employee can develop into a life-changing experience for the children and young people in the care of SOS Children’s Villages and make us understand the importance of the feeling of belonging to a community.

¹ Barbara L. Fredrickson (2003): Positive Emotions and Upward Spirals in Organizations in: Positive Organizational Scholarship. Foundations of a New Discipline. Kim S. Cameron, Jane E. Dutton and Robert E. Quinn. Berrett-Koehler Publishers, Inc., San Francisco.



Sibangilizwe Malinga

Family Care Coordinator SOS Children's Village Bulawayo,
SOS Children's Villages Zimbabwe

The value of employee's appreciation in SOS Children's Villages

When talent fits needs

I joined SOS Hermann Gmeiner Primary School Bulawayo as a primary school teacher in 1995. This was the year when SOS Children's Village Bulawayo was established. It was one of the greatest experiences in my career to be associated with one of the biggest child welfare organisations. Despite working a lot in the education facility, I was quickly attracted to the family care unit, where I could use my musical talents to engage children and young people in the care of SOS Children's Villages. We shared a passion for traditional music and dances, in particular with the marimba drum beats. Witnessing the joy and passion that manifest in such moments of music, the Village Director opened up and gave his support to these activities. He appointed me as part-time activities officer.

The new role suited me very well. I enjoyed what I did and the appointment led to new synergies. A number of activities such as soccer, karate, volleyball and music were going on in the village for both the children and young people in our care, all with the aim of providing a platform for psychosocial development for the children and young people. Soon the SOS Children's Village Marimba Band was a popular provider of entertainment within the Bulawayo Corporates, NGOs and Zimbabwe Tourism Authority.

The children and young people in our care made inroads into soccer circles within the community through participating in competitive soccer with other community clubs.

“I have been with the organisation for the past 26 years as a family care coordinator, teacher and youth programme coordinator. I love going on excursions with families. Malinga has been with the organisation for the past 26 years as a teacher, youth programme coordinator and now family-based care coordinator and especially adores excursions.”

Extra commitment for integration into local communities

My work environment in 1998 was flexible and there was room for me to develop ideas on how to further engage the children and youth and to respond to their social needs. My aim was to bring the children and young people closer to the community by understanding traditions and experiencing community life. It occurred to me that the memorial ceremony which my siblings and I were to conduct for our late father would be a good opportunity to do this. A memorial ceremony is an event where we publicly gather as a family to remember and share the memories of our late beloved parent. In our culture it is normally done at least a year after the passing of a parent. Wouldn't this be a great opportunity to involve the children and young people in being part of the event so that they also get to have a feeling of the activities that happen in the community? I had to share my wish and to convince the Village Director about my idea.

This proposal was welcomed with open arms by the then Village Di-

rector. Now that my request was approved, I felt the pressure to make this experience a success story for all of us. I faced a number of challenging tasks at the same time. I had to make sure to help my siblings to prepare a solemn ceremony of good quality for our relatives and the local community. In addition I wanted to fulfil my mission to create a special experience for the youth under the care of SOS Children's Village, as they would be involved as witnesses and participants at the same time.

I sat down with my siblings to share our tasks in preparing the ceremony. We also contributed a lot to the funding the activity. I spent time talking to the young people being cared for by SOS Children's Villages. I explained the purpose of the memorial ceremony. Understanding the importance and scale of the event made them quite excited about the visit to the village and their role in the ceremony. I also made sure to keep the Village Director and SOS mothers motivated for the reality of the event.

sions with families in the care of SOS Children's Villages.

He is married with three lovely children and – along with his wife Annie – is used to a full-time lifestyle. As the nest is now emptying and retirement from SOS Children's Villages is slowly approaching, he is gently and curiously preparing for some readjustments. Malinga enjoys being with his family, travelling and exploring and – as a passionate singer – loves showing who he is and where he belongs. You can even find him and his [videos](#)

The big day

As the day approached, the excitement was getting bigger and bigger. The young people always came to ask me if the trip was still on and I would sometimes joke and say we were no longer going. Guess what, one could tell their deep disappointment from their expressions. However, I quickly reassured them that the trip was still on. This brought more excitement and curiosity too. Finally the day arrived: what an exciting moment for the young people! We set off to go from the SOS Village early in the morning and arrived after two hours of safe travel around 8 am on a Saturday. It was a clear and sunny Saturday at the end of August 1998. The event took place in a district called Filabusi, under Chief Ndube and headman Tshili of the Magondeni village. Magondeni village, the village of our homestead, is about 120 kilometres away from Bulawayo, which is the second largest city in Zimbabwe, where the SOS Children's Village is located.

Due to our thorough preparations, the event was one of the lifetime experiences for myself, my family, the com-

munity and, above all, for the young people from SOS Children's Village Bulawayo. I felt joy when I looked at the young people who had come with me and were full of emotions while dancing and celebrating with the community. It was as if they had been part of it since birth. No one could single them out as they became like members of the community, blending quite well with the appreciative public of Magondeni. The reception from the community was really soothing. It was a ceremony to remember indeed. It was attended by hundreds of people from the local village, relatives and the young people under the care of SOS Children's Villages.

On that day there was enough food for a lavish treat, various group entertainments and individual speeches highlighting my dad's life by the excited local community. It was a very special and emotional moment indeed, especially when I stood up with my group on stage and started presenting a tender song dedicated to the memory of my dad's life. Everybody was impressed and deeply touched. This experience enhanced my relationship with the young people

on YouTube. Addicted to the Internet, you will often find him researching and downloading useful or interesting information.

He is proud of his home town Bulawayo “the city of kings and queens” and his country Zimbabwe, with its abundance of natural resources, the big five animals, gold, diamonds and farmland.

in the care of SOS Children's Village and the management.

Building on the good relationships

In 2002 I left teaching and was promoted to youth programmes coordinator at the family care unit. It was like my dream come true to get the opportunity to work directly with the young people. I was so excited and the news spread to all my family members.

Indeed, the flow for good progress with the youth in the care of SOS Children's Village continued. In 2000 a new Village Director was appointed and he worked with the important appreciative leadership style. As a team of co-workers (the youth programmes coordinator, the leading child development officer, the village educator and mothers) we were able to influence children and young people in all spheres of education and talents. This kind of achievement resulted in me landing the current family care coordinator position, the former village director post. When my predecessor retired in 2014, I applied for the advertised position and was able to succeed over a number of applicants. Currently, in 2021, we pride ourselves on having about 30% of our young people in university level studies, in first, second and masters' degrees at local and foreign universities. More than half of our young people are at the semi-independent living stage.

Without doubt I and my team are responsible for all the achievements we have posted as the family care

unit for the children and young people in SOS Children's Village Bulawayo, based on the spirit of positive leadership and appreciation by the national director and team, and the location programmes manager and team. I am very proud of our cooperative work and those beautiful memories will always keep my heart warm and beating fast, giving me the strength and motivation to continue my work.

A bright future

In the next three years, by the grace of the Lord, I am looking forward to a satisfying retirement, having been shaped by and benefited children and young people being cared for by SOS Children's Villages.

I believe that leadership based on positive appreciation is the best approach to keep both the staff members and the organisation focused on delivering the required service. When managers are focused on what works well, they give the staff members room to innovate and consider positive activities that act towards projecting the expected organisational outcomes.

I suppose it is time we in SOS Children's Villages International should openly support a global change based on Appreciative Inquiry. Appreciative Inquiry is a change theory that assumes and acknowledges staff members' positive disposition at work, and their very individual talents and skills, and focuses on what is working well instead of trying to get rid of "mistakes" or problems.

This story came to light during the Harvest workshop process 2020 in November 2021. Thanks so much to the Harvesting Workshop organisers for the knowledge and storytelling opportunity.

My message to SOS Children's Villages is

"Consideration for leadership based on positive thinking and appreciation is the best approach to keep both the staff members and the organisation focused on delivering the required service."

My Dream

Appreciative Inquiry benefits to children and young people

My dream was about Appreciative Inquiry being the rock on which SOS Children's Villages engages and develops its employees at all levels.

All employees are people positively centred in their approach to their day-to-day work, and children and young people in our care will benefit from quality care provision.

In my picture you see a figurine that symbolises a rock. Below you see a pillar balancing on a solid rock to support the symbol of a child. The rock is Appreciative Inquiry, the pillar on the rock is staff and employees. Tied to the symbol of the child are staff members, the pillar, embracing the child and keeping it warm.

The benefit of
Appreciative Inquiry
for the children of
SOS CV.

Malinga



Our successful teamwork

Creating a platform for the exchange of experience and joint learning serves as a strong energising source, especially in challenging and complex situations. Bringing a team together to reflect good practices and systematically think about how to improve the quality of care work increases the understanding of important aspects of the care work. This motivates caregivers because they recognise the difference their work can make in the life of children and young people in the care of SOS Children's Villages.

The following story reveals how dialogue creates trust and confidence and how an employee works towards her vision to make SOS Children's Villages the best place to work. The collaboration of staff from various programmes within one SOS Children's Villages Member Association serves as a strong enabling force in this endeavour.



Macarena Sofía Gutierrez Amorin

Human Management Coordinator, SOS Children's Villages Uruguay

Walking together: the power of a team

In 2016 caregivers were asking for tools to improve their work and for more training programmes in order to continue their development and growth. That is where I came in. I started my work at SOS Children's Village working as the coordinator of caregiver development. I had to design a training curriculum and create workshops for them.

That job was demanding and challenging for many years. Each workshop and each training group was different. The experience from each individual group taught me a lot about caregivers' needs and their role within SOS Children's Villages Uruguay. The curriculum worked very well for many years but in 2019, I started to feel that something else was needed. The caregivers' team had changed over the last few years. This new group of caregivers that were working with us learned the new vision

about what temporal care is, and how to apply this new paradigm in child care. We realised that they were really convinced that this new way of understanding the care of children as temporal care is better for them (the children). Besides this, we changed the new modality of alternative care, which is now organised with care givers working in shifts. That means that during twenty four hours they work in three shifts of eight hours each, one caregiver per shift. Since this change, the team has grown as a group and has increased their group skills for child care.

I asked myself, "What can we do to improve caregivers' teams? Is there something I can do to improve my work? What is the way to support them to take a step forward?" I realised that we required a team to reflect upon the work of the caregivers.

“I think SOS Children's Villages is a great place to work. I have grown in different ways, both in my professional career and in my personal life. The opportunity to participate in a Harvest Workshop is an example of how the organisation looks for growth in its employees.

For psychologist Macarena, SOS Children's Villages has been a great place to work since 2016. As Caregiver's Training Coordinator and Human Resources Coordinator she has developed in different ways, both in her professional career and her personal life.

Macarena grew up in a big family with her parents and grandparents, an older sister and >

The beginning of the team

When this idea came to me, I presented it to the Human Resources manager.

“What if we created a team to think about how to develop caregivers to improve the quality of care?” I asked.

This was when we decided to create the National Committee of Caregivers. From day one, we knew that in order to create this committee we needed the input of child protection, so we shared the idea with the national child protection coordinator, (focal person in charge of implementing the child protection policy at a national level). Together we thought about how to create this team, and we called together the coordinators and assistants to caregivers of all the different residential care programmes. This was a new idea, but I felt I was not prepared to overcome this challenge because we all lived in different cities in Uruguay, and I thought it was important to motivate the group, in order to keep the same team working together.

In 2019 we had our first committee meeting with eight participants. The

goals of the committee were and still are:

- To generate a work team which includes representatives of the different programmes, allowing the achievement of clarity and consensus on the characteristics and working frames of the caregivers.
- To articulate and socialise the different practices of each programme in order to generate a national framework and improve child care.

The first milestone of our committee was to create a national workshop for caregivers. It was a huge challenge, given that it was the first time we had worked as a group, and it was something never done before. We thought that a caregivers’ workshop was something very important. We conducted the workshop and the results were very positive. The caregivers ensured that the workshop gave them more and the best tools for their role and time to think and reflect about the alternative care work. They requested more of this kind of activity in order to integrate learnings, create ideas together, share their experiences and learn from that.

a twin brother, who is very different from her. She is also the very proud aunt of Alfonso and loves her friends.

She enjoys reading, listening to music, watching movies, riding her bike and conquering the diverse Uruguayan countryside, especially the unique coastline with its fantastic beaches.

Macarena was born and lives in Montevideo, the capital of this small South American country of football fanatics who even won the World Cup twice.

After the workshop, we felt the flow of working together and started to plan the year ahead, 2020. Then we were forced to change our plans...

When COVID-19 arrived

During the COVID-19 pandemic, all face-to-face trainings and meetings were suspended, so all we had planned had to be changed. We worked from home and we could not even travel to the other cities to meet each other. We had to create a new plan in order to give support to the caregivers virtually.

In the beginning of the pandemic, I asked myself, *“Are we mature enough as a team to face this challenge? Will we be able to fulfil our commitment in this situation?”* I was afraid we would not. I thought the committee would not find time to meet, or even worse, they would think it was a waste of time, because they had other priorities in this situation.

Despite the critical context, we had our meeting five days after the pandemic started. During this meeting my fears disappeared, the committee expressed their wish to meet weekly instead of monthly to reflect together on the new responses in the light of this new situation. We were positive that in order to ensure good care for the children, we had to pay attention to the caregivers' needs, and we clarified our proposal:

“Give the best to caregivers to overcome the pandemic”.

At that moment, I realised that we had switched from a group to a team.

Critical moment, creative ideas

Within months, we came up with different practices and ways to support the caregivers in this new situation. We had to think about quick actions that had never been tested before. We had to trust in the fact that, thinking together, we could respond better in this situation of uncertainty that we were facing due to the pandemic.

We thought about different training activities. Furthermore, we created the “Casa tiempo fuera” (time away from the house) so the team could rest during the day. Along with other areas from the national office, we also did a survey in order to find out what the caregivers needed during this period. As a result, a space for emotional support called “Acompañar a quien cuida” (support people who care for others) was created.

During the crisis, there was a lot of creative input, and many of those actions and decisions made at the time are still happening today. We also held the second national workshop of caregivers in 2020. That was the only national workshop that year!

A couple of months after the COVID-19 pandemic started, we had to send a report to the regional office to tell them about the different good practices and work of the committee during this time. Our team is the only

one of that kind in the whole Latin America & the Caribbean region: no other team like ours exists.

When I reflect upon our work, I realise that the flow was always there, both in the decision-making situations and in the planning. I realise that we had worked hard and had put everything together to offer support in this process, but we did not see it while it was happening. For us, it was just about getting things done and providing the best support to the caregivers. It was only when we reflected about it later that we saw how the flow was there. The work flowed, and as a result, it lead to a positive outcome.

Go further together

The consistency and consolidation of our team was put to the test during the COVID-19 pandemic, and I guess that we have successfully passed the exam.

Nowadays, the committee is still working, and we just had our third national workshop. At the beginning I had many doubts and my own insecurities about creating this committee, but on the other hand I was always sure that “if you want to go fast go alone, but if you want to go far go together”, and the team showed us that this is so right.

My message to SOS Children's Villages is

Generate and motivate opportunities to create new national work teams.

My Dream

Best place to work

My dream was about SOS Children's Villages Uruguay that will be the best place to work. I dream that we continue to grow as one team, and make SOS Children's Villages a place where people say: "I would like to work for SOS Children's Villages". We can reach that with empathic leadership, "co-creation" and strong values that strengthen our teamwork.

In my picture you see a symbol that represents the teamwork in which the pieces are put together to complete the image, just like a puzzle. The blue piece represents the empathic leadership and the green piece is about co-creation. It shows how we can build something bigger by working together with the same mission. It is important to have a solid base, the relationship between co-workers must be strong.

Best place
to work.



Securing Resources through Innovative Partnerships

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. In its 2030 strategy, SOS Children's Villages declared an increased readiness and determination to see as many children as possible succeed in life, as the organisation aims towards becoming the world's largest child care movement (SOS Children's Villages Strategy 2030). A concerted effort and dedication are obviously necessary for this declared aim to be realised.

SOS Children's Villages has put the most disadvantaged children at the heart of its Strategy 2030¹ with the cen-

tral 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 and child protection, and decent work.

In order to achieve these goals, SOS Children's Villages needs to build strong partnerships with ministries and local authorities. This forms the basis for making efforts more sustainable and creating an impact. The following story shows how constant effort towards building strong partnerships finally leads to earning the fruits of trust. In this way SOS Children's Villages can show their innovative examples of child and youth care to society.

¹ <https://www.sos-childrensvillages.org/who-we-are/strategy-2030> [February 2022]



Samar Fathy Zourub

Family Based Care Coordinator Rafah,
SOS Children's Villages Palestine

Don't give up on things you believe in

When enthusiasm meets with only cautious approval

I was proud of my work for the children who have lost parental care or even lost their parents and I was keen to do what I could in the best interest of the children. Enthusiastic to do my best in the interest of the children, I began to share our goals, vision and reintegration policy with our partners, the Ministry of Social Development. They already knew the work of SOS Children's Villages and they trusted in the work we did with the children being cared for at an SOS Children's Village. Despite their trust, I struggled to convince them about the idea of reintegrating children in their local community in community houses. They doubted this was a safe environment for the children and SOS parents who, in our case, are all females, so I will call them SOS mothers.

In fact, our government and, to be more precise, the Ministry of Social Development, is considered strict

with regard to children of different sexes living together in one household if they are not biological siblings. As a result, at first they refused and hindered the implementation of the reintegration policy.

As I am convinced of this approach, I asked myself, "What can I do to convince them about the benefits and show them what we do?" I thought, "If I invite them to visit the SOS Children's Village and sit with the SOS mothers and the children, they will get a better impression of our work". Next time we met, I invited them and they promised to come.

Another try to get government support

I knew now it was my turn to prepare the SOS mothers for their visit. I informed the SOS mothers that representatives of the Ministry of Social Development would come and ask many questions. They would want to learn about their lives as SOS

“My passion lies in helping people who are less advantaged, in supporting people in need. I am interested in working with children and families. Actually, the SOS Children's Village values of courage, commitment, trust and responsibility have enhanced my personality in leadership.”



mothers, their houses and how the girls and boys in their care treat each other. I knew that to see that boys and girls sleep in one room might make them especially doubtful.

I decided to prepare the SOS mothers and children of the programme I am responsible for. I wanted them to know how to protect themselves and deal with issues they might be facing in the neighbourhood. We therefore organised trainings on child protection, communication and life skills to facilitate their learning and understanding. In consequence, co-workers e.g. prepared a child development plan for each child in consultation with the child and his/her SOS mother. The SOS mother is responsible to follow up the individual development plan of each child in her care within a defined implementation period. Consequently, we train our SOS mothers about how to follow-up on the implementation of these plans.

I trusted that the Ministry of Social Development would see and feel that the SOS mothers and I talk with one voice. So on the day they came to the

SOS Children's Village, I felt relaxed. I greeted them and then I went to my office. They talked for about two hours with the SOS mothers. After their conversation, I joined them and we had lunch together with the children. I wanted to show them that the mothers act without pressure from my side and that we talk with each other very openly. In addition, I wanted them to understand and experience that the children treat each other like brothers and sisters.

The change: when personal experience proves right

They were very pleased with what they saw. However, we did not stop holding workshops and weekly meetings to convince them even further about the quality of our care. It was not an easy process and it was a long journey. Some meetings ended without any achievements, but we were determined to reach our goals and complete what we started. The result of their visit was the beginning of changing ideas and trends. They found our work very effective and car-

Samar's passion lies in helping people who are less advantaged, in supporting people in need. She is interested in working with children and families. The SOS Children's Village values that are courage, commitment, trust and accountability have enhanced her personality in leadership.

She is a proud mother of four boys, two of whom live in Germany while the others live with her in the beautiful city of Rafah, near the beach and close to the SOS Children's Village. Samar adores walking through the park between trees and flowers, exploring and finding peace in nature. Her favourite sport is table tennis.

ing, so we finally earned the government's support.

I believe that success came through our efforts to consult with all the partners. Now the reintegration programme is running well despite the initial hesitation and resistance. Finally, after all this effort and determination, they have started to believe in and support our mission.

One of the very rewarding moments for me was when the Ministry of Social Development asked us to share the good experience of our work with other institutions as a good practice model of care.

My message to SOS Children's Villages staff is

Achievements come with persistence.

Samar's home country, Palestine – Gaza strip – is famous for its natural beauty, nice weather, delicious fresh fish dishes and resorts where you can find joyful relaxation.

In 2001, I began my professional career at SOS Children Villages in Rafah. First I was a social worker, after that an educational adviser and finally I was promoted to be village director. Today my role is called Family Based Care Coordinator. This was my childhood dream, especially as I am the first female village director in my country.

My Dream

Together we will be

My dream was about what gives life to a child in the care of SOS Children's Villages. In my picture you see a child represented in blue in the centre. There are a lot of people and partners who support the child such as the mother in red who is considered a good model. The co-workers who share in providing support to the child with the individual development plan are yellow. A teacher in brown builds

the desire to learn and creates ambition. The most important partner is the government (Ministries of Social Development and Health) who supports the child and facilitates all the things that the child needs.



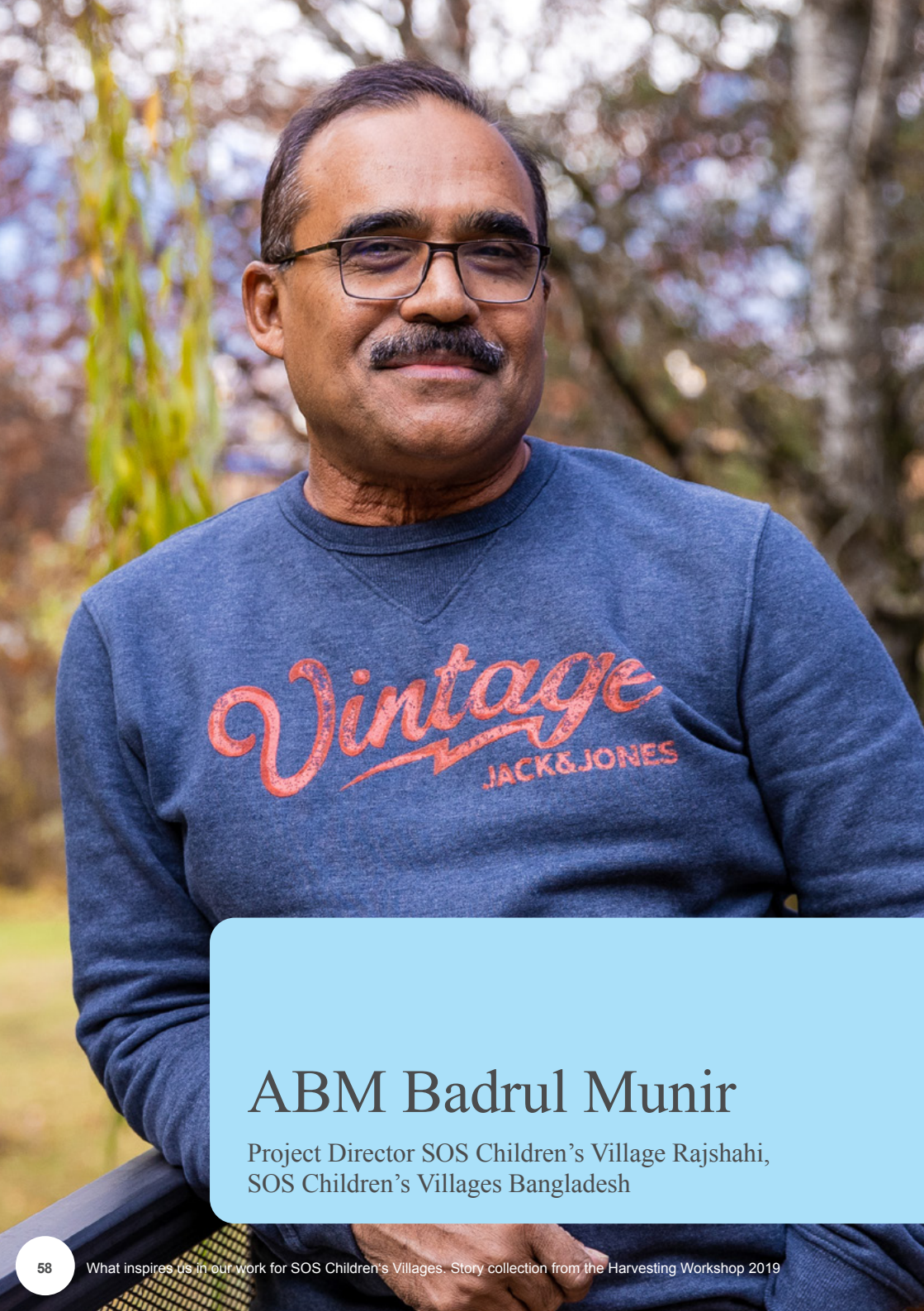
Quality care

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 are¹). Our efforts are focused on creating the conditions to develop strong relationships.

The following selection of stories contains the above-mentioned aspects in one form or another. They 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 circumstances in which a child with special needs got the support through a family strengthening programme which changed the life of the entire family. You will also hear about how a teacher invested in building strong relationships among caregivers with the aim of supporting each individual child according to his or her needs. One story in this section underlines the importance of strengthening the gatekeeping system in alternative care to prevent unnecessary separation of children from their families or placement in a setting which might not be in the best interest of the child.

1 101206-WhoWeAre-en-WEB.pdf
(sos-childrensvillages.org) [February 2022]



ABM Badrul Munir

Project Director SOS Children's Village Rajshahi,
SOS Children's Villages Bangladesh

Every child must get an equal chance. The dream of a physically challenged girl.

This is a story about a physically challenged but promising girl who dreamt of reaching the moon but had no aircraft.

I started my career just after completion of my post-graduate course on Islamic history and culture at the University of Dhaka. My responsibilities were to support and empower the community mothers and children under the rural family and child welfare project run by *Enfant du Monde*, an international childcare organisation. When I joined *SOS Children's Village Rajshahi*, I had the opportunity to reach marginalised families to eliminate human suffering such as poverty,

malnutrition, child marriage, school dropout and child labour. In the *Family Strengthening Programme* we support marginalised families to develop a livelihood and provide them with a midday meal and educational support. As a professional social worker, I love to travel to the countryside to understand the socio-economic deprivation of community people on the ground and to meet different people with diverse talents. I am the responsible leader of *SOS family care*, kinship care and *SOS Family Strengthening Programmes* at community level in my location.

“Connecting people is my everyday business. Every moment I learn new lessons from different people. I love my profession from my heart. As a change maker, I try to contribute to alleviating human suffering and empowering young people to be future leaders of society.

Connecting people has been *Badrul's* daily business for 28 years in various non-profit child care organisations and as a project director at *SOS Children's Village Rajshahi*. He is learning every moment and loves his job with all his heart. As a change maker, he seeks to help alleviate human suffering and empower young people to be future leaders of society.

Badrul grew up in a big family with unconditional love, support and inspiration from his fa- ➤

One fine morning, I visited a remote village to meet with a physically challenged beautiful girl who belongs to a disadvantaged family living with bottomless financial hardship. She had a strong commitment to be one of the contributing members in her society and wanted to support her own family to be self-reliant. I was surprised and had never before in my 23-year long career at SOS Children's Villages in Bangladesh met a similar wonderful girl with such a strong personality.

Opening doors

I believe that determination and personal commitment can change a life, can empower someone to connect with mainstream society to get support to survive with dignity and respect. The Family Strengthening Programme (FSP) of the SOS Children's Village Rajshahi, Bangladesh had opened the door to fulfil the dream of a girl with a lame leg (in Bangladesh it's called leg behind), who had no hope, nobody around, no care, no adequate food and her safety was not ensured causing her frustration about her life. Parvin is a physically disabled girl living with her

parents in a remote village in a small house along with three brothers and one sister. Her father is a vegetable seller, her mother a homemaker, and it was very difficult for her to manage two meals a day for all the family members. They had to spend many days each month without adequate food. Her other brothers and sister are also mentally or physically challenged and they had to stop going to school because of a lack of cooperation from the peer learners and from the school authority, as they were unable to pay the tuition fees in time. Parvin, as the older girl in the family, was determined to continue her studies for her survival. She wanted to grow up like others and not as a burden on her family.

ther despite all the challenges. He is the eldest of seven children. His wife keeps him strong so that he can achieve his goals.

In his free time, Badrul enjoys swimming, listening to traditional folk music and early morning walks in the silence of nature watching dolphins, birds and flying fish in the beautiful River Padma near his home and the SOS Children's Village Rajshahi. Padma is one of the 230 rivers and important resources of Bangladesh, Badrul's small homeland located in the Bay of Bengal in South Asia.

Start of the journey

The SOS Family Strengthening Programme had been launched in Parvin's community and her family enrolled on the programme. After programme intervention, all types of support like school fees, educational materials, food, school uniform, and psychosocial and career counselling were provided to ensure quality care and education for the children entrusted to the support of SOS Children's Villages FSP. Parvin started to see her dream to shape her own life come true. Along with all her brothers and sister, she restarted school to continue her studies. Parvin completed her secondary education at the local school. After that, she had the opportunity to be admitted to a diploma course on Health Science through the holistic support of the SOS Children's Village Rajshahi FSP. It was not very easy for her to continue the studies in health science because it was a very expensive course at the medical college hospital in the city and her family had no financial ability to enrol her on this course. Parvin therefore started supporting other school students with private tuition to earn some money to pay the hostel charges in order to survive in the town. Great determination and confidence gave her the inner strength to complete the four year diploma course on health science with great hardship.

Dream comes true

"Life is not a bed of roses"

Parvin had to face and overcome many difficulties and challenges like the purchase of scientific instruments, books and journals to complete her four years' education in the city. SOS Children's Village Rajshahi always offered a helping hand to support her by providing tuition fees and some pocket money to shape her own future. Parvin worked hard to continue her studies. She successfully passed the course and got a job at a private hospital in Rajshahi city. She said, "My family stopped our education and would never have been able to send me to study medical science in the town. If SOS Children's Village had not supported me and not trained my mother to earn extra money for our livelihood, it would not have been possible for me to stand on my own feet. Now I am fully capable of helping my younger brothers and sister to continue their studies."

Parvin is now working in a private hospital as a laboratory assistant. She earns a good amount of money, which is sufficient to maintain herself and to contribute to her family.

As childcare practitioners, we are committed to all children to ensure their basic rights and provide an equal and fair chance to shape their own future to survive. SOS Children's Villages offers the best option for the children to get the right quality care in order to flourish.

No child is to be left behind: it is our global commitment to reach the sustainable development goals (SDG). We cannot achieve this goal by ignoring children and young people with challenges. SDG-2030 represents our highest aspiration for a better world and reflects our greatest responsibilities to provide quality care for children in need. Many more children need our support to survive and develop their talents.

The year 2021 will always be remembered for COVID-19 and the disruptions, uncertainty and suffering it caused worldwide. While children seem to be less vulnerable to the virus directly, school closures, increased vulnerability to abuse, the mental health anxieties of parents and families, distance from friends, and loss of access to vital health care and protection services have upset children deeply. But not all children were affected equally. The pandemic exposed deep inequalities that have existed for too long, with the worst impact on children in the poorest countries and communities and those already disadvantaged by discrimination, social exclusion, fragility and conflict.

Our challenges are very critical. We must ensure the basic rights of all the children entrusted to our care, because the children are our only lasting hope.

My message to SOS Children's Villages is,

Giving a fair and equal chance in life to every child, everywhere, especially the most disadvantaged groups, offers the greatest hope of breaking inter-generational cycles of inequity and poverty in every society. All our programmes are aligned with the Strategy 2030 and the SDG goals 2030, so we must ensure a fair and equal chance for all children to succeed in life. The Sustainable Development Goals have been implemented since January 2016. Together, we can work to make tangible progress in reaching these goals and making the world an impartial and safer place for destitute children and young people.

For most of the world, the constraints on reaching children who are being left behind are not technical: rather, they are a matter of resources, cooperation and our commitment. When we work for the common cause to reach these children and young people, to alleviate their suffering, to help them grow and learn, then we are not only giving them a fair chance to have a future. We are allowing them to build a better future for themselves and their families and communities at large.

My Dream

More green environment for children

My dream was about a green field. Children need a green field to play, to interact with nature and learn from their contact with it. It is our responsibility to create such green spaces for our children, so children can enjoy the beauty of nature, can see how nature

gives us lifesaving forces and energy to survive.

In my picture you see children who are playing and enjoying the beauty of nature in a green field.





Dio Kienou

Teacher in the city of Kita, SOS Children's Village Mali

The Perch

Providing a safe landing space for children

In 2013, there was an SOS child in my class who was not interested in studies. He got bad grades in the class tests, so I went to the village in order to discuss his school situation with his mother. The mother told me: “Ladji doesn’t like school”.

I took Ladji’s copybooks and I realised that he had not taken notes during all the lessons because he cannot write correctly.

Get involved for children

In this moment, I felt sad and wanted to make a difference somehow. So I decided to set up a local school monitoring strategy to support children because I am deeply convinced that school support is a necessity for children to succeed – especially for those with a low level of achievement and difficulties in understanding.

It emerges that the school future of the children entrusted to SOS Children’s Villages Mali requires the involvement of all: SOS parents, aunts, schoolteachers and village educators. Everyone at his or her level has an important role to play and our organisation will only achieve its mission when these children become autonomous adults. SOS Children’s Villages has always been committed to ensuring quality education for all children with the creation of Hermann Gmeiner school structures. Preschool educa-

“ I am a fervent defender of the Child Protection Policy. In my work, children are the source of motivation. An adage says: “He who educated a child did not live needlessly, because of this child, he made an enlightened man”. Education allows me to contribute to this development.

As a teacher and master in law, Dio is a fervent defender of the Child Protection Policy. In his work, children are the source of motivation. As in the saying “He who educated a child did not live needlessly, because of this child, he made an enlightened man”, education allows him to contribute to the development of the country. >

tors and teachers from these schools have always supported the villages in the school follow-up of children and it is in this context that my strategy entitled “The Perch” was born.

A school monitoring strategy

“The Perch Strategy” is a local sponsorship scheme at the level of our programme to support children growing up in an SOS Children’s Village programme who have learning difficulties. Teachers and educators are the local sponsors. I am one of those. I am the one who created the whole concept. We follow our god-children at school and at home with their families. Through this strategy, I would like to involve more preschool educators in the kindergarten and the teachers of the Hermann Gmeiner School of Kita in the school support of children in the care of SOS Children’s Villages. We thus support the family care staff. Everybody will be a school sponsor for a child who faces a certain difficulty and will help him or her to overcome different challenges through a personalised, efficient and effective approach.

To do this, I needed the support of all the staff of the educational structure and the coordination of the follow-up between teachers and SOS parents and aunts. At the beginning, it was not easy to convince my colleagues to do additional work: that was a big challenge but, with the headmaster’s support, they accepted the strategy in the best interests of the children and the performance of our school. I also had to coordinate the follow-up between teachers and SOS caregivers. The direct beneficiaries of the strategy are the students of the first to the ninth classes. In general, the strategy takes into account all the activities necessary for the academic follow-up of a student. Among others, we can mention:

- The control of the child’s punctuality in his or her class;
- The actual acquisition of teaching materials;
- School support adapted to the needs of the child;
- Counselling support to mothers, aunts and educators in the village.

Dio grew up in a big farmer’s family where he was taught the values of traditional society: community, work, respect and a sense of sharing which guide him in his everyday life. Today he is a married father of three boys to whom he tries to pass on the values he received from his father. For Dio, reading is a source of knowledge, discovery and development, which is important when you are a teacher. Dio also practices Taekwondo for good physical condition, self-confidence and against stress. Dio lives in Kita in western Mali, near Mount Kita, known for its caves and rock paintings. People come here for the Dakar-Niger Railway, for its music and for the annual Roman Catholic pilgrimage.

A report at the end of the school year makes it possible to evaluate successes and areas for improvement. The strategy is renewable every year and is part of a dynamic of sustainability.

As "The Perch Strategy" may not take account of all students, we organise additional remediation courses in order to have a successful school. These classes are done every day during lunch break, 1 hour per day, and allow us to raise the level of our students.

Together, we can...

Today, "The Perch Strategy" is bearing fruit at the level of the SOS Children's Villages programme in Kita. From its implementation to today, we have been able to identify the real learning difficulties of the beneficiaries. This has allowed us to then propose effective solutions to address their challenges and to improve their educational level.

Ladji has passed his DEF (Diplôme d'études fondamentales, the Diploma of Basic Studies) exam and is now studying to become an electrician in a professional school. As he said: "Thanks to the Perch Strategy, I got motivated to study."

The Hermann Gmeiner School in Kita is one of the most successful schools in the area. Students perform well at the level of the Teaching Academy:

- 9 students (5 boys and 4 girls) from the Hermann Gmeiner School of Kita were invited to participate in the "Camp of Excellence" by the President of the Republic of Mali in 2014, 2015, 2017 and 2019 to be celebrated for their outstanding efforts and brilliant results in school.
- 14 students from the SOS Children Village of Kita got their Baccalauréate exam and are now studying successfully at university in Bamako;
- 3 students from the Hermann Gmeiner School of Kita (2 boys and 1 girl) obtained Excellence Scholarships to continue their studies at prestigious universities in France.

This high performance really impressed the National Director of SOS Children's Villages Mali and led him to support "The Perch Strategy" in all SOS Children's Villages programmes in the county.

My message to SOS Children's Villages is,

Sharing my experience about the good results that many children in Mali achieved, I want to emphasise the importance of the encouragement of all people involved in the development of a child to work together. Good success in school is an important cornerstone on the way towards an independent life.

My Dream

Quality education for every child

My dream was about quality education. When children and youth have access to quality education, they can break the cycle of ignorance and poverty. The right to education also presupposes that the objectives of learning are achieved. This means that all children have the right to quality education adapted to their needs. We can have quality education through Hermann Gmeiner Schools with teachers trained in innovative

teaching techniques (use of digital resources via interactive learning software, etc.) that combine the pedagogical aspect and the playful aspect in order to arouse the children's interest.

In my picture you see a child standing in a circle. Employees from different structures form the circle. They all do something to give quality education to the child.

Quality education
for every child





Eyob Berhanu Negash

Regional Programme Development Advisor,
SOS Children's Villages International,
Regional Office Eastern and Southern Africa

The yearning of the child to go back.

A story of separated twins.

Going to work one morning in April 2007, I found Surafel walking wearily to school unaccompanied. Surafel is among those children who are labelled as a “problem child.” Surafel is a run-away child who uses every single opportunity to escape from the village. I decided to accompany him to school as it gave me the opportunity to talk to him and listen to his stories. I asked him why he was walking alone while the other children were going to school together with their friends. He replied, “I like to be alone whenever I miss my families in the countryside.” His response triggered my curiosity and I asked lots of question to further understand his situation. “Who do you miss most from your relatives?” Then Surafel dashed off to his classroom leaving me puzzled and unanswered.

I went straight to his SOS mother to discuss the matter in depth and I realised that Surafel dearly misses his relatives who live in a small town which is 461 km away from the SOS Children’s Village programme. After a thorough discussion with the programme management and review of the child’s care and development plan and related documents, we agreed to trace the family and engage them in strengthening their ties with Surafel.

“I love my job as it gives me an opportunity to contribute to the well-being of children, their families and communities. I am a passionate development worker who always aspires to see social change in the countries that I work with. I have two lovely children and they are my treasures.

Eyob joined SOS Children’s Villages Ethiopia in 2006 and loves his job as it gives him the opportunity to contribute to the well-being of children, their families and communities. He is a passionate development worker who always aspires to see social change in the countries that he works with.



When a child in the care of SOS Children's Villages dearly misses his relatives

The Village Director, Surafel¹, four other children and I left the SOS Children's Village for the child's hometown. I was filled with joy when I realised that we were going to reunite Surafel with his families. Despite the gloomy weather lurking ominously outside the window of the vehicle that we were in, I smiled a big, happy smile. We arrived at Surafel's hometown in the afternoon, and we met the government social worker to help us trace Surafel's families². We went to the small destitute neighbourhood in the morning to meet the relatives. When we arrived at the gates of the house, a small boy, who looked a lot like Surafel, except he was a little slimmer and darker, ran to us with joy and excitement. Surafel and this young boy began to cry as he hugged him with his wide and caring hands. Later, we discovered that the young boy was the identical twin brother

1 Name changed for privacy reasons

2 Plural form used as according to the author, in the African context extended families are considered family

of Surafel and we were all filled with tears and melancholy. As happy as I was to see the reunion of the twins, I felt sorry that they had been separated for such a long time due to the failure and dysfunctionality of the child-care and protection system in general and the gatekeeping mechanisms in particular. Another surprise came when Surafel's aunt told us that she was the biological mother of the twins. I was perplexed at this moment as I know for certain that SOS Children's Villages does everything possible to keep biological siblings together. This is due to the fact that the organisation recognises the importance of the bond and attachment for the child's healthy development.

When only strong gatekeeping mechanisms foster the best interest of each child

When asked why she let the twins be separated, Surafel's mother replied, "I was in a completely miserable situation by the time the SOS Children's Villages and government people came to our village to identify children without parental care. I decided to give away one of my sons to SOS Chil-

Eyob is married with two lovely children – "A gift from the heavens and his treasures" as he says. In his leisure time he loves hiking, hanging out with his family and friends, playing with his kids, watching movies, reading and meeting new people.

Eyob's home country Ethiopia is located in the Horn of Africa and is one of the world's oldest countries with its capital Addis Ababa ("New Flower"), situated almost at the centre. It was among the first independent nations to sign the Charter of the United Nations, giving moral and material support to the decolonisation of Africa and to Pan-African cooperation.

dren's Villages and to keep the other one with me so as not to lose both of them at the same time. I deceived the social workers by presenting myself as an aunty of Surafel, who had no economic capacity to care for him any longer.”

This particular moment motivated me and the programme team to review the cases of other children and support reintegration of children back to their families of origin.

“Reintegration is a process of a separated child making what is anticipated to be a permanent transition back to his or her immediate or extended family and the community (usually of origin), in order to receive protection and care and to find a sense of belonging and purpose in all spheres of life.” (Guidelines on Children’s Reintegration developed by the inter-agency group on children’s reintegration, 2016)¹

The process of reintegration takes time!

My learning from this story was that government, in collaboration with partners like SOS Children’s Villages, needed to strengthen the gatekeeping mechanisms in order to avoid unnecessary separation and placement of children in alternative care. We who work in the childcare and protection sector need to recognise the fact that nearly all children in care have a great yearning to be back with their parents on a permanent basis if the family situations improve.

From this story I also learned that we need to keep in mind that reintegration of children and young adults with their family of origin is a very delicate, sensitive and emotional process for all the stakeholders involved. Children may go through feelings of pain, guilt, shame and fear of not being loved. As such, reintegration is a process which unfolds over months, if not years. Over that period, the ultimate goal of reintegration is not just the sustained placement of the child with family members, but is instead concerned with the child being on a path to a happy, healthy adulthood.

As we facilitate reintegration, we need to prioritise family unity and be child-centred so that, for each child in alternative care, reintegration with the family of origin should be actively explored. What does that mean? If a child is in alternative care, other options must be regularly revisited. Further, we have to make sure that

¹ Guidelines-on-Children-s-Reintegration_web-version.pdf (sos-childrensvillages.org) [January 2022]

decisions are grounded in a child rights framework, enshrined by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.

High awareness of the role of a child's gender in the reintegration processes

It is essential to have an awareness of the gendered nature of children's experience. Girls are likely to face challenges such as rejection and isolation. We also need to embed reintegration in wider childcare and protection systems. As SOS Children's Villages, we cannot work towards reintegration alone but must work with the responsible government authorities. It is essential to work with other stakeholders in the broader childcare and protection system, including community, families and children. Communities have a vital role to play in supporting reintegration and should be supported to do so. It is important not to consider children in isolation, but the dynamic between them and their peers, family, community and the wider environment as a whole. A community-based approach seeks to assist communities in supporting the most vulnerable children, by promoting social cohesion, strengthening existing capacities that will continue to be available beyond the life of the project. It includes investing in infrastructure and services that are of benefit to the wider community. Other children in the community who are vulnerable to a range of different protection concerns must be included. Community-based support

can serve as a safety net for all the children who may need it.

It is also important to work with other systems, e.g. education, health, social protection and those supporting children with disabilities. We also need to put in place mechanisms to safeguard the child from discrimination, neglect, exploitation and abuse. Information should be stored and communicated in a way that protects confidentiality.

Reintegration is a long-term investment

Above all, reintegration support is not something that can be offered to children on a temporary basis, as it requires consistency and quality – all of which require a long-term investment in time, funding and resources. SOS Children's Villages should devise exit strategies to avoid dependence on the services of the agency, and to promote local ownership of reintegration processes. We must not consider children in isolation, but see them included in their interaction with peers, family, their community and their wider background.

My messages to SOS Children's Villages are

- *“Support governments in strengthening the child care and protection system in general, and gatekeeping mechanisms in particular, to prevent unnecessary separation of children from their families or placement in alternative care, as well as advocating for referrals and making sure a range of appropriate services are accessible to them.*
- *Invest in institutional capacity development for reintegration.*
- *Embed reintegration in child care and protection programming.”*

My Dream

Safe and Sustainable Communities

My dream was about safe and sustainable communities that are aware of their existing situation, difficulties and capabilities. As a result, they devote their resources and capacities to improving their situation while also ensuring that the results are sustained to benefit future generations. Safe and sustainable communities take children's holistic needs into account and address them using local solutions. The communities are also a place where children from different backgrounds feel loved, safe, cared for and protected. They are a place where children and young people have a voice in decision-making, and where wealth and wisdom are created, shared and sustained. Safe and sustainable communities take a child-centered approach and a long-term perspective, focusing on anticipating and adopting change in the present and future.

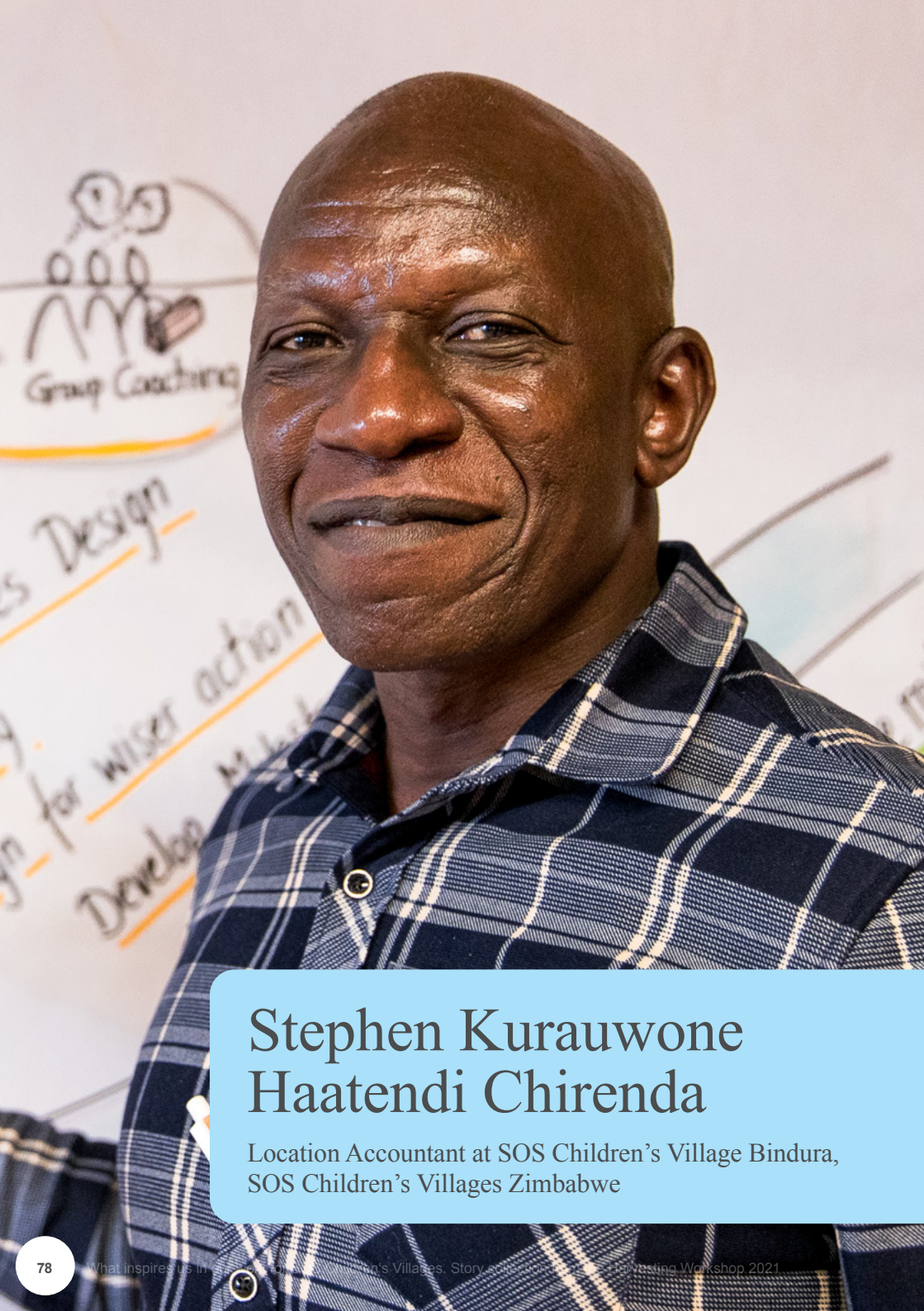
In the picture you see that all the children are happy! All the children, both boys and girls, as well as children with disabilities and special needs, are enjoying life in a safe and sustainable community in which the members respect and promote the rights of children. You will also notice that children are receiving quality care in their own families or, when necessary, in family/community-based and family-like alternative families such as foster families, kinship families, adoptive families and SOS families. They are all committed to safeguarding children's rights, providing high-quality care, and promoting children's holistic development.

The gate at the far end symbolises a robust gatekeeping mechanism built by local authorities, communities and other partners like SOS Children's Villages.

Safe + sustain-
able communities.

Ev





Stephen Kurauwone Haatendi Chirenda

Location Accountant at SOS Children's Village Bindura,
SOS Children's Villages Zimbabwe

Conviction: the fruits we are going to get. Overcoming the family insecurity gap.

Orientation

It all started in 2004 when I passed an interview and joined SOS Children's Villages as a field officer with the Family Strengthening Programme Bindura. I was just a teacher with an education and accounting background, who had qualified to be a field officer specifically in charge of income-generating activities in a community outreach family strengthening programme that had been introduced in Bindura.

Community needs assessment

Driven by the wish to inspire hope for the cause of the weak and vulnerable, I opened my heart with passion to assist in closing the gap in wealth and financial needs of families with children who had lost parental care. A needs assessment had clearly shown that the majority of the families were just having one meal a day and that this affected their health and even the academic performance of the children under our care. They had no food reserves and it was a hand to mouth situation. There were siblings living in just one room and their parents were victims of the HIV and AIDS pandemic. Most households were headed by a single parent or grandparent.

“Connecting people is my everyday business. Every moment I learn new lessons from different people. I love my profession from my heart. As a change maker, I am trying to contribute to alleviating human suffering and empowering young people to be future leaders of society.

Stephen joined SOS Children's Villages Zimbabwe in 2014 and – with his passion for financial innovation and growth – is now responsible for the finances and management of the SOS Children's Village programmes: the SOS Children's Village, the youth programme, >

The conviction

One day the Deputy National Director called me. He wanted to know more about my approach to community outreach and family strengthening programmes. He simply asked, "What is your conviction?" I responded confidently in a nutshell, having all the income-generating ideas in mind, "Oh it's all about sustainability and the fruits we are going to get." At the end of the call the Deputy National Director was really optimistic that my financial innovation strategy would help to improve the livelihoods of the parents and children under our care. Having a passion in financial innovation and growth, I was ready to show my potential and ability in the development of a financial programme that could give a trickle-down effect of resources to the beneficiaries.

Programme design and moment of flow

The situation of the families in the community touched my heart and prompted me to design a self-reliant activities programme for immediate intervention with the families. I crafted and introduced programmes for income generating activities using an

approach drawn from the International Labour Organisation (ILO): approaches such as Generate Your Business idea (GYB), Start Your Business idea (SYB) and Improve Your Business idea (IYB).

I started by identifying families' areas of need and projects for livelihood support and training. We arranged workshops for the Income Generating Project trainings and management. Interesting business ideas were put forward by the parents. Three projects came up and were found to have potential and viability from the short to long term. The poultry project was adopted by each family to enable them to realise quick returns. Within six weeks the chickens would be ready for sale and be available for their meals with chicken as well. The sewing project was implemented as a group project composed of family members identified as having sewing skills but who had no material resources for uniform production. Each family was to be engaged in a small plot (an acre in size) farming project. Seed, fertilisers and training in farming techniques were provided for them to achieve a better yield. The programme was successful and

three schools and the SOS farm in Bindura. He supports the SOS Children's Village's family projects, beneficiaries and youth projects to realise their potential for income generation and sustainability.

Spending most of his time analysing and managing numbers, he loves morning sprints or cycling and tennis for relaxation and – once a teacher, always a teacher – teaching the children a whole range of sports and wellness activities.

was popularly known as “Fill up your Granary” for food self-sufficiency. The Deputy National Director was pleased and we got approval for the project support and funding.

Poultry, uniform production and food reserve programme

The families and children welcomed the projects with great enthusiasm. The project launch and funding began in August 2004. Poultry projects provided immediate cash needs as well as payment of school fees for the children and that reduced school dropouts. The sewing group had skills in making school uniforms and was involved in school uniform production for 100 primary school children. During the presentation of the school uniforms, the headmaster of the school concluded enthusiastically, “This was so wonderful!” and thanked SOS Children’s Villages for treating children “with care and passion”. The “Fill up your granary programme” went well and a field trip to the maize plots of the families indicated the promise of a good harvest of a tonne of maize grain for each family. The mayor of the town acknowledged this and was grateful to the SOS Family Strength-

ening Programme in closing the food insecurity gap and providing access to essential health and educational needs.

The fruits we are going to get

On the same occasion the Deputy National Director of SOS Children’s Villages acknowledged the implementation and innovation and said, “I have seen the fruits, and you helped in creating a better world for the love of children.” The support that the SOS Family Strengthening Programme gives to family projects will always help them to realise their full potential in income generation and sustainability. Although I had mobilisation, training and monitoring challenges when developing the new programme we had good success with the techniques used and the technical advice that was given by other stakeholders. I always look back with a smile that we have won the World Cup in child family care and security. We need to continue securing resources in support of income generating activities for sustainability and the children will be assured of a decent meal every day.

Stephen lives in the mining town of Bindura, a stone’s throw away from the first SOS Children’s Village in Zimbabwe, which was founded in 1983. He is very proud of his two successful sons, an engineer in Melbourne and a medical doctor in Tanzania and – as he wants his rice and hens to stay afloat – he runs a poultry farm with his wife as their long-term income project.

The key lesson

This story has taught us a lot about the importance of creating a stable and secure environment in which children can grow up safely, develop and receive good education and contribute to family stability through individual and group income-generating projects. We provided start-up capital to individual families, groups and even schools and introduced a variety of savings clubs and (group) lending schemes. We also established a sustainable way of collaboration with the community and the families in need with various stakeholders.

My Dream A better world

My dream was about the world being a better place for our children. The red heart symbolises love. The hut with a white rooftop symbolises shelter and a loving home. The green ball symbolises the world's children. The large blue dish symbolises that the world is in safe hands as long as we continue to show love.

My message to SOS Children's Villages

Continue strengthening and support for income generating activities to achieve economic stability. A stable economic situation is the foundation for sustainable communities and families.

In my picture you see a secret admirer of the world in green with a loving home on top with a red door and white roof. At the back of it all is a big red heart overflowing with love being gathered in a large blue dish as a strong foundation. It can also symbolise a mother receiving a hug from a happy child.

A better world

stephen



Supplementary information

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
“ 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.

Christine Fritz



Intern Hermann
Gmeiner Academy

“ Once a Harvester, always a Harvester!”
How grateful I am for this unforgettable experience and meeting and connecting with such wonderful people!

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Responsible for the content

Irene Gleirscher

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Ms **Aruna Marandi**

Ms **Macarena Sofía Gutierrez Amorin**

Ms **Samar Fathy Zourub**

M **ABM Badrul Munir**

M **Dio Kienou**

M **Sibangilizwe Malinga**

M **Stephen Kurauwone Haatendi Chirenda**

M **Eyob Berhanu Negash**

M **Edwin Alvaro Rodriguez Bohorquez**

Editorial team

Margret Steixner,
Intercultural Perspectives, Vienna, Austria
Irene Gleirscher, Team Leader and
Christine Fritz, Intern, Team Education,
Hermann Gmeiner Academy, Innsbruck, Austria

Proof-reading

Lynda Hepburn

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