

# CHILD SAFEGUARDING ANNUAL REPORT 2017/2018

Child Care & Safeguarding Team  
Programme & Strategy ICC

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SOS CHILDREN'S  
VILLAGES  
A loving home for every child



Fatima, 11, Morocco, painted a picture of summer

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## 1 Introduction

In 2018, as we celebrated the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of our Child Protection Policy, we saw safeguarding issues rise to prominence in the international media. Allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse committed by staff of international aid organisations and failures to respond timely and appropriately continue to put vulnerable people at risk and undermine public trust. Historical allegations of harassment, sexual misconduct, exploitation and abuse by employees of some of the most well-known international aid organisations surfaced in February 2018, leading to an unprecedented wave of media scrutiny and public dismay towards harmful practices and abuse of power within the sector. SOS Children's Villages is not immune to this. As we have reported previously, in 2016 and 2017 respectively, SOS Children's Villages registered 21 incidents of sexual coercion and abuse of children and young people in our care by SOS co-workers.<sup>1</sup>

The attention towards safeguarding does not appear to be fading. In fact, the focus seems to be increasing as governments, donors and the public at large demand that organisations, including SOS Children's Villages, demonstrate how they safeguard those who they are meant to serve. In several major donor countries, such as the UK, Norway, Sweden and the Netherlands, there are currently processes underway to review funding requirements for aid and development organisations. This will most likely lead to demands for compliance to minimum integrity and safeguarding practices as well as stricter reporting requirements. The International Development Committee of the UK Parliament commissioned an investigation into the presence of abuse and sexual exploitation in the global aid sector. This six-month investigation culminated in a scathing report, which was released on 31 July 2018 and has since seen significant high-profile media coverage worldwide.<sup>2</sup>

The report asserts that a full response to sexual exploitation and abuse depends on the empowerment of aid beneficiaries to be knowledgeable and confident in their rights and in finding help. Furthermore, organisations must proactively seek reports of sexual exploitation and abuse and robustly respond to them with feedback to victims. Organisations must establish a zero-tolerance culture where they follow up reports with investigations and meet results with accountability, and prioritise transparency over reputation. Finally, organisations must prevent known perpetrators from moving into new positions. They must improve staff screening methods, cooperate amongst organisations and establish a global register of aid workers.

It is within this context that we celebrate the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the [SOS Children's Villages Child Protection Policy](#). Issued in 2008, the Child Protection Policy was a major milestone on our child safeguarding journey that already started for some member associations in the early 90s. Looking back at the past 10 years, give us the opportunity to pause for a moment and to reflect. It has been a journey fuelled with many achievements, challenges and learnings. Some of those achievements include:

- Improved policy framework. To complement the Child Protection Policy and support its implementation, SOS Children's Villages developed the [Code of Conduct](#) in 2011, the policy support documents for member associations and the General Secretariat on reporting and responding to child safeguarding incidents in 2016 and 2015, respectively, and on conducting child safeguarding investigations in 2016. The procedures were updated based on learnings in 2017.
- More effective child safeguarding reporting and responding procedures. A strong focus was placed on closing reporting and responding gaps and clarifying roles and responsibilities of line managers in member associations and the General Secretariat to ensure effective management, monitoring and accountability.
- Functioning child safeguarding and care networks. These networks have been instrumental in driving child safeguarding work globally and within the regions and have been a key priority since 2012.
- Improved accountability. Since 2013, the Chief Operating Officer (COO) receives direct reports on child safeguarding incidents escalated to the General Secretariat.<sup>3</sup> Similar lines of reporting are also in place in regional offices. The role of the COO and regional directors is to keep an overview and to ensure effective management of child safeguarding incidents escalated from member associations to the General Secretariat. The Management Team (consisting of the CEO, CFO and COO) also receives a bi-monthly report of all open child safeguarding incidents escalated to the General Secretariat. These reports are shared with the [Management Council](#) as well as the [International Senate](#) Programme Audit Committee, which plays an oversight role.

<sup>1</sup> Child safeguarding annual survey (2017)

<sup>2</sup> International Development Committee (2018). [Sexual abuse and exploitation in the aid sector](#). House of Commons.

<sup>3</sup> As the COO position is vacant at present, the Deputy COO receives the reports of escalated child safeguarding incidents.

- **SOS Care Promise.** The approval of the [SOS Care Promise](#) in April 2018 is an important milestone for the federation. It demonstrates how child safeguarding is integrated with all other commitments that we have made to children in our care.

Looking forward, it is clear that our child safeguarding journey will never end. For us to be better able to meet the challenges of an increasingly complex environment, we need to remain an organisation that is able to learn and to translate lessons learned into concrete action. We need to be accountable for improving and strengthening our child safeguarding measures to ensure a safe environment for children who are supported through all our programmes. This includes addressing those issues we now know are a problem within the aid and development sector. SOS Children's Villages is not immune to developments elsewhere.

During the past year, a strong focus was placed on learning. SOS Children's Villages put two new processes in place to ensure that our child safeguarding measures are fit for purpose. This includes the external Level 1 certification process, conducted by Keeping Children Safe, that monitored our compliance to the International Child Safeguarding Standards and which we successfully achieved.

Our recent efforts to learn from past mistakes also include our continued work on an Independent Child Safeguarding Review (ICSR), which is reviewing historical and current child safeguarding practices for learning and improvement purposes. The ICSR was set up in 2016, and other INGOs and UN agencies have since followed suit and commissioned reviews of their own practices. This is explained further in Section 6.4.

This Child Safeguarding Annual Report provides an overview of our child safeguarding related actions, achievements, challenges and lessons learned from September 2017 to August 2018 that were initiated or coordinated by the SOS Children's Villages International. This report makes key recommendations for the federation of SOS Children's Villages in 2018/19.

## 2 The pillars of our work

It is essential that we ensure that children are safe in our programmes at all times. Every single failure in this respect is a failure on our mission. This is reflected in commitment 4 of the SOS Care Promise.

*We commit to create a safe environment for children in all our programmes at all times by implementing child safeguarding measures and procedures in line with our child protection policy, international standards and best practices.<sup>4</sup>*

Children in alternative care often experience trauma because of violence, abuse and neglect within their own families or previous care placements. As an unfortunate consequence, children within our target group are more vulnerable to further violence or abuse. In general, alternative care service providers have a higher child safeguarding risk profile, and from experience, we know that SOS Children's Villages is not immune to these risks. We therefore put measures in place in order to:

- 1) Manage our child safeguarding risks. This we do through child safeguarding risk assessments and mitigation actions including awareness raising and prevention.
- 2) Manage child safeguarding incidents. This we do through clearly defined reporting and responding procedures.



<sup>4</sup> SOS Care Promise (2018), p.16

To achieve the above, the Child Care and Safeguarding Team in the International Office works closely with the global and regional care networks and child safeguarding networks, and other teams in the General Secretariat to strengthen member associations in their efforts to manage child safeguarding risks and incidents when they occur. We develop guiding documents and tools, and promote exchange, practice sharing and learning within the global and regional networks.

Recognising the need to accelerate the implementation of child safeguarding measures and procedures across the federation, we are also initiating a project to strengthen programmes and oversight mechanisms in countries with a high child safeguarding risk profile.

### **3 Care networks and child safeguarding networks**

Our child safeguarding work is strongly anchored in cross-regional collaboration within the SOS Children's Villages federation. Strengthening the regional care networks and the child safeguarding networks remained a key priority throughout the year. These networks are instrumental in driving our prevention of child abuse and child safeguarding work in the regions and member associations.

#### **3.1 Regional care networks**

The regional care networks are lively communities of practice and exchange forums regarding care, child and family development as well as child safety topics. During the 2017/18 reporting year, face-to-face regional care network meetings were held in our regional offices. They covered a whole range of topics related to the SOS Care Promise implementation. For the purpose of this report, we only focus on topics related to the prevention of child abuse which were worked on within the care networks.

In the six regional care networks, care co-workers (SOS parents, youth care co-workers) and their support staff (trainers, advisors and others) reflect on their practice, discuss vital prevention and care topics, share experience, and gain new insights and tools. Through these activities, a positive impact on the care and protection of children and young people can be expected.

The topics are chosen based on learnings drawn from day-to-day work experiences, child safeguarding incidents, as well as the results of the annual child safeguarding surveys. During the 2017/18 reporting year, prevention related topics included positive parenting and discipline, protective behaviours, responding to teenage pregnancies, prevention of child-to-child abuse, care of children and young people who experienced trauma, and child & youth participation.

During 2017/2018, the Child Care and Safeguarding team in the International Office facilitated regular virtual exchange between the coordinators of the regional care networks as well as one face-to-face meeting. This exchange helps the regional care network coordinators to learn from each other's experience and strengthens them in their efforts of facilitating exchange across member associations within their regional networks. The Child Care and Safeguarding Team also supports with co-ordinating relevant trainings, which regularly form part of the regional care network meetings.

#### **3.2 Child safeguarding networks**

The role of the global and regional child safeguarding networks is to coordinate, support and monitor the implementation of the SOS Child Protection Policy and related policy support documents; develop guidance and tools; promote practice sharing and exchange between member associations and across regions; and to facilitate and co-ordinate relevant child safeguarding trainings for member associations.

The regional child safeguarding focal point organises one regional face-to-face meeting per year and facilitates virtual exchange between the child safeguarding focal persons from the member associations.

During the 2017/18 reporting year, regional child safeguarding network meetings were held in five of the six regional offices. The Global Child Safeguarding Network Meeting was held in June 2018. The main focus was on the learnings from the process of obtaining Keeping Children Safe Level 1 Certification process, the implementation of the reporting and responding procedures within member associations, the child safeguarding risk assessments as well as on sexual coercion and abuse incidents.

**CHILD SAFEGUARDING NETWORKS –  
LEARNINGS FROM THE KEEPING CHILDREN SAFE LEVEL 1 CERTIFICATION PROCESS**  
**Keeping Children Safe commented:**

1. SOS Children's Villages is to be commended for having introduced noteworthy global, regional and country level structures (child safeguarding networks) who are effective and reasonably well linked together.
2. There is a strong reliance on the Child Care and Safeguarding Team at the International Office and regional child safeguarding networks. That responsibility must be shared by many more persons across the organisation, especially managers.
3. The staff with specialist responsibilities for child protection have received opportunities for learning which are required to perform their roles effectively.

## 4 Managing child safeguarding risks

A key component of SOS Children's Villages' overall child safeguarding approach is managing child safeguarding risks. The SOS Care Promise emphasises the need for a risk assessment and mitigation approach.

*We put in place tailored measures to assess, analyse and reduce child safeguarding risks associated with each care option, partnership and community, as well as with functional areas of the organisation such as human resources, communications or fundraising.<sup>5</sup>*

Understanding the child safeguarding risks associated with a particular programme (such as SOS families, small group homes, family strengthening, school etc.), function (such as human resources or fund development) or context (such as conflict or emergency situation) enables us to put mitigation actions in place in order to reduce our risks.

We have taken strong steps in recent years to integrate a child safeguarding risk management approach into our child safeguarding work, as is highlighted below. However, there is still significant room for improvements. The Keeping Children Safe Level 1 Certification report also highlights the fact that child safeguarding risk assessments should not be limited to our programme work. It is relevant and necessary for all functions – for example, finance, human resources, fundraising, etc. -- to carry out a regular assessment of the risks their area of work poses to the safety of children. Managing child safeguarding risks also means identifying countries or programmes with a high child safeguarding risk profile to prioritise mitigation actions and investments.

A recent initiative to further strengthen child safeguarding and the management of child safeguarding risks can be highlighted at this point. As part of the Joining Forces Initiative, its steering group, consisting of the CEOs of the participating child focused agencies (CFAs)<sup>6</sup>, decided to take steps in all pilot countries of the initiative (currently five) to ensure that the highest child safeguarding standards are upheld. This means that focal persons across the six CFAs will work on this during 2018 and 2019.

The topics presented below are examples of work done with the purpose of managing our child safeguarding risks: the child safeguarding risk assessment, orientation of new GSC co-workers and Code of Conduct implementation, and three prevention-orientated care topics taken up in the regional Care Networks.

### MANAGING CHILD SAFEGUARDING RISKS – LEARNINGS FROM KEEPING CHILDREN SAFE LEVEL 1 CERTIFICATION AND THE PILOT REPORT OF THE INDEPENDENT CHILD SAFEGUARDING REVIEW

1. The proactive management of child safeguarding risks (as opposed to the reactive response to incidents and issues) is not explicit in the General Secretariat or in member associations. This makes children more vulnerable to abuse.
2. A child safeguarding risk management approach should include a child safeguarding risk assessment, mitigation, monitoring and learning strategy.
3. There is a limited understanding that all organisational functions, not just programming, must integrate child safeguarding risk management in their operations, including Human Resources and Organisational Development, Communication, Fundraising, Finance, Sponsorships or ICT.
4. Few member associations carry out a local mapping and child safeguarding risk assessment of the local context. Such an assessment must consider the specific environment in which children live and the member association operates.
5. It is not clear how far children and parents have been consulted on risks in their programmes.
6. Member associations require support in understanding the scope of local mapping and risk assessment processes and on how to carry them out.
7. Child safeguarding risks that are known to be prevalent in specific countries and in the aid and development sector overall, as when identified by external reports<sup>7</sup>, must be proactively addressed. This includes sexual harassment and abuse of vulnerable staff and adult beneficiaries.

<sup>5</sup> SOS Care Promise (2018), p.16

<sup>6</sup> These organisations are, in addition to SOS Children's Villages: ChildFund Alliance, Plan International, Save the Children, Terre Des Hommes, and World Vision.

<sup>7</sup> Past examples include UNHCR and Save the Children published a report in 2002 that detailed extensive sexual exploitation of children in Liberia, Guinea and Sierra Leone by employees of national and international NGOs and UN agencies; Save the Children published a report in 2008 detailing a wide range and prevalence of sexual exploitation and abuse of children by aid workers and peacekeepers in Haiti, Ivory Coast and Southern Sudan. In 2018, the International Development Committee published a report describing that sexual exploitation and abuse of vulnerable populations is 'endemic' in the aid sector.

8. The introduction of a proactive child safeguarding risk management approach should be prioritised in member associations and areas of operation where there is a concern about the implementation of child safeguarding measures.
9. Strong governance and oversight of member associations by the General Secretariat is crucial for effective child safeguarding risk management, especially in member associations with high risk profiles.

#### 4.1 Child safeguarding risk analysis

The SOS policy support document, *Child Safety is Everybody's Business -- Child Safeguarding reporting and responding procedures in member associations*, specifies that every programme and national child safeguarding team must conduct an annual child safeguarding risk assessment. Member associations must use its outcomes as input for the annual planning process to put risk-mitigating actions in place. Substantial progress has been made across the federation to meet this requirement. The number of member associations that have a fully functional risk assessment process in place has more than doubled, increasing from 15% in 2016 to 37% in 2017.<sup>8</sup> This improvement is a result of the ongoing federation-wide focus on strengthening child safeguarding risk management capacities and putting robust reporting responding procedures in member associations in place. However, much more remains to be done across all member associations in the federation to establish a functional child safeguarding risk management approach.

#### 4.2 Awareness raising

The purpose of awareness raising activities is to put a focus on relevant topics regarding child abuse prevention, in order to encourage member associations to reflect on them in their daily work. The Child Care and Safeguarding Team at the International Office and the regional offices use a range of approaches to raise awareness on such topics like articles on the Collaboration Platform (our intranet), webinars, publications, and discussions in meetings and relevant networks. In addition, many member associations raise awareness on prevention of child abuse topics that are relevant within their local context. It is not possible to reflect on all those rich experiences in this report. Instead, this report focusses on those prevention topics that were driven and supported through the regional care and child safeguarding networks. Here are a few examples.

##### 4.2.1 Child safeguarding orientation for new co-workers

The [Hermann Gmeiner Academy](#) hosts the Introduction Days for new colleagues. During the Introduction days co-workers learn about the SOS Children's Villages vision, mission, brand and strategy and get acquainted with the structure and different entities in the federation. They also learn more about child abuse, the child protection policy and the procedures for reporting child safeguarding concerns.

The Introduction Days took place four times from July 2017 to July 2018, with a total of 99 participants, including 19 from the International Office,<sup>9</sup> 13 from different International Offices Regions<sup>10</sup> and 67 from various member associations.

##### 4.2.2 Code of Conduct roll out

It is mandatory that all SOS co-workers from member associations, PSAs and GCS, as well as board members, consultants or anyone who works for or on behalf of SOS Children's Villages signs the Code of Conduct. In addition, all member associations and GSC offices should provide a training course to ensure co-workers are thoroughly orientated. By signing the Code of Conduct, co-workers commit to a professional conduct prescribed by SOS Children's Villages to keep children safe from harm and to the responsible use of power and position, resources and information. The recent reports of abuse in the aid and development sector as well as our own internal experiences, confirm the importance that all SOS co-workers are well trained and aware of what constitutes appropriate behaviour towards children

<sup>8</sup> It is important to note that creating a functional risk assessment process is a complex endeavour, especially in larger member associations, which includes the training of individuals who conduct the risk assessment.

<sup>9</sup> 10 co-workers from IO Vienna and 9 co-workers from IO Innsbruck.

<sup>10</sup> ESAF, EUCB, MENA and WCAF

and young people in our care and in the wider community, and what their specific roles and responsibilities are.

The Human Resources and Organisational Development Department is responsible for the Code of Conduct roll out at the General Secretariat, and holds trainings together with other relevant departments and functions, including the Child Care and Safeguarding Team. In 2017, three Code of Conduct trainings took place and were attended by 38 IO co-workers.<sup>11</sup> The Code of Conduct was also discussed during the Introduction Days. Two trainings were held for IO co-workers so far in 2018,<sup>12</sup> attended by a total of 25 participants.

### 4.3 Prevention

Most member associations implement actions to prevent child safeguarding incidents. Child safeguarding is a cross cutting topic within SOS Children's Villages. Prevention activities are therefore best anchored within the programmes, member associations, regions and functions that are responsible for managing particular child safeguarding risks. Targeted prevention measures aimed at children, young people and care professionals are of particular interest. Such measures include capacity building to help them recognise abuse as well as equip them with the knowledge, skills and attitudes to respond to risky situations or abuse.

#### 4.3.1 Positive discipline

All children and young people have the right to physical and mental integrity and to be protected against all forms of violence. Physical and emotional abuse constitutes 60.2 percent of all child safeguarding incidents within the Latin America region of SOS Children's Villages. For this reason the Latin America regional office invested in building the capacity of parents and caregivers to equip them with the knowledge and skills to apply positive discipline in their interaction with their children.

A practical guide on positive discipline was developed as a frame of reference and support to member associations in LAAM and other regions interested in the topic. It intends to help caregivers, other care professionals and families of origin to raise children with a positive parenting approach through one of the key tools: positive discipline.

Caring with a positive discipline approach changes how adults relate to children. For example, when someone says that a child "misbehaves", this is an adult perspective not taking into account the child's experience. Their behaviour may be due to a lack of motivation, discouragement, boredom or sadness. Positive discipline means not questioning the reason for the behaviour but looking for more positive and effective ways to meet the end goal.

Positive discipline also helps children to understand and manage their emotions, and teaches them positive ways to face difficulties and conflicts throughout their lives. It sets boundaries with firmness and kindness, respecting children's rights and their emotional needs. Establishing mutual respect with democratic education and regulated freedom allows for recognising the rights and needs of both children and adults.

Finally, caring with a positive discipline approach is not achieved in a couple of days or months – it is a long-term process and a challenge to adults. The tools need to be handled by highly sensitive adults with emotional stability – only achieved through self-care and the ability to express emotions, and properly trained on the specifics of the children they work with. It also means that we need to be open to ongoing inner change as families and caregivers.

#### 4.3.2 Protective Behaviours

Protective Behaviours is a preventative, life skills programme which enables people of all ages - but especially children and young people - to develop skills which promote resilience and empower them to deal with risky, unsafe or abusive situations. It is a simple and effective approach to strengthen children and young people around two main themes "We all have the right to feel safe at all times" and "We can talk with someone about anything, no matter what it is".

Following the programme's roll out by SOS Children's Villages South Africa in all its programmes in 2016, two regional offices provided the training in 2017 in the frame of their regional care networks.

<sup>11</sup> 2 trainings in Innsbruck, 1 training in Vienna

<sup>12</sup> 1 training in Innsbruck, 1 in Vienna

### **The Protective Behaviours Programme was rolled out in Asia in the following way:**

After participating in the Care Network meeting in 2016 where the Protective Behaviours training was presented, as well as recognising the need to ensure the safety of children in our care, the Asia regional office held a Protective Behaviours train-the-trainer workshop for all of the regions member associations in October 2017. The training took place at an SOS national training centre in SOS Nepal. Twenty-four co-workers from eleven member associations were trained. The participatory approach created interest and ensured active participation from all colleagues. At the end of the training, all co-workers shared their plan to roll out the programme in their member associations.

Ten member associations rolled out the Protective Behaviours programme in their locations with programme co-workers, SOS mothers and aunts, children and young people. The remaining member associations intend to roll out the training by the end of June 2018.

Voices from SOS mothers/parents from the training include:

- “Sometimes the unwritten rules may be a cause for sexual abuse; this is a learning for us. Our duty is to inform and make the children aware about the unwritten rules.”
- “Children need to be taught about safe and unsafe touch from very young age.”
- “Children enjoyed the activities and they said that they will apply their new skills in their lives when they need.”
- “Early warning signs and safety continuum lessons were very useful for the daily dealing with children.”

### **Together with a child rights training, the Protective Behaviours Programme was rolled out in Western and Central Africa and in the following way:**

The regional office organised a weeklong training on Children’s Rights for care professionals and on Protective Behaviours in November 2017. The training took place at the SOS regional training centre in Benin, and co-workers from 17 member associations participated. Participants were asked to present a work plan to the Care Network Leader by the end of 2017, which would serve as a guide in replicating the training in the various member associations.

Until the end of March 2018, 13 out of the 17 member associations held trainings for relevant co-workers, children and young people at their programme locations. Around 500 care professionals from the 13 member associations were trained. Additionally, 409 children and young people participated in various interactive discussions, trainings and group meetings in the member associations.

Voices from SOS mothers/parents and children from the training include:

- SOS mother: “Training on Protective Behaviours changed my life; I understood many things, even my mistakes. I am a bit ashamed, but now I am an ambassador for Child’s rights & Protective Behaviours everywhere I will be.”
- “For me the sessions on “We all can talk with someone about anything, no matter what it is” and “Body awareness and ownership” are the most educative.”

#### **4.3.3 Trauma-informed care**

Trauma-informed care was first prioritised in our regional office for Central and Eastern Europe/ Commonwealth of Independent States in 2016. Due to the changing profile of children in care, our caregivers are not well enough prepared to take care of children with challenging behaviour and psychological problems. Consequently, the regional office designed a 2-3 day workshop on trauma-informed care, based on the main challenges and concerns raised during the care network meetings.

By the end of 2017, ten member associations organised capacity building for care professionals in a project sponsored by our international corporate partner Johnson and Johnson. The topic remained in focus throughout 2017:

- Regional Care Network meeting on “Young people living in SOS families”;
- Virtual follow-up meeting for member associations on trauma-informed care;
- Care Webinar;
- Various articles for the regional newsletter and the care blog on the virtual collaboration platform.

To keep the momentum going and to ensure a strong support base for member associations in the region, co-workers from seven member associations that already have a lot of experience and knowledge on the topic formed a small working group on trauma-informed care. They met twice virtually

in 2018. The participants started to exchange their knowledge and interesting documents, and plan to work on a briefing paper regarding trauma-informed care in the second half of 2018.

#### 4.3.4 Child safeguarding in emergencies

Ensuring that children and young people we support through different programme interventions are safe and protected against any form of harm and abuse is one of the key tasks of our organisation. Given the challenges related to very often unstable, fragile and fast changing context in the areas where our member associations provide emergency response, this task is even more important but also far more difficult. For more on our emergency response programmes, see our [website](#).

To address the needs of member associations operating in such a challenging environment in the middle east and north africa region, the regional office organised a three-day training on child safeguarding in emergencies. The training took place in November 2017 in Beirut, Lebanon, and it was facilitated by a trainer from Keeping Children Safe. During the training, participants learned about the legal context of child safeguarding in emergencies and applicable international standards, and they went through all aspects they need to take into consideration when planning and later delivering their emergency response programmes such as recruitment and orientation of staff, working with partners and contractors, setting up reliable reporting system and dealing with reported complaints. As a final outcome of the training, participants drafted an action plan reflecting the needs related to their country specifics and existing (or planned) emergency response programmes.

In May 2018, the training on child safeguarding and emergencies was replicated by the regional office for east and southern Africa at the training centre in Nairobi. This training was facilitated by the global child safeguarding advisor of the Child Care and Safeguarding Team in the International Office.

Based on the lessons learned collected in these two trainings, the Child Care and Safeguarding Team, together with the Global Emergency Response Department will work on a proposal on how to provide more in-depth and hands-on guidance to member associations implementing emergency response programmes.

## 5 Managing child safeguarding incidents

Managing child safeguarding incidents when they occur is the second pillar of SOS Children's Villages safeguarding work. The SOS Care Promise states:

*We define clear expectations and responsibilities for child safeguarding and establish reporting and whistleblowing mechanisms which enable children, staff and other stakeholders to raise concerns and make complaints. If abuse occurs, we know what to do. We respond quickly and effectively through clearly defined procedures. This includes reporting to the responsible authorities whenever appropriate. We provide support and counselling to the affected children based on their individual needs. We expect the same from our partners and support them in these processes.<sup>13</sup>*

During 2017/18, the global and regional child safeguarding networks continued full steam ahead to further strengthen and improve how we report and respond to child safeguarding incidents. New milestones were achieved which are presented in more detail below. Managing child safeguarding incidents remains a challenge for all stakeholders involved. Co-workers who work on this topic require strong support to deal with the pressures that are associated with this line of work.

### 5.1 Child safeguarding incidents where the General Secretariat gets involved

Member associations are accountable for following up on child safeguarding incidents that occur in their association. Their response is guided by the national legislation of their country and SOS Children's Villages Child Protection Policy and policy support documents. Following the initial child safeguarding incident assessment, the General Secretariat gets involved if any of the following criteria are met.

- Maltreatment, neglect, abuse or any other harmful activity led to severe health consequences, attempted suicide or death of a child or young person participating in one of our programmes or in our care.
- There is a conflict of interest involving the management of a member association or within a General Secretariat office.

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<sup>13</sup> Care Promise (2018), p.16

- There is evidence of negligence on the part of the responsible member association or General Secretariat office to comply with the organisational procedures as set out in the policy support documents.
- A child safeguarding incident was escalated from the same member association to the General Secretariat in the past five years. This includes for example incidents that are recurring and which prompted government intervention or media attention at the time.
- There is high media coverage, donor, public and/or government interest or the risk of it.

The reason for introducing this mechanism is to identify those child safeguarding incidents where the General Secretariat needs to get involved to support member associations or to intervene directly. For example, member associations may require direct guidance from the regional office child safeguarding focal person to ensure compliance to our child safeguarding requirements or support from crisis communication staff from the regional office to draft press statements or incident papers. It also enables General Secretariat line managers to monitor the member association's response more closely and where required, intervene to ensure an appropriate response. In such cases, the responsibility of regional office and International Office child safeguarding focal persons is to support line managers with their response and interventions.

Between September 2017 to August 2018, 13 new child safeguarding incidents were reported to the Management Team where the General Secretariat got involved. 15 more incidents were carried over from the previous reporting period. During this time a total of ten child safeguarding incidents were re-assessed and eight were closed and nine were still open at the time of the writing of the report. The nature of these incidents varies from neglect to sexual coercion and abuse.

The child safeguarding incidents that are escalated to the General Secretariat are sometimes challenging and very demanding for all the stakeholders involved. Since the implementation of the policy support document on the reporting and responding procedures within the General Secretariat in 2013, SOS Children's Villages made significant improvements in responding to the challenges associated with the child safeguarding incidents where the General Secretariat got involved. These improvements include, amongst others, better support to victims of abuse, more thorough follow-up on investigation findings, improved record keeping as well as ensuring that follow-up by member associations is in line with local legislation and organisational child safeguarding policies and procedures. Because of the challenging nature of these child safeguarding incidents, they offer a number of learnings for member associations and the federation.

Some learnings from escalated child safeguarding incidents in 2017/18 include:

- 1) Under no circumstances should board members or national directors investigate allegations of abuse themselves. Their role is limited to an oversight role ensuring that allegations are followed-up in line with the country legislation and the organisation's policy and procedures.
- 2) National boards and national management require training on their roles and the responsibilities in relation to the child safeguarding incidents.
- 3) All allegations of abuse must be followed-up in line with our policies and procedures, including child safeguarding allegations which leaders or managers believe have no substance.
- 4) If a child safeguarding incident is a criminal act, it must be referred to the relevant government authorities for further investigation, such as the police or child welfare authorities and not to SOS Children's Villages.

## **5.2 Implementation of child safeguarding reporting and responding procedures in member associations**

In March 2016, the policy support document Child safety is everybody's business. Child safeguarding reporting and responding procedures in member associations was approved by the Management Council. Following approval, the Child Care and Safeguarding Team at the International Office and the regional offices launched a project to implement the child safeguarding reporting and responding procedures in all member associations by June 2018.

As part of this implementation project, member associations introduced the child safeguarding reporting and responding procedures to their national boards and national management and trainings were organised for all SOS co-workers including caregivers and children and young people cared for and supported in all programmes. In addition, an e-learning course on child safeguarding reporting and responding was launched and is described in more detail in section 5.3 below.

By July 2018, the implementation process was completed in 457 out of 511 programme locations<sup>14</sup> and full roll-out was achieved in 87 member associations. Remaining member associations will complete the implementation in the coming months.

Some key achievements of implementing the reporting and responding procedures in member associations, as highlighted by the 2017 child safeguarding survey, include:

- The number of member associations conducted local mapping to ensure that the reporting and responding procedures are in line with the national legislation has increased.
- The child safeguarding incident registers are in place in more member associations enabling closer monitoring and follow-up on the reported child safeguarding incidents from line management.
- Lessons learned from practical incident experience are integrated into organisational networks, trainings and for programme improvements.

Despite the progress it remains clear that some member associations will require more capacity building going forward.

### **5.3 E-learning on child safeguarding reporting and responding procedures**

At the end of July 2017, the Child Care and Safeguarding Team launched the first child safeguarding e-learning course on reporting and responding procedures in member associations. After completing this course, learners know what they need to do when they have concerns about children's safety, when abuse allegations are reported and what their responsibilities are. The course was first launched in English. In March 2018 the e-learning course was made available in Arabic, French, Russian and Spanish.

The course is hosted by SOS Virtual, the e-learning platform maintained by the regional office for Latin America. This enables the Child Care and Safeguarding Team to monitor who attended and completed the course. It is available to all SOS co-workers across the federation with Internet access and is free of charge. Course participants can go through the course in their own pace; and can leave and continue it at any time.

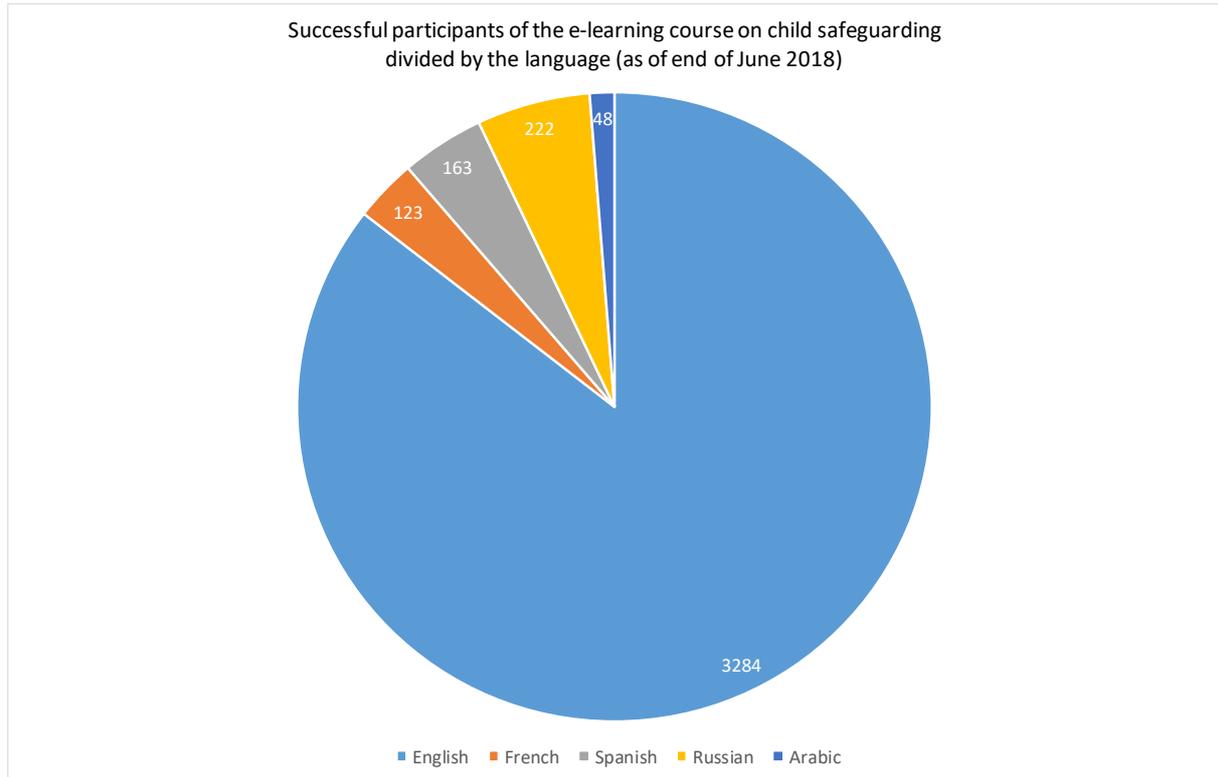
At the end of the course, participants are required to complete a short test. When more than 60% of the questions are answered correctly, participants are awarded a certificate confirming their successful participation.

Since the course was launched, 4,669 SOS co-workers registered for the course and 3,840 of them successfully passed it. Most participants used the English version (3,284 users) followed by Russian (222), Spanish (163), French (123) and Arabic (48).

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<sup>14</sup> Member associations in EUNA are not included.

Chart 1



The highest number of the participants successfully completing the course come from Asia (1,600 participants), followed by east and southern Africa (1,294) and Central & Eastern Europe/Commonwealth of Independent States (417). Member associations with highest number of participants who successfully passed the course are India (692 users), followed by Uganda (303) and the Philippines (277).

The Child Care and Safeguarding Team is currently working on another course on child safeguarding investigations. This course is aimed at potential child safeguarding investigation team members, line managers and national child safeguarding focal persons.

#### 5.4 Whistleblowing channel

In November 2017, together with the Integrity, Compliance and Legal Department within the General Secretariat, the Child Care and Safeguarding Team launched SOS Children's Villages' first online whistleblowing channel. It is a further channel through which any person irrespective of their position or status inside or outside of the organisation can report concerns they have relating to child safeguarding or fraud and corruption. Reports can be submitted through the adult or the child-friendly version in six languages (English, Spanish, French, Arabic, Russian and German). A link to the whistleblowing channel is provided on the external website: <https://www.sos-childrensvillages.org/report-a-child-safety-concern>. Business Keeper AG, one of the leading companies providing whistleblowing systems, hosts the site. It is not possible for anyone to identify the reporter or trace him/her back to the submitted report.

The online whistleblowing channel does not replace any of our other reporting channels such as helplines, e-mail addresses or child-friendly complaint boxes that are maintained by designated child safeguarding staff within member associations and the General Secretariat. The online whistleblowing channel simply offers more security for people who want to report anonymously. A reporter has the option to create a confidential post box to enable further communication between the reporter and the organisation.

From November 2017 to July 2018, the Child Care and Safeguarding Team received 15 reports through the online whistleblowing channel, of which four were not related to SOS Children's Villages' work.<sup>15</sup> In

<sup>15</sup> The reporters asked for support on issues related to their community or personal matters.

comparison to the overall number of reported child safeguarding incidents, less than one percent of incidents were reported through the online whistleblowing channel.

## 5.5 CS investigation training

Where external authorities do not exist, are not willing or unable to take up their responsibility to investigate allegations of abuse, SOS Children's Villages can commission an internal child safeguarding investigation and based on the outcomes of the investigation, determine appropriate response actions.

All child safeguarding investigations commissioned by the General Secretariat must be led by an internal investigator drawn from a global pool of certified child safeguarding investigators. Members of this group were nominated by member associations and International Offices Regions and were subsequently trained and certified. As of July 2018, SOS Children's Villages has 23 internal certified child safeguarding investigators.

Providing the certified child safeguarding investigators with relevant trainings and further capacity building is important to ensure that they are able to lead difficult and/or challenging investigations. The Child Care and Safeguarding Team organised an initial training in 2015 and a more advanced training that covered how to conduct investigative interviews in 2017. In April 2018, a training on taking statements and writing investigation reports was provided by a Keeping Children Safe trainer. An interactive learning approach was followed where participants, working with mock statements and other materials, had to write investigation reports and explain their findings and conclusions, and how they reached them. The group also worked on a "How-to" guide on frequently asked questions for child safeguarding investigators, drawing on their experiences of past investigations and lessons learned.

### **MANAGING CHILD SAFEGUARDING INCIDENTS – LEARNINGS FROM KEEPING CHILDREN SAFE LEVEL 1 CERTIFICATION AND THE PILOT REPORT OF THE INDEPENDENT CHILD SAFEGUARDING REVIEW**

1. Staff members' understanding of their specific responsibilities towards child safeguarding is variable, and sometimes unclear. This leads to challenges in ensuring that reporting and responding procedures are implemented and complied to.
2. Child safeguarding responsibilities are not included in the job descriptions of all managers at GSC and in member associations, or in the global HR policy.
3. SOS Children's Villages works in some countries where societal norms or aspects of the organisational culture do not encourage co-workers speaking out. This may lead to situations where reporting child safeguarding concerns is perceived as 'telling on colleagues' and may mean that cases are not being reported as they should be.
4. A fear of speaking out and reporting child safeguarding concerns may be aggravated when there is a strict hierarchy between (predominantly female) care co-workers and (predominantly male) managers.
5. Complaints mechanisms have been developed locally. It is not clear, however, to what extent children and parents have been consulted on the development of these mechanisms.
6. Some member associations require support in engaging appropriately and constructively with local child protection systems to report child safeguarding incidents and work together to effectively manage them.
7. SOS Children's Villages must strengthen its approach to child safeguarding in partnerships. Partners with little or no safeguards in place need to be brought up to a certain standard without expending huge amounts of resources. This includes ensuring that partners have adequate reporting and responding mechanisms in place and extending trainings to them.
8. The reporting and responding procedures must cover *all* incidents that arise within SOS Children's Villages operations, not only incidents perpetrated by staff.
9. SOS Children's Villages is recognised for the child safeguarding training opportunities developed at the International Office, the significant uptake and the plans to expand the trainings. This includes e-learning and learning opportunities for staff with specialist child safeguarding responsibilities. However, not all member associations have followed suit.
10. The GSC must continue to strengthen the capacities of internal certified child safeguarding investigators through specialised training. Investigations must cover the full scope of abuse, such as the number of victims, period of time in which the abuse occurred, an analysis of factors that contributed to failures and an assessment of accountability and responsibility on different organisational levels. It must also address how to restore the wellbeing of victims.

## 6 Child safeguarding monitoring and learning

SOS Children's Villages can only ensure the reliability and effectiveness of its reporting and responding procedures and our overall child safeguarding work if it is subjected to internal and external monitoring, audits and reviews on a regular basis, and the outcomes of these processes are used to learn, take corrective action when necessary and thus strengthen our child safeguarding work overall. The SOS Care Promise highlights this necessity.

*We regularly perform internal and external child safeguarding audits, in line with accepted international standards.<sup>16</sup>*

Four processes and tools that are used to measure and improve the quality of SOS Children's Villages child safeguarding work are described below, together with some of their most important outcomes of 2017/2018.

### 6.1 Child safeguarding incident register

The child safeguarding incident register is an important tool to record reported child safeguarding incidents, monitor progress in responding to them and demonstrate how the organisation responded within the frame of national legislation and internal procedures. On a national level, the child safeguarding incident register records and monitors progress on all incidents that are reported in the member association. On a General Secretariat level, the child safeguarding incident register records and monitors progress on all incidents that are directly reported to the International Office or regional offices and on those that are escalated to the General Secretariat, enabling more accurate and timely reporting to the regional directors and COO. Following due process and record keeping on reporting and responding to child safeguarding incidents is also important as it protects staff working in this area. It is not always possible to resolve child safeguarding incidents amicably. For example, there may be a reporter, an alleged perpetrator, witness or victim who is aggrieved with the investigation outcomes. This may lead to a situation where aggrieved parties question the process or the motives of the child safeguarding focal persons and/or line managers. For this reason it is essential to keep thorough records of complaints, investigation outcomes and the organisational response to it.

Introduced in the General Secretariat in 2015 and in member associations in 2016, the child safeguarding incident register is now fully implemented in the General Secretariat. There has been a substantial rollout in member associations in the last two years. Ninety-three member associations report to have a functional child safeguarding incident register in place in 2017.<sup>17</sup> Given the importance of the child safeguarding incident register as a mechanism to ensure quality and compliance of our child safeguarding work, it is important to audit its implementation throughout the federation. This ensures that the child safeguarding incident registers are up to date and contain all required information, that follow up actions are taken, such as reporting to authorities, investigation reports or action plans, and that incidents were closed according to requirements.

### 6.2 Child safeguarding annual survey 2017

Carried out for the first time in 2009, the annual child safeguarding survey is conducted to monitor the compliance of member associations to the SOS Child Protection Policy, related procedures and the International Child Safeguarding Standards. It covers the following areas:

Putting the policy into practice	Organising staff	Planning	Implementing	Monitoring and review
A safe environment is created for children and young people in SOS programmes.	Capacity building is done, roles and responsibilities of co-workers are clear for child safeguarding.	Local mapping and risk assessments are done, child safeguarding measures planned.	Resources are available for child safeguarding activities, and reporting and responding procedures.	Learning and monitoring is done of day-to-day child safeguarding work and incidents, and

<sup>16</sup> SOS Care Promise (2018), p.16

<sup>17</sup> The further rollout will continue in 2019, especially in member associations without domestic programmes.

				oversight ensured.
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Based on the lessons learned collected from the 2016 child safeguarding annual survey and a consultation with a selection of member associations, the 2017 survey questionnaire was adapted to better reflect the national context.

Nearly all member associations completed the 2017 child safeguarding survey. Some Promoting and Supporting Associations (our fundraising associations in Europe and North America) without domestic operations answered a questionnaire which excluded questions relating the programme level. 122 member associations answered the full survey; this is three more than in 2016. Member associations and organisations affiliated to SOS Children's Villages that have not completed the survey are Australia, China, France<sup>18</sup>, France-Alsace, French Polynesia, Japan, Luxembourg Monde, Madagascar, Shreyas Balgram, South Korea, Taiwan, Tibetan Children's Villages and Tibetan Homes Foundation, and Aide à l'Enfance du Vietnam.

Compared to the 2016 survey results, the 2017 results show that member associations made progress in implementing the Child Protection Policy and complying with the International Child Safeguarding Standards in almost all survey categories. Some of the most important achievements and challenges are described in the respective sections throughout this report.

### 6.3 Keeping Children Safe Level 1 certification

In 2017, SOS Children's Villages took further and bolder steps to ensure our child safeguarding work is at the required level. We underwent and in September 2017 successfully achieved Level 1 certification by Keeping Children Safe, a leading expert organisation in the child safeguarding area. The certification process is an audit to measure compliance to the International Child Safeguarding Standards.

SOS Children's Villages International is a member of the Keeping Children Safe coalition and as such, is committed to going through an external audit of its child safeguarding practises. The certification takes place at two levels:

- Level 1: Self-assessment complemented with a policy framework review and virtual interviews with 30 percent of member associations and General Secretariat offices.
- Level 2: On-site audit conducted by independent child safeguarding auditors nominated by Keeping Children Safe. The auditors travel to 30 percent of member associations and General Secretariat offices (different sample than in Level 1).

As part of the Level 1 certification, 37 member associations and two General Secretariat offices were interviewed. In achieving Level 1 certification, Keeping Children Safe confirmed that SOS Children's Villages has a robust and reliable child safeguarding system in place. The minimum compliance level to each standard, required to achieve Level 1 is 70 percent. SOS Children's Villages achieved a compliance score of 72 percent. We are committed to improving this, and the number of recommendations put forward by Keeping Children Safe to strengthen the existing child safeguarding system will be useful to guide our improvements.

There are more criteria that SOS Children's Villages needs to comply with for Level 2. The main challenges lie in standards 2 'Organising staff' and 3 'Planning and implementing – putting child safeguarding into practise'. They are reflected in the learnings from Level 1 Certification that can be found inserted throughout this report.

To prepare for Level 2 Certification, member associations require focussed support from the General Secretariat to address certain learning areas. Based on the required preparation and feasibility of achieving Level 2 Certification, the start for Level 2 Certification will be planned for mid-2020.

### 6.4 Independent Child Safeguarding Review

In October 2016, the SOS Children's Villages' International Senate established the Independent Child Safeguarding Review (ICSR) in order to review a number of historical child safeguarding cases and to ensure that our child safeguarding practices today are robust and efficient, and in line with best practice. The ICSR focuses on understanding historical cases and the circumstances that contributed to the occurrence of child abuse, so that the organisation can reduce risks in programmes today and strengthen our child safeguarding work. The review not only considers what SOS Children's Villages

<sup>18</sup> France only provided answers to the survey section relating to child safeguarding incidents.

has already achieved, but also identifies challenges that the organisation still needs to address to protect children from harm. To ensure an objective and high quality review that can stand independent scrutiny, the child safeguarding organisation Keeping Children Safe was commissioned to independently conduct the review.

The objectives of the ICSR are to:

- 1) Provide insight into past and current child safeguarding practices of SOS Children's Villages International and its federation of member associations by looking into historical child safeguarding cases in four different countries.
- 2) Identify and promote the lessons learned from historical and current child safeguarding practices to implement child safeguarding efficiently throughout the federation of SOS Children's Villages International.
- 3) Support all member associations to strengthen their ability to respond to historical abuse allegations and effectively safeguard children in their care today.

Following approval of the project by the International Senate in March 2017, the pilot review took place between March and December 2017. The pilot report confirms organisational failures of SOS Children's Villages across different levels and units of the federation. It offers an independent assessment of potential reasons behind the failures based on information available today and with the benefit of hindsight. The review has enabled the federation to achieve vital organisational learning and has allowed the General Secretariat to plan actions, some of which are already in development, to strengthen our child safeguarding work across the federation. Some of the learnings from the review are included elsewhere in this report.

Following completion of the ICSR pilot review, the International Senate took the decision to continue the ICSR in the following set up:

- Keeping Children Safe remains our partner to independently carry out the review.
- A new and detailed research framework will help ensure more targeted and timely results.
- Stronger focus on learning -- each review to include a research portion and learning workshop.
- More open internal communication on broad lessons learned.

## 7 Child safeguarding incident analysis

A child safeguarding incident is defined as a situation when an SOS co-worker breaches the Child Protection Policy and/or Code of Conduct.<sup>19</sup> A child safeguarding incident may involve multiple perpetrators and/or multiple victims.

A child safeguarding incident is considered to be a **critical incident** if any of the following criteria is met:

1. The incident is a criminal act according to national law. It is reported to the relevant authority, such as police, court and/or child welfare authority.
2. Disciplinary action was taken by SOS Children's Villages against the perpetrator. This includes issuing a warning letter or dismissal.

It is important to note that the majority of reported and confirmed incidents are non critical. Such incidents are best illustrated with the following example:

- An SOS mother and teenager argue about house rules over dinner in the SOS family. In the process, the SOS mother loses her temper. She shouts at the teenager and aggressively tries to remove the teenagers headphones, accidentally scratching the teenager's neck. During the assessment it is established that a healthy bond exists between the SOS mother and child. The mother acknowledges that she overreacted and the teenager agrees that he has broken a standing house rule. Both agree to work on their relationship and how they react to mutual disagreements.

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<sup>19</sup> An incident is considered as an internal Child Safeguarding incident if any of the following criteria are met: 1) A child in direct SOS care is involved in a reported child safeguarding incident either as victim or perpetrator or; 2) An SOS employee or associate is involved in a reported child safeguarding incident as a perpetrator;

As this child safeguarding incident happens in an alternative care setting, it is required that it is reported and that it informs prevention interventions to avoid it escalating into critical situations that do have a detrimental impact on children's wellbeing and development.

Disaggregated by regions, the rate of child safeguarding incidents that were confirmed to be classified as "critical" ranged between 20 and 40 percent in all regions, with the exception of Asia, in which only 4.6 percent of the confirmed child safeguarding incidents in the region were registered as critical.

As table 1 illustrates, disaggregating the total number of critical child safeguarding incidents involving SOS staff as perpetrators by programme setting shows that the majority of reported and confirmed child safeguarding incidents in 2017 occurred in SOS families. The low numbers reported in family strengthening, education, health and emergency must be analysed further to determine whether this is due to underreporting, or due to other reasons.

**Table 1: Number of SOS co-workers involved in confirmed critical child safeguarding incidents according to the programme setting**

Programme setting	No. of perpetrators	% of total
SOS families	255	91%
Youth programmes	5	2%
Family strengthening	7	3%
Education	11	4%
Health	1	<1%
Emergency	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>279</b>	<b>100%</b>

When looking at the number of confirmed incidents in SOS families in table 1, it is important to keep the following in mind. SOS families are a family-like alternative care setting where children are cared for 24 hours per day, seven days a week. Whilst this situation increases the safeguarding risk profile, it also enables care professionals to identify, report, respond and monitor child safeguarding concerns and enables them to focus on prevention and to minimise harm. A higher number of child safeguarding incidents in SOS families therefore does not necessarily reflect on the quality of care offered in SOS families.

Furthermore, please note that the number of incidents reported for family strengthening in 2017 in table 1 refer to those confirmed child safeguarding incidents where SOS Children's Villages staff members are the perpetrators, and children who are not in direct care of SOS Children's Villages but are supported through family strengthening programmes are the victims.

During 2017, a total of 279 critical staff-to-child abuse incidents were reported, as table 2 illustrates. A critical child safeguarding incident involving a staff member requires that it was reported to the authorities and/or disciplinary action was taken. Almost half were incidents of physical abuse, which mostly involved acts of corporal punishment by SOS parents and aunts. The next largest group are incidents of neglect and negligent treatment, which mostly involved acts of failing to provide adequate supervision, nutrition, clothing or meeting a child's education and safety needs, followed by emotional abuse, which mostly involved behaviour, speech and actions that had a negative impact on a child's emotional state and development. Sexual coercion and abuse by SOS co-workers accounted for eight percent, or 21 incidents, reported and confirmed in 2017. (This number was reported in the 2017 SOS Children's Villages International Annual Report.) Finally, there were two critical incidents where a child's privacy was violated.

**Table 2: Number of staff perpetrators in confirmed critical child safeguarding incidents**

Type of abuse	No. of perpetrators	% of total
Physical abuse	135	48%
Neglect & negligent treatment	70	25%
Emotional abuse	51	18%
Sexual coercion and abuse	21	8%
Violation of privacy	2	<1%
<b>Total</b>	<b>279</b>	<b>100%</b>

Table 3 illustrates that out of the 279 confirmed critical child safeguarding incidents perpetrated by SOS co-workers, 74 percent of the incidents involved SOS parents and aunts (206), i.e. co-workers providing direct care to children and young people in SOS Children's Villages' programmes. The most common form of abuse committed by SOS parents was physical abuse (49 percent or 101 perpetrators) followed by neglect and negligent treatment (26 percent or 53 perpetrators), emotional abuse (22 percent or 45 perpetrators) and sexual coercion and abuse (3 percent or 6 perpetrators).

The category of other SOS co-workers includes administrative staff, maintenance staff and other support functions but also co-workers at SOS schools and medical centres. In 2017, these co-workers were involved in 73 confirmed critical child safeguarding incidents. In comparison with SOS parents, we can see a significantly higher ratio of incidents of sexual coercion and abuse (that type of abuse representing 20% of all critical cases involving 'other' SOS co-workers). This will require further attention and follow up in future.

**Table 3: Number of staff perpetrators in confirmed critical child safeguarding incidents per type of staff**

Type of abuse	No. of perpetrators	
	SOS parents, aunts	Other SOS co-workers
Physical abuse	101	34
Neglect & negligent treatment	53	17
Emotional abuse	45	6
Sexual coercion and abuse	6	15
Violation of privacy	1	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>206</b>	<b>73</b>

## 7.1 Sexual coercion and abuse involving staff as perpetrators

During 2017, 21 SOS staff globally were reported and confirmed as perpetrators of child sexual coercion and abuse. 42 children were confirmed as victims in these incidents. As a direct consequence, 17 staff members were dismissed. One staff member was on suspension pending the outcome of a legal process which will then lead to a dismissal. One staff member resigned before action to dismiss could be initiated. Two staff members were no longer working for the organisation once the allegations were reported.

Fourteen of the allegations were defined as criminal acts in the respective countries. Thirteen of those were reported to police or prosecuting authorities. In one incident the family of origin, who had guardianship of the child, refused to report the incident to the police. Table 4 further breaks down the type of sexual coercion and abuse incidents involving staff perpetrators that were reported in 2017.

**Table 4: The number of staff perpetrators and the number of child victims according to the type of sexual coercion and abuse**

Type of sexual coercion and abuse incidents	No. staff perpetrators	No. child victims
Indecent exposure	n/a	n/a
Recording of inappropriate and/or sexually degrading imagery of children / young people	2	6
Exposing children/youth to pornography	1	1
Attempted rape	n / a	n / a
Rape	n / a	n / a
Harassment / inappropriate touching	13	28
Child/Young person manipulated and/or coerced into sexual acts <sup>20</sup>	5	7
<b>Total</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>42</b>

<sup>20</sup> Incidents where a staff member exerts his or her power to coerce or manipulate a young person into sexual acts. This particularly applies to incidents where the victim has reached the age of consent.

It must be noted that – as is the case with corruption and child safeguarding incidents in any organisation, country or context – there is a risk of underreporting. Underreporting is a real problem in terms of sexual exploitation and abuse, as a result of various interlocking barriers ranging from victims' dependence on the abuser to fear of stigma and the social consequences should the abuse become known.<sup>21</sup>

The child safeguarding scandal in the aid and development sector in early 2018 increased the awareness of the need to cast the safeguarding net more widely to include vulnerable women in communities and the workplace. This is currently a gap also in SOS Children's Villages. Reports centred on the unbalanced power relations between aid workers and vulnerable population groups, and furthermore between male employees in higher positions, and female employees in lower positions, and employees in Western headquarters and in other offices around the world. As such, there is a strong push for organisations to develop clear guidelines on how such power imbalances can be prevented, identified and penalized in the aid sector. Power imbalances certainly played a role in the 21 incidents of sexual coercion and abuse where children and young people were targeted.

Some important learnings can be drawn from the 21 incidents:

- 1) Staff who work directly with children were the perpetrators in eleven incidents.
- 2) Staff who work in non-care services were the perpetrators in ten incidents. They held maintenance, gardener, security guard or driver positions.
- 3) Men were the perpetrators in 16 incidents (ten non-care staff, four care staff, one programme coordinator and one teacher), and women were the perpetrators in five incidents (three SOS Mothers, one SOS Aunt and one Youth Care co-worker).

There is a need to widen the safeguarding net within SOS Children's Villages to include incidents of exploitation and abuse of adult beneficiaries within the communities we work in and staff. SOS mothers are particularly vulnerable to power imbalances.

## 8 Key recommendations

Based on the practical experiences, learnings and data as described in this report the following recommendations are made. They align with the lessons learned from the Independent Child Safeguarding Review pilot report, and provide more detail on how to implement a child safeguarding risk management approach, strengthen the care and child safeguarding networks as well as internal child safeguarding investigations, and outline the required preparation to achieve Keeping Children Safe Level 2 Certification. A new recommendation addresses the need to expand reporting and responding procedures to include incidents perpetrated by staff against adult beneficiaries and staff.

- 1) Strengthen the child safeguarding risk management approach within the SOS Children's Villages federation and across all functions. This includes:
  - Strengthen prevention, child safeguarding procedures, governance, oversight and compliance in ten member associations with a high child safeguarding risk profile.
  - Integrate child safeguarding risk management across all organisational functions including human resources, fund development, communications, and information and communication technology.
- 2) Invest in a systematic child safeguarding capacity building process for National Directors, senior regional office staff, International Directors of function areas within the International Office, and the MT, with a focus on responsibilities and accountability. This includes incorporating child safeguarding responsibilities into their job descriptions.
- 3) Build on the existing safeguarding procedures and approach to include the incidents affecting adult beneficiaries in the communities we work in, as well as staff. SOS mothers are particularly vulnerable to power imbalances.
- 4) Continue to invest, through the regional care networks, in targeted prevention measures aimed at children, young people and care professionals. Such measures include capacity building that enables them to recognise abuse as well as equip them with the knowledge, skills and attitudes to prevent abuse or risky situations.
- 5) Continue to strengthen internal child safeguarding monitoring and learning. This should be operationalised by conducting internal child safeguarding audits and preparing and assessing the

<sup>21</sup> International Development Committee. 2018. [Sexual abuse and exploitation in the aid sector](#), p. 33

feasibility of the external Level 2 Certification by Keeping Children Safe. It includes securing regional child safeguarding operational budgets for regional child safeguarding network meetings, capacity building of member association child safeguarding focal persons and in-country visits.

- 6) Continue to strengthen and improve the skills of the pool of trained child safeguarding investigators (both from member associations and the General Secretariat) to be well-trained in conducting child safeguarding investigations and available to lead challenging investigations and/or investigations commissioned by the General Secretariat.

## 9 Glossary

**CEO** – Chief Executive Officer

**COO** – Chief Operating Officer

**General Secretariat** – Also referred to as SOS Children’s Villages International, this is the international body that is responsible for implementing strategic decisions taken by the SOS Children’s Villages General Assembly and the International Senate, developing and monitoring federation quality standards, and representing the federation in international communications and forums. It consists of the International Office (based in Austria) and six regional offices.

**Member Association** – An autonomous unit of the SOS Children’s Villages federation operating on a national level.

**Management Council** – The Management Council defines the global targets of SOS Children’s Villages, approves work plans developed by the Management Team, and makes recommendations to the International Senate.

**Reporter** – Any individual who reports a child safeguarding concern through any channel.

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