

SOS CHILDRENS VILLAGE



Manual for the
SOS Children's Village Organisation



SOS-KINDERDORF
International

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Approved by the Secretary General and the President

Developed in consultation with National Associations,
the General Secretariat
and the Hermann Gmeiner Academy

Who we are

Our Roots

What we are

We take action for children as an independent non-governmental social development organisation.

We respect varying religions and cultures.

We work in the spirit of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.

With the SOS Children's Village concept, our organisation pioneered a family approach to the long-term care of orphaned and abandoned children.

Our Vision

What we want for the world's children

Every child belongs to a family and grows with love, respect and security.

Our Mission

What we do

We build families for children in need, we help them shape their own futures and we share in the development of their communities.

Our Values

What keeps us strong

Courage: We take action

Commitment: We keep our promises

Trust: We believe in each other

Accountability: We are reliable partners

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Preface

Hermann Gmeiner's idea was clear and simple and he challenged us to put it into practice around the world. For over fifty years we have spread his idea, considering different cultures, different religions and different ways of life. We have found ways to blend our enduring and universal four principles with the social and economic realities of each country. When planted with care and commitment, our SOS family child-care model is the most appropriate and beautiful response for children who have been left to live alone in the world.

Over the past four decades I have experienced our many successes, I have seen some things we must improve and I have met thousands of co-workers and friends who tirelessly commit their energies, hearts and minds to our work. The words of this manual build on this experience. With our organisation's rapid growth has come the need for certain guidelines to be worked out and clearly stated as the minimum standards of our work. The ten standards in this manual unite the good practices, experience and thoughts of co-workers from around the world. Written words are not enough, they must be lived with joy and humanity as we continuously seek to enhance our care for children.

In our daily work we must challenge our children to reach their potential. We must never treat them as charity objects or seek to plant European ideals outside of Europe. Young adults who have left our villages often tell me that their SOS mother and other co-workers were caring, but sometimes not strict enough in pushing them to face the hardships and realities of the community at an early age. Our children must learn to stand on their own feet in their society. To achieve this we should not overprotect or shower each child with overwhelming love and material comfort. We must try to support each child, never giving up, but within limits and with each society's realities in our hearts and minds. Sometimes giving a little less can help the child to learn better and live as an integral member of their community.

It is my clear conviction that we can find women in every country who possess the passion, strength and commitment to take on the role of the SOS mother. Finding these women and opening this opportunity to them can be the most beautiful, but also the most difficult part of our work. I have seen that thousands of women can very successfully fulfil their personal and professional goals within SOS Children's Villages. The hardest part of our work is accomplished if we find the right women who truly want to live with, accept and give their love to children.

From my experience, a village director is a person who dedicates his energy to the development of each SOS family in the village. He takes great pride in each family's achievements and helps them to live a simple, well-structured and joy-filled life. He often starts his work with the village's planning and construction, influencing its rooting in the community. He selects the SOS mothers, knows where they come from and learns how to individually support each woman in raising her SOS family. He has brought each child into an SOS family, often in his own arms, and understands the reality from where they come. We give the village director room

to leave his mark on the village and experience its successes and failures. We give him the respect and support needed to become a confident leader. Through compassion, fairness and clear decision-making he gains the confidence of the SOS families, co-workers and community leaders. I am thankful to have met many village directors who live this vision.

Professionalism has entered our work for good reason. Through experience we learn how to best adapt and improve our SOS family child-care model according to the needs and requirements of each country and community. I support a human kind of professionalism where our hearts and minds are directed towards the best interests of the child. We should never lose sight of the human quality of our work and become overly fascinated with technology and administrative perfection. The key to the success of an SOS Children's Village is for the community of adults to work together and not against each other. Caring, sharing and celebrating together builds the bonds and human relationships that children and youth need to heal, learn and lead successful lives.

People working in SOS Children's Villages are first and foremost human beings. We give of ourselves and contribute to the care of children, knowing that the more we give to others the more we will receive. To see a child who was abandoned in the street, grow healthy, go to school, find a job and start his or her own family gives so much happiness to the SOS mother and the others who joined hands to guide the child. Together we create an environment where love can truly grow.

The purpose of this manual is to make it easier for us to share a common understanding of our SOS Children's Village work. This manual also expresses a commitment to our four founding principles. Our experience has shown us that they are as relevant today as in 1949 when they were first implemented in the SOS Children's Village Imst by our founder Hermann Gmeiner. I ask each one of us to bring together the best of their human qualities and professional skills to ensure that our SOS Children's Villages remain a beautiful and vital sign of hope and peace. Together we can ensure that future generations of children don't grow up alone, but find a mother, brothers and sisters and the security and love of a family.



Helmut Kutin
President of SOS-Kinderdorf International

Overview of SOS Children's Village Policy

Introduction

This international SOS Children's Village manual provides a general policy frame for the care of children within an SOS Children's Village. It is built on the many years of experience of village co-workers from around the world and embodies accepted good practices in the field of international child care.

The policy contained in this manual gives the village director and his team of co-workers a direction in which to focus their efforts in the years ahead. It provides national associations with a policy frame for the operation of their SOS Children's Villages. Within the structure of principles, standards and guidelines, co-workers can make their own decisions and take action at a local level and in accordance with their own cultural norms.

This manual is open to all co-workers, donors and external partners who are interested in learning more about SOS Children's Villages. By sharing this information, we can face the challenges of our work with confidence, and we can, with commitment and understanding, continue to improve our care provided to children.

The SOS Children's Village organisation works in accordance with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. You can find a summary of the convention as an appendix to this manual.

Principles	These form a general philosophical framework that defines how the co-workers of the organisation approach their work.
Standards	These are clear statements about the required level of quality. They are a structure and direction for our work.
Responsibilities	These are the tasks, duties and defined areas of authority for all co-workers and decision-making bodies.
Guidelines	These explain what must be done to implement each standard.
'How To'	Explanations on how the principles, standards and guidelines can be implemented.

Note on gender

- *In order to respect gender equality, in this document the terms 'they, them, their' will be used rather than 'she/he, her/him, her/his', except where the meaning specifically requires the singular pronouns.*
- *The exception to this is with reference to the village director. As there is only one village director in each village, the use of the plural pronoun is uncomfortable, and so the singular is used. The village director may be female or male but most are male, and so, in this document, for the sake of easy reading, the village director is referred to by the male pronoun only.*

*“ . . . in my opinion,
nothing in the world is more important
than to care for a child.”*

Hermann Gmeiner

SOS Children's Village Purpose and Principles

Our Roots: The first SOS Children's Village was founded by Hermann Gmeiner in 1949 in Imst, Austria. He was committed to helping children in need – children who had lost their homes, their security and their families as a result of the Second World War. With the support of many donors and co-workers, our organisation has grown to help children all over the world.

Purpose of an SOS Children's Village: We build families for children in need and we help them shape their own futures. We give children the opportunity to build lasting relationships within a family, we enable them to live according to their own culture and religion, and we help them to recognise and express their individual abilities, interests and talents. We ensure that children receive the education and skills training they need to be successful and contributing members of society.

The long-term family-based care of the SOS Children's Village is rooted in four principles:

► **The Mother: Each child has a caring parent**

The SOS mother builds a close relationship with every child entrusted to her care, and provides the security, love and stability that each child needs. As a child-care professional, she lives together with the children, guides their development, and runs her household independently. She recognises and respects each child's family background, cultural roots and religion.

► **Brothers and Sisters: Family ties grow naturally**

Girls and boys of different ages live together as brothers and sisters, with natural brothers and sisters always staying within the same SOS family. These children and their SOS mother build emotional ties that last a lifetime.

► **The House: Each family creates its own home**

The house is the family's home, with its own unique feeling, rhythm and routine. Under its roof, children enjoy a real sense of security and belonging. Children grow and learn together, sharing responsibilities and all the joys and sorrows of daily life.

► **The Village: The SOS family is part of the community**

SOS families live together, forming a supportive village environment where children enjoy a happy childhood. The families share experiences and offer one another a helping hand. They also live as integrated and contributing members of the local community. Through his or her family, village and community, each child learns to participate actively in society.

SOS Children's Village Standards

1 The SOS family child-care model provides a frame for our work

Children are given the opportunity to grow up in a caring and secure family environment and form lasting relationships. An SOS mother builds a loving family where children learn values and share responsibilities. She leads the family according to professional child-care standards and receives the required support from the village director and other co-workers, to ensure that the children's needs are met and their rights respected.

2 The SOS mother leads the SOS family

The SOS mother shares her life with the children, offering them emotional security and the opportunity to develop new and lasting relationships within her family where love can grow. At the same time, the SOS mother is a child-care professional who co-operates with the other village co-workers in meeting the needs of the children.

3 Children find a home in an SOS family that best meets their needs

Only those children whose needs are best met by an SOS family are considered for admission to an SOS Children's Village. The child-admission process ensures a careful assessment of each child before they join an SOS family.

4 The child's development is actively supported

Each child is offered individual development opportunities tailored to their needs and potential. The SOS mother guides the development of the children in her SOS family. Other SOS Children's Village co-workers support her by providing services and organised activities that are not available in the community. All co-workers respect and promote the rights of each child.

5 Youth programmes offer self-development opportunities

Youth programmes offer learning and growth opportunities and are a part of each SOS Children's Village. Young people develop the attitudes, behaviour, confidence and skills needed to take responsibility for building their own futures and to become successful and contributing members of society.

SOS Children's Village Standards

6 Each SOS family lives as part of the community

Each SOS family lives as an integral part of the community and shares in community life. The child establishes relationships, learns important skills and develops the confidence to be an active and contributing member of society.

7 Funds and property are used responsibly

Administrative systems are structured to ensure accountability, while building a sense of responsibility in each SOS family and among all co-workers. The consistent application of these effective administrative systems promotes the responsible use of funds and property.

8 Planning and evaluation ensure a quality child-care environment

The quality of child-care is continually improved through evaluation and planning. Plans provide a clear framework for action, identifying priorities and enabling co-workers to approach their work in a confident and co-ordinated manner.

9 Each co-worker's learning and growth are supported

A culture that promotes sharing, learning, growth and creativity among all co-workers is nurtured. Individual training needs are assessed and the long-term growth of each co-worker is encouraged. Well-structured human resource practices help to build skills and lead to a greater sense of responsibility and commitment.

10 The village director leads the SOS Children's Village

The village director leads the overall development of the SOS Children's Village by promoting the organisation's values, setting objectives with his team, and ensuring that support services are offered to the SOS families. He guides all co-workers and plays a central role in guiding and promoting the professional development of the SOS mothers.

SOS Children's Village Responsibilities

Child and Youth Care Co-workers

Child and youth care co-workers live with the children and youth entrusted to their care and are responsible for guiding their individual development.

SOS Mother

The SOS mother is the leader of the SOS family and is responsible for the care and development of each child entrusted to her. She reports to the village director. He supports her, and they work together in a spirit of openness and trust. SOS mothers work together, supporting and helping each other. They elect one SOS mother to act as their representative within the organisation.

Key responsibilities:

- ▶ Create a home
- ▶ Lead her SOS family
- ▶ Ensure the well-being of children through parenting
- ▶ Develop her own well-being
- ▶ Perform household work
- ▶ Guide children to take responsibility
- ▶ Interact with and contribute to the community

Youth Leader (or Youth Care Co-worker)

The youth leader is responsible for supporting the development of youth and guiding them towards independence. Youth leaders report to the village director unless one of them is appointed as the overall co-ordinator for youth programmes. They normally live in or close to the youth home and ensure that youth are appropriately guided and assisted at all times.

Key responsibilities:

- ▶ Guide the personal development of youth living in the youth home
- ▶ Create opportunities for contacts with family and community
- ▶ Guide the educational and career development of youth
- ▶ Support the SOS mothers with the youth in their SOS family homes

SOS Children's Village Responsibilities

Supporting Co-workers

The role of the supporting co-workers is to strengthen the SOS families. They support the SOS mothers by giving them help when needed and offering development opportunities for their children. They act as positive role models for children, even though they do not have overall responsibility for the care and development of the children.

SOS Aunts and SOS Family Assistants

The SOS aunts and family assistants provide many kinds of general support to SOS mothers within an agreed framework. SOS aunts live in the village, while family assistants live outside the village.

Key responsibilities:

- ▶ Support and relieve SOS mothers and provide direct care to children
- ▶ Assist SOS mothers with child development activities
- ▶ Act as another role model for the children

Child Development Co-workers

Child development co-workers are responsible for providing opportunities and programmes that support each SOS mother in promoting their children's development. The child development co-workers may include educators, psychologists and social workers.

Key responsibilities:

- ▶ Co-operate with SOS mothers on child development planning, and prioritise resources to implement those plans
- ▶ Ensure that SOS families receive support, such as remedial, special needs and educational programmes
- ▶ Support the child-admission process by collecting information about the child's background and present situation, by undertaking any legal formalities, and by working with the child's biological family

SOS Children's Village Responsibilities

Administrative and Maintenance Co-workers

The administrative co-workers are responsible for maintaining a simple administrative system in the village. The purpose of this system is to build financial responsibility within each SOS family. The administrative co-workers may include such positions as administrator, bookkeeper and secretary. The maintenance co-workers ensure the upkeep of the village buildings, vehicles and grounds. The maintenance co-workers include such positions as handyman, driver, gardener and cleaner.

Key responsibilities:

- ▶ Provide support to SOS mothers in administrative matters
- ▶ Ensure that the village's administrative system is maintained. This encompasses the funds; village information and data; property, grounds, buildings, vehicles, and equipment
- ▶ Ensure that proper files are kept for all children and co-workers

Village Director

The village director is accountable for the overall development of the children within the SOS families, and supports each SOS mother directly. He is also accountable for the effective management of the village, including finances and human resources. He reports to the national director, and is fully supported by the national office in developing plans and activities which lead to the advancement of the village and its SOS families.

Key responsibilities:

- ▶ Lead the overall development of the village and its families
- ▶ Guide and support the SOS mothers
- ▶ Ensure that support services are provided for SOS families
- ▶ Hold meetings with all SOS mothers at least once a month
- ▶ Participate in children's activities in the village and community
- ▶ Lead the administration of the village
- ▶ Encourage and assist the SOS families to be part of the community
- ▶ Lead the village committee
- ▶ Participate in village director training programmes on an ongoing basis
- ▶ Contribute to the development of the national association

SOS Children's Village Responsibilities

Village Supporting Committees

Village Committee

In leading and co-ordinating village activities, the village director is supported by a village committee. This committee includes the SOS mother representative; a youth leader or their co-ordinator; a senior child development co-worker; and a senior administrative co-worker. It consists of five or six people and meets at least once a month to co-ordinate and discuss village matters.

Key responsibilities:

- ▶ Exchange information and expertise
- ▶ Share and discuss concerns regarding village activities
- ▶ Make recommendations and set priorities
- ▶ Develop village annual plans and evaluate their implementation

Child Admission Committee

The child admission committee is responsible for the process of admitting children, ensuring that only children whose needs are best met in an SOS family are admitted. The committee is led by the village director, and normally includes child development co-workers, and, ideally, the referring social worker. The village director may also consult the SOS mother representative. SOS mothers being considered for a child are given detailed information about the child's background and can then confirm whether they are ready to accept the child.

Key responsibilities:

- ▶ Review applications for admissions into the village, ensuring that the child-admission criteria are met and the process is strictly followed
- ▶ Assess, in close consultation with the relevant SOS mothers, which SOS family is most appropriate for the child
- ▶ Ensure that all necessary documents are obtained and that legal requirements are met
- ▶ Keep the required documentation of the admission process

SOS Children's Village Responsibilities

The National Association

The National Director

Key responsibilities:

- ▶ Act as the executive director of the national association and the direct superior of each village director
- ▶ Create opportunities for the village director to contribute to the development of national policies, plans and priorities
- ▶ Share information on national plans and priorities with the village director, especially about those that directly affect the village. Assist the village director in making sure that the village's annual plan is consistent with those plans and priorities
- ▶ Make sure that specialist services and administrative support are provided to the village by the national office co-workers
- ▶ Maintain an active interest in the village director's development and offer him ongoing advice, guidance and support. Ensure that he regularly receives training opportunities according to his development needs
- ▶ Create opportunities for the exchange of ideas and experience between facilities

The Board

Key responsibilities:

- ▶ Guide the national association's long-term planning, setting a clear direction for the development of SOS Children's Village activities
- ▶ Review and approve the annual budget and plans
- ▶ Confirm employment of the village director, and, where necessary, approve termination of employment

SOS Children's Village Responsibilities

Organisation of Village Responsibilities

The village director, SOS mothers and youth leaders are the key co-workers in an SOS Children's Village. They are supported by SOS aunts and family assistants, the child development co-workers, administrative co-workers, and maintenance co-workers. The table below illustrates how responsibilities in a village can be organised. In particular, it emphasises the strong link between the village director and the SOS mothers and youth leaders.

The village director has two senior co-workers; one with responsibility for the child development area and one with responsibility for the administration area. One of these co-workers acts on behalf of the village director when the village director is on leave.

The village director always maintains a direct reporting relationship with the SOS mothers and youth leaders or their co-ordinator. The leading child development co-worker maintains a direct reporting relationship with the SOS aunts and SOS family assistants.

VILLAGE DIRECTOR	SOS MOTHERS AND YOUTH LEADERS	
	They ensure that the children feel at home in the SOS Children's Village and develop in accordance with their abilities and potential into independent and contributing members of society	
	Leading child development co-worker	SOS AUNTS AND FAMILY ASSISTANTS They support and relieve the SOS mothers
		CHILD DEVELOPMENT CO-WORKERS Educators, social workers, psychologists They support the SOS mothers and youth leaders by providing services to them and development opportunities for the children
Leading administrative co-worker	ADMINISTRATIVE AND MAINTENANCE CO-WORKERS Administrator, bookkeeper, secretary, handyman, driver, gardener and cleaner They are responsible for maintaining simple administrative systems and village property	

**Putting the
SOS Children's Village
Standards
into Practice**

The SOS family child-care model provides a frame for our work

Children are given the opportunity to grow up in a caring and secure family environment and form lasting relationships. An SOS mother builds a loving family within which children learn values and share responsibilities. She leads the family according to professional child-care standards and receives the required support from the village director and other co-workers, to ensure that the children's needs are met and their rights respected.

(Standard)

“The SOS Children’s Villages have made one simple idea the basis of their whole educational work. They have grown from the assumption that no child can live without a family, that the child needs the family in order to develop and unfold his physical, mental (and) spiritual powers.”

- Hermann Gmeiner -

Children who have been deprived of a caring family environment and require long-term care find a permanent home in an SOS family. In this family they are given love, protection, and a place where their needs are provided for. Children grow in families, as brothers and sisters, with each member caring for, listening to and learning from the other.

The SOS family child-care model builds on the four SOS Children’s Village principles, which explain how an SOS Children’s Village and its families are formed and grow together. Within the SOS family they have one stable parent, the SOS mother, who respects and builds on each child’s family background. As the children take steps through their life, whether in the SOS family home, a youth home or as independent adults, they keep ties with their SOS family. This stable and long-term family link is what defines the SOS family child-care model.

Responsibilities

- ▶ **SOS Mother:** The SOS mother is directly responsible for guiding the development of each child entrusted to her care. As leader of her family, she takes responsibility for their day-to-day decisions. The SOS mother involves the children in decision-making according to their level of maturity.
- ▶ **Supporting Co-workers:** All co-workers respect the individual nature of each SOS family and provide support according to their specific needs and requests. Each co-worker is committed to the care of the children, promotes the organisation’s mission and values, and contributes to the overall development of the village.

- ▶ **Village Director:** The village director guides and nurtures the development of strong SOS families, bringing the SOS family child-care model to life.
- ▶ **National Director:** By providing regular guidance and evaluation, the national director ensures that the village director has the necessary orientation, training and resources for the successful implementation of the SOS family child-care model.

Guidelines

- 1 **The SOS family child-care model is for children who need long-term care:** Only those children who require a new home in a permanent family environment are offered a place within an SOS family. Children grow within their SOS family until they are mature enough to lead independent lives, and even then they maintain emotional ties with their SOS mother, brothers and sisters. These ties create a network of close contacts, which can provide care, guidance and support throughout their lives.
- 2 **The SOS mother is responsible for her SOS family:** The SOS mother is responsible for guiding the development of the children within her SOS family, including areas such as health care, education and career guidance. She runs her household independently.
- 3 **The SOS family usually consists of between seven and a maximum of ten children, living as brothers and sisters with an SOS mother in a family house:** This family size ensures that as many children as possible are able to benefit from the care provided by an SOS family. Girls and boys of different ages live together, with natural brothers and sisters always staying in one SOS family. Each national association decides the exact family size within this range.
- 4 **SOS families are grouped together to form a village:** SOS families live close together so that they can share experiences, support each other and enjoy a sense of belonging. A caring and supportive environment is created within the village. This is especially important for children of varying backgrounds who require special support and protection to overcome difficult and often traumatic pasts. New SOS Children's Villages have a maximum of fifteen SOS families, with twelve being the ideal number.
- 5 **The SOS mother respects the roots of the children:** Each child's cultural roots, religion and family background are respected and nurtured by the SOS mother. Personal relations and direct contacts with biological parents and other immediate relatives are maintained on a regular basis, as long as this is in the child's best interests. The SOS mother is supported by a child development co-worker who is responsible for overseeing all administrative and official legal requirements.
- 6 **The SOS mother listens and respects to the views of the children:** Children's views and opinions are considered, and the children are challenged to develop their individual skills and abilities. They are provided with opportunities within their SOS families to participate in decisions which affect their lives, for example, within the child development planning process.

- 7 **Each SOS family is part of the community:** The participation of SOS families in the community is supported and seen as beneficial to the development and integration of the children. If education, health or other services can be found in the community, they should be used, as long as a basic level of quality is ensured. In every aspect, the village and its SOS families strive to be part of the community.
- 8 **SOS families are provided with professional support services within the SOS Children's Village:** Supporting co-workers are committed to providing services to the SOS families, according to the needs of each SOS mother and her children. In particular, child development and youth programmes are an essential part of each village, and are aimed at assisting SOS families to take responsibility for themselves and also to form strong links with the community. In offering supporting services to the SOS mother, co-workers always respect her position as the head of the family, interacting with her in a consultative way. The village director co-ordinates these services and ensures their quality.
- 9 **The SOS family child-care model develops in consideration of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child:** Children's rights are used as an important input for discussion, research, planning, evaluation, and the continuous development of the SOS family child-care model. Within the framework of our model, co-workers protect the child from all forms of neglect, exploitation and abuse.

'How to': Further Explanations of the Guidelines



- 1 **The SOS family child-care model is for children who need long-term care**
 - a) Each national association determines a maximum age limit for youth who live in SOS accommodation or who need financial support. Often youth leave the care of the organisation by 21 years of age, but in some cases continue to receive support for extended education or small business start-ups until 23, or, in exceptional cases, until they are 26.
 - b) When children grow up and move out of the care of their village, reunions are planned and other opportunities are created which enable them to reconnect both formally and informally. A regular follow-up is also made to keep track of their progress, to maintain family links, and to suggest improvements to the SOS family child care model.
- 2 **The SOS mother is responsible for her SOS family**
 - a) The SOS mother is a permanent point of reference for the child and is responsible for guiding the decision-making process while the child is in the family house, or other SOS accommodation.
 - b) Each SOS mother assesses the needs of the children in her family and is responsible for obtaining the additional professional services needed. She is supported in this by the

village director who co-ordinates the involvement of professionals from within the village or beyond it.

- c) Experience and research have shown that for their sound development children need to be able to rely on at least one stable, long-term relationship. If this is assured, there is no significant difference in the quality of care between a long-term family-based care approach that works with couples, single women, or single men. The SOS family child-care model, as defined in its principles by Hermann Gmeiner, is based on the fact that there are many women around the world who are attracted to the role of the SOS mother and the long-term care of children. This concept also gives women the opportunity to develop themselves and their own skills.

3 SOS families are grouped together to form a village

- a) The SOS mothers meet regularly to discuss points of common interest, including child-care experiences, residential issues of living together in the village, ideas to strengthen their families and ways to increase interaction with the community. SOS mothers also form supportive relationships among themselves where they can share personal issues and obtain advice.
- b) Through the SOS families' interactions, a sense of belonging is created, giving them the confidence to be part of the surrounding community. The SOS families support each other to step out of the village and participate in community life.
- c) Village co-workers are active in creating a supportive village environment, finding creative ways to provide the support each SOS family needs. These services can only be effectively provided to a maximum of 15 families, this ensuring that the entire village organisation remains as small and personal as possible.

4 The SOS mother respects the roots of the children

- a) If children have no family contacts and have lost touch with their roots, a child development co-worker will help to find their family members.
- b) The children should be given the essential information concerning the whereabouts of all their known family members, unless having this information would be detrimental to the well-being of the children.
- c) As far as possible, the SOS mother tries to ensure that all her children live in a manner consistent with their culture and religion. This may include promoting their language and arranging opportunities for regular contact with members of their cultural and/or religious grouping. Cultural practices that have a negative impact on a child's health and welfare should not be followed. For example, the genital mutilation of girls is not to be practised.

5 The SOS family child-care model develops in consideration of the United Nations Convention of the Rights of the Child

- a) When information arises regarding physical or mental violence, injury or abuse, neglect, maltreatment or exploitation of a child in an SOS Children's Village, the village director takes immediate steps to protect the child. Each village should develop a clear procedure on how to respond appropriately to these situations.
- b) In each village the Rights of the Child play an important role within the planning and evaluation process. During the annual planning process an evaluation is done to ensure that the village and its co-workers are following the Rights of the Child.

The SOS mother leads the SOS family

Standard

2

The SOS mother shares her life with the children, offering them emotional security and the opportunity to develop new and lasting relationships within her SOS family where love can grow. At the same time, the SOS mother is a child-care professional who co-operates with the other village co-workers in meeting the needs of the children.

(Standard)

“... we must make the profession of an SOS Children’s Village mother attractive in the intellectual as well as spiritual sense. In this way we must create a new, modern women’s profession like the professions of nurse or social worker.”

- Hermann Gmeiner -

At the heart of the SOS family child-care model is the lasting and stable relationship between the SOS mother and the children entrusted to her care. In sharing her life and emotions with the children, the SOS mother builds a loving family where emotional wounds can heal and confidence is built. At the same time, the SOS mother is a child-care professional who is committed to the long-term care of children. She is the head of the SOS family and a caring parent to each of her children.

The SOS Children’s Village organisation is dedicated to building the SOS mother profession in each country. A comprehensive selection process, a high standard of training, and ongoing support are essential. These steps ensure that the SOS mother can continue to develop, expand on her capabilities and qualifications, and fulfil her potential. The village director gives the SOS mother his support and promotes a culture of learning, responsibility and initiative within all the co-workers of the village.

Responsibilities

- ▶ **SOS Mother:** The SOS mother is the leader of the SOS family and is directly responsible for the care and development of each of her children. She guides them towards self-sufficiency and independence and leads the decision-making process with her children. She also seeks out expert advice from other village co-workers when it is needed.
- ▶ **SOS Aunt and SOS Family Assistant:** The SOS aunt or SOS family assistant helps the SOS mother in her duties and relieves her during her holiday periods. They specialise in caring for children living in different SOS families and respect the emotional bonds between the SOS mother and her children.

- ▶ **Supporting Co-workers:** All other co-workers within the village provide support services to the SOS mother and her family, offering expert advice and practical support as requested by the SOS mother, taking the village budget and plans into account.
- ▶ **Village Director:** The village director co-ordinates the professional development of SOS mothers, and ensures that they receive the individual support they need to fulfil their tasks.
- ▶ **National Director and Board:** The board ensures that a strong and permanent foundation for the development of the SOS mothers is built. The national director makes proposals that enhance the development and recognition of the SOS mother profession and, with the support of the board, promotes it to the government, educational facilities and other child-care organisations in the country.

Guidelines

- 1 **A caring family environment is created:** An SOS mother aims to create a family environment where children can heal and have the opportunity to fulfil their potential. She accepts each child as unique and cares for her or his individual needs with respect and understanding. She shows affection and creates a home where loving relationships can grow.
- 2 **The SOS mother leads the decision-making process regarding her children:** As the leader of her family, the SOS mother is responsible for actions and decisions relating to her children. She assumes the role of the children's parent, and all other staff work with her children only with her knowledge and agreement.
- 3 **A thorough selection and recruitment process is followed:** A selection process, which ensures that the right SOS mothers are employed, is a crucial step in establishing the SOS family. Each SOS mother applicant is interviewed at least twice and carefully screened to establish if she has the personality, qualifications and potential to join the SOS mother profession. This recruitment process is led by the village director with the support of the SOS mother representative and/or another co-worker experienced in the selection of SOS mothers from within or outside the village.
- 4 **The SOS mother has a clear career path:** A clear career development structure is part of the conditions of service of the national association. SOS mother applicants are provided with detailed information about the main steps of the SOS mother career.
- 5 **SOS mothers receive training throughout their careers:** A newly employed SOS mother completes an initial two year training programme to become a professionally qualified SOS mother. During this period she is called an SOS mother trainee. Her training consists of at least three months' theoretical child-care training as well as twenty-one months of practical on-the-job training. SOS mothers then participate in ongoing training throughout their careers. A minimum of two weeks' training at least once every two years is compulsory for every SOS mother. In addition, in-service training of a minimum of one week per year is organised in the village.

- 6 **An SOS mother trainee takes on responsibility for an SOS family after one year at the earliest:** The SOS mother trainee must have worked for at least one year in the village, including three months' theoretical training, before she is given responsibility for her own SOS family.
- 7 **Each SOS mother receives guidance from the village director:** The village director carries out a performance appraisal with the SOS mother every year which is followed up at least every six months to ensure that the necessary training and appropriate support are available to her. He also gives regular feedback and support to the SOS mother through a more informal discussion once a month.
- 8 **The SOS aunt and SOS family assistant are child-care professionals:** The SOS aunt and SOS family assistant are provided with specialised training that prepares them for the temporary care of children from different families and running a household that is not their own. They report to the leading child development co-worker.
- 9 **The SOS mother representative takes a leading role in the village:** At least once every two years an SOS mother representative is elected by the SOS mothers, SOS aunts and/or family assistants. She serves as their spokesperson and is a full member of the village committee. She promotes the SOS mother profession and makes proposals regarding its further development, after consulting with the other SOS mothers.

'How to': Further Explanations of the Guidelines



- 1 **A thorough selection and recruitment process is followed**
 - a) Selection and recruitment criteria are established by each national association taking the local situation in a country into account.
 - b) Suitable applicants for the SOS mother profession are normally between 25 and 40 years of age and have a minimum of eight to ten years of school education. The prospective SOS mother has reached a stage in her life where she can make a clear commitment to raise at least one generation of children in an SOS family.
 - c) Applicants are females who are single, divorced or widowed, and have no young dependant children.
 - d) They possess a deeply caring and respectful attitude towards children who are not their own and who need a home and a new family.
 - e) They are in good physical and mental health, and are open, culturally tolerant, warm-hearted and resourceful.
 - f) They have practical child-care and housekeeping skills.
 - g) Formal work experience is not required, but is preferred.

2 The SOS mother has a clear career path

<p>Recruitment and Selection</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Before selection, a prospective applicant may stay within an SOS Children’s Village to understand the profession better. ◆ Once selected, the successful applicant is given an employment contract and begins her career as an SOS mother trainee.
<p>SOS mother trainee <i>The first two years of employment</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ The first two years of her career consist of three months’ theoretical child-care training and 21 months’ practical on-the-job training. The three months’ full-time theoretical training is the minimum requirement; longer training periods are beneficial. ◆ The SOS mother trainee should have at least two months’ practical training in a village, before she starts the theoretical training. This experience helps ensure an effective training experience. ◆ During her first six months, the village director holds a monthly meeting and provides close guidance. Performance is reviewed and she receives ongoing orientation regarding SOS family life. ◆ An experienced SOS mother is assigned to the SOS mother trainee and becomes a mentor, giving her support and feedback. ◆ After the two year training period, the SOS mother trainee can become a professionally qualified SOS mother. This important career step is possible if: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) the SOS mother trainee is responsible for her SOS family; and b) the evaluation conducted by the village director indicates that her performance and skills allow her to join the SOS mother profession. ◆ When the SOS mother trainee meets these requirements, a celebration is held in the village to acknowledge that she has now joined the worldwide SOS mother profession.
<p>SOS mother</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ A minimum of two weeks’ follow-up training every two years is compulsory for every SOS mother. The objectives of this follow-up training are to reflect on daily child-care work, to exchange experiences with SOS mothers from different villages, and to develop new skills. ◆ In addition, in-service training programmes are held in the village for a minimum of one week per year. These are normally designed around the recommendations of the SOS mothers. They consist of one or two day workshops, seminars and discussion groups, which are run by village staff or external experts. ◆ SOS mothers may also spend two to three days per year in retreat. This is a period of reflection, organised in an appropriate location outside the village. Away from their life in the village, SOS mothers find time and space for themselves as individuals and as a group. ◆ After a minimum of seven years of service, the SOS mother may be nominated by the village director for the award of the SOS Children’s Village Ring. This nomination is made to the national director.

Retirement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Well in advance of her retirement, the SOS mother is prepared for it through personal discussions and seminars. Preparations start at least three to four years before retirement. ◆ Ideally the SOS family has been planned in such a way that there are no more children under 14 years of age in her care when she retires. ◆ When the SOS mother is retired, the village stays in contact with her through meetings and functions for retired SOS mothers. At least once a year the village contacts her and invites her to a special event. The lasting relationship between the SOS mother and her adult children is encouraged and supported.
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3 The SOS aunt and SOS family assistant are child-care professionals

a) *What is the difference between an SOS aunt and an SOS family assistant?*

- ◆ The SOS aunt is a child-care specialist who lives within the village. When an SOS mother is on holiday, she moves into the SOS family house and provides temporary care to the children. She also assists the SOS mothers during heavy working periods supporting them with child development and household work. Like the SOS mother, she is single and has no young dependant children of her own. The SOS family assistant performs all the functions of an SOS aunt. The difference is that she lives in the community, can be married, and may have a family of her own. She also moves into an SOS family house when SOS mothers are on holiday.
- ◆ The SOS aunt is eligible for SOS mother retirement benefits including medical, housing and pension. The SOS family assistant is not eligible for the SOS mother retirement benefits because she has the long-term security of her own family in the community.
- ◆ Each national association determines whether to employ SOS aunts, SOS family assistants or a combination of both. This decision is based on what is best for the SOS mother and her family. The decision also needs to take the legal framework and labour market in the country into account.

b) *What are the general working conditions?*

- ◆ SOS aunts and SOS family assistants work with two to three different SOS families or may rotate throughout the village. They therefore must have flexible working habits and be able to quickly adapt to different households and children.
- ◆ In general, they attend most components of SOS mother training programmes, while also receiving the specialist training needed for the temporary care of children. Their training also prepares them in case the SOS aunt or family assistant takes the decision to apply for any vacant SOS mother positions.
- ◆ SOS aunts or SOS family assistants are employed specifically for these positions when there are vacancies. If an SOS mother vacancy arises they may apply for it.

4 The SOS mother representative takes a leading role in the village

a) A workshop around leadership skills or facilitating meetings can be offered to the SOS mother representative when she assumes her responsibilities.

b) She may be asked to join planning meetings on a national level or participate in regional conferences where the issues and policies affecting SOS mothers and their families are discussed.

- c) The SOS mother representative is encouraged to make contact with SOS mother representatives from other villages to share ideas and information or to plan joint activities.
- d) As the responsibilities of the SOS mother representative can take additional time, consideration is given to providing her with assistance within her family house. Her priority always remains the care of her SOS family.

5 An SOS Mother's Key Responsibilities

The SOS mother is the leader of the SOS family and is directly responsible for the care and development of each of her children. She leads the decision-making process for her children, making day-to-day decisions on her own. She also seeks out expert advice from other village co-workers when needed to ensure that the best decisions possible are made for her children.

a) **Create a home**

An SOS mother develops the SOS family house into a warm, loving and secure home for the children entrusted to her care. The home is a place with a relaxed atmosphere, fun and laughter, and a place where the SOS mother and her children can readily bring their friends.

b) **Lead her SOS family**

The SOS mother is the leader of her SOS family and the central figure in the lives of her children. Family ties are maintained when the child grows to adulthood and leaves his or her SOS mother's care.

c) **Ensure the well-being of the child through parenting**

The SOS mother promotes the development of each child and youth in her SOS family. She creates a nurturing family environment and supports the physical, emotional, intellectual, social and spiritual well-being of each child taking the child's biological, social and cultural roots into consideration.

d) **Develop her own well-being**

An SOS mother develops her own well-being. She strives to balance her life and enjoy her own personal time and interests. She gives special attention to maintaining her physical, mental, emotional and spiritual well-being.

e) **Perform household tasks**

Each SOS mother is responsible for the management of her own home and the necessary domestic activities. She works with a monthly budget, runs her household economically and ensures the proper care of household furnishings and equipment.

f) **Guide the children to take responsibility**

While an SOS mother provides for a child's needs, she also creates opportunities for the child to become more independent and responsible. As a parent, she appropriately guides children of varying ages.

g) **Interact with and contribute to the community**

The SOS mother encourages her children to interact with children from other SOS families and the community. The SOS mother ensures that she and her family live as an integral and contributing part of the community.

6 An SOS Aunt's or SOS Family Assistant's Key Responsibilities

The SOS aunt or family assistant provides general support to the SOS mother in a variety of ways. She respects the SOS mother's role as the person who is ultimately responsible for the children, while also contributing towards the welfare and development of the children.

a) **Support and relieve SOS mothers and provide direct care to children**

The SOS aunt or SOS family assistant co-operates with the SOS mother according to an agreed framework. This framework includes the SOS mother's requirements regarding the care of her children and home. When the SOS mother is away from her family house for any reason, the SOS aunt or SOS family assistant relieves the SOS mother and cares for her family.

b) **Assist SOS mothers with child development activities**

She has a sensitivity towards each child's development and supports the SOS mother in integrating child development objectives into daily activities.

c) **Provide a complementary role model for the children**

As an important figure in the life of the children, she has an impact on how the children develop. She is aware of this role and offers the children another adult perspective, sharing her values and life experience.

Children find a home in an SOS family that best meets their needs

Standard

3

Only those children whose needs are best met by an SOS family are considered for admission to an SOS Children's Village. The child-admission process ensures a careful assessment of each child before they join an SOS family.

(Standard)

“So much depends on the right composition of the SOS family . . . children can usually be placed in the type of SOS family which best suits their needs.”

- Hermann Gmeiner -

Every effort is made to ensure that the children placed in an SOS family are those who are going to benefit most from its care. Only those children who are in need of a new home in a permanent family environment and for whom a more suitable care placement cannot be found are considered for admission into an SOS family. This is ensured through the implementation of clear admission criteria and a structured admission process. By working together with government social welfare authorities, this process is further strengthened and the legal placement of the child in the SOS family is ensured.

It is recognised that each child comes to their new SOS family with their own personal history, background and sense of identity. With this in mind, co-operation with the child's natural family is encouraged to make the transition to their new home as smooth as possible and to provide the basis for continued family ties.

Responsibilities

- ▶ **SOS Mother:** The SOS mother is responsible for evaluating whether her SOS family offers the most appropriate family environment for the child, preparing the children of her SOS family for the arrival of their new brother or sister, and making the child feel welcome and accepted into her SOS family.
- ▶ **Child Development Co-worker:** One co-worker is responsible for collecting information about the prospective child's background and present situation. The child development co-worker supports the SOS mothers in their co-operation with the biological parents, and oversees any legal formalities that may be involved.

- ▶ **Village Director:** The village director is ultimately responsible for ensuring that only those children who meet the admission criteria and for whom a more suitable placement cannot be identified find a home in an SOS family.

Guidelines

- 1 The child-admission process is guided by a child-admission committee:** This committee evaluates if an SOS family is the best care option for the child, assesses which SOS family is most appropriate in consultation with the relevant SOS mothers, ensures that all the necessary documents are obtained and that legal requirements are fulfilled, and keeps the required documentation of the admission process. Led by the village director, the committee normally includes child development co-workers. The SOS mother representative must be consulted when necessary. The committee co-operates with government social welfare authorities, and the referring government social worker may be included on the committee as a consultant.
- 2 Applications are screened according to clear admission criteria:** Only those children who require a new home in a permanent family environment are considered for placement in an SOS family. Top priority is given to orphaned and abandoned children who do not have relatives who can provide them with family-based long-term care. Other cases that may be considered include children who have been legally removed from the care of their parents and are in need of long-term family-based care. Children are normally admitted below the age of ten, unless they are the older siblings of younger natural brothers and sisters. Children with mild physical or mental disabilities are considered for admission if their needs can be met in an SOS family. Children with severe disabilities are referred to alternative facilities that meet their special needs more effectively.
- 3 Social welfare authorities are partners in the admission process:** The child-admission committee works in partnership with social welfare authorities, ensuring that cases are fully investigated and that all legal requirements for placement are fulfilled. The committee supports social welfare authorities in the processing of cases, providing assistance wherever necessary and as requested. If no legal partner is available to investigate children's family background, then this becomes the responsibility of the SOS Children's Village.
- 4 The circumstances of each child are carefully reviewed:** The admission committee evaluates the child's background and present situation to ensure that the child is in genuine need and that placement in an SOS family is the best option. The committee must be satisfied that there are no other placement options available that are more suitable. If the child has a natural family, then the admission committee considers if and how they could best be supported within that family.
- 5 The child's biological family is recognised as a partner in the care of the child:** The child's biological family is informed about the SOS family child-care model, and is invited to get to know the prospective SOS mother and family of the child. They are consulted and kept involved throughout the admission process. This ensures that all the required background information about the child is obtained, and it provides a good basis for the continuation of family ties while the child is living in the village.

- 6 **The appropriate SOS family is carefully selected:** Each child joins an SOS family according to their individual needs and those of the other children already within that family. In particular, the child is placed with the most appropriate SOS mother, considering her strengths and abilities. The SOS mother is provided with detailed information about the child's background and needs, and can then confirm whether or not she is ready to take care of the child. Care is also taken to ensure that a natural family structure is maintained, with boys and girls of different ages, and natural brothers and sisters staying together in the same SOS family. Children are placed in the SOS family where they are best able to grow according to their cultural roots and religion.
- 7 **Preparations are made for admission of the child into the SOS family:** The SOS mother prepares the children within her SOS family for the arrival of their new brother or sister. Before admission, the child visits their new SOS family. Ideally, on admission, the child is accompanied by relatives who entrust the child to the care of the SOS Children's Village.
- 8 **Legal birth certificate, personal identity documents and background information are obtained:** Continued efforts are made to ensure that each child has a clearly documented identity in the form of a birth certificate, a passport and any other identity documents that they are likely to require in their future life. Also, as much information as possible is gathered about the child's history, such as past school and medical reports. Efforts are made to secure any property or inheritance to which a child is entitled.

'How to': Further Explanations of the Guidelines



- 1 **Applications are screened according to clear admission criteria**
 - a) If possible, the developmental status of the child is assessed. This may include psychological tests, health checks, and research about the background of the child.
 - b) Special attention should be given to ensuring that children fit into an SOS family both mentally and physically. Children who are terminally ill are not admitted, but are referred for placement to an alternative facility that is better able to meet their special needs.
- 2 **Social welfare authorities are partners in the admission process**
 - a) Contact with social welfare authorities should not be limited to specific applications for admission, but should rather be part of an ongoing and strong working relationship, based on regular personal contacts.
 - b) Where necessary, support may be provided to social welfare services, ranging from follow-up and encouragement, to more substantial support, such as offering transport for case visits or conducting initial case investigations.

The child's development is actively supported

Standard

4

Each child is offered individual development opportunities tailored to his or her needs and potential. The SOS mother guides the development of the children in her SOS family. Other SOS Children's Village co-workers support her, by providing services and organised activities that are not available in the community. All co-workers respect and promote each child's rights.

(Standard)

"We cease to understand the nature of children when we fail to appreciate the importance of a child's relationship with his mother. This relationship lays the foundation for our whole development, both as individuals and as members of society."

- Hermann Gmeiner -

Each child is seen as a unique individual and given the support necessary to develop into a responsible and participating member of society. In supporting the child's development, the SOS mother, youth leader and other co-workers focus on the strengths, abilities and potential of the child. The SOS mother supports the child's physical, emotional, intellectual, social and spiritual well-being, taking their biological, social and cultural roots into consideration. The youth leader continues this development support when the children move to a youth home.

Each child's potential is carefully considered and brought into focus through a regular and structured child development planning process. Through documentation, it also makes each child's progress verifiable and their successes apparent. The child development planning process helps the SOS mother, the youth leader and other co-workers to recognise, support and extend the development of each child's interests, abilities, talents and potential. Working towards clear and agreed development goals also helps them to co-ordinate their efforts.

Responsibilities

- ▶ **SOS Mother:** The SOS mother promotes the development of each child in her SOS family and guides them to become self-sufficient and independent. She creates a nurturing family environment, leads the child development planning and seeks the support of the village director and child development co-workers, as and when necessary.
- ▶ **Youth Leader:** The youth leader promotes the development of each youth living in the youth home. The youth leader creates a supportive environment where youth can develop life skills and responsibility for themselves. The youth leader takes the leading role in the child development planning.

- ▶ **Child Development Co-workers:** They ensure that each SOS family receives the resources needed to meet their needs. They create links with community services and, when required, provide specialised services in the village. They are co-ordinated and supervised by the village director or a senior child development co-worker.
- ▶ **Village Director:** The village director supports each SOS mother and youth leader in setting development objectives for children and youth. He ensures that there is a child development plan for each child, sees that this is updated annually, that the SOS mother receives the support she requests, and that the co-operation among SOS mother, youth leader and other staff members is well co-ordinated. He also maintains an overview of the general development needs of children in the village.

Guidelines

- 1 **Children actively participate in SOS family life and decisions:** The SOS mother listens to the needs expressed by the children and ensures that their voice is heard. Children take part in making decisions that affect their lives and assume responsibilities within the family. As children grow older, they take increasing responsibility for their own lives and development.
- 2 **Social and emotional development is nurtured:** Each child experiences love, affection and tenderness through the SOS mother, as well as from brothers and sisters, and is encouraged to express their emotions. The child is supported in building and sustaining family relationships, friendships and other social contacts. The child learns to communicate, interact and share with others through an active family life, at kindergarten and school, as well as by being engaged in various group activities in the community and the village. Contacts with the child's own biological family and the community are supported.
- 3 **Moral and spiritual development is supported:** The child learns about cultural values, morals, and religious practices in ways that respect their family background. Within the SOS family, each member is given the opportunity and freedom to practise their religious beliefs. The organisation is committed to ensuring that this right is enjoyed by all family members, making resources available as appropriate. Through their daily interaction with family, friends and other community members children develop the values and beliefs that will guide them through life.
- 4 **A strong educational foundation is built and continued through to adulthood:** Educational opportunities are identified and provided according to the individual needs of each child. Education and training programmes are found in the community rather than being organised in the village.
- 5 **Play and other recreational activities are promoted:** Play and recreation are recognised as important ways of stimulating the child's development. In the family house the SOS mother fosters an atmosphere where children feel encouraged to play. She gets them involved in all kinds of creative and stimulating activities that best meet their individual needs, interests and abilities. Each village also organises a structured recreation programme for all children during school holidays that includes educational, community service and leisure activities.

- 6 **Physical health is promoted:** Careful attention is given to ensure that each child grows in a healthy environment. Good nutrition, personal care habits and physical activities are promoted. Within the SOS family a healthy and balanced diet is provided. Sex education is provided, and awareness is created regarding the harmful effects of alcohol, tobacco and narcotic drugs. Each child has a medical check-up once a year, as well as the relevant immunisations and other preventive measures.
- 7 **A formal child development planning process is carried out:** Individual development planning meetings are held once a year for each child and a written record is kept. Follow-up discussions are held regularly to support the SOS mother in continually reviewing her family's development. After a child has moved from the family house into the youth home, the youth leader takes responsibility for leading the process. At least once a year the village director meets with each SOS mother to discuss the overall development of her children.

'How to': Further Explanations of the Guidelines



- 1 **Children actively participate in SOS family life and decisions**
 - a) Through participation children are able to learn important life skills, such as communication, co-operation, mutual understanding, conflict resolution, negotiation and decision-making. These essential skills are required for them to become independent adults and responsible contributing members of society.
- 2 **Social and emotional development is nurtured**
 - a) Children are given full access to information about their family background and personal history, according to their maturity. This helps children develop a strong sense of identity and roots.
- 3 **Moral and spiritual development is supported**
 - a) Each SOS family is supported if they wish to attend a regular religious service.
 - b) Each village director decides if a daily gathering takes place where all of the SOS families say the SOS prayer. The village director may also consider some other regular means by which the village is brought together for reflection and thanksgiving.
- 4 **A strong educational foundation is built and continued through to adulthood**
 - a) According to the child's talents, additional vocational training programmes or university education are strongly supported. Suitable educational programmes should also be found for children with learning difficulties.

5 A formal child development planning process is carried out

a) *What kind of process is followed?*

Child development planning is a simple process which is led by the SOS mother in the family house and by the youth leader in the youth home. Ideally, it consists of the following three main aspects:

- ◆ Observations are collected regarding the child's development, reflecting on progress made during the year. The focus is on strengths, abilities and potential in each area of development.
- ◆ Long- and short-term development objectives are defined and agreed upon. These are clear, specific and measurable.
- ◆ Detailed actions are identified and agreed upon which support the development of the child or youth.

b) *Who normally participates in the annual child development planning meetings?*

- ◆ The child participates in the process and the views of the child are given careful attention. This encourages the child to think realistically about their future and secures their commitment to any action plans that may be made. This is particularly the case once they are living in the youth home, where youth are expected to participate actively in the planning process.
- ◆ The SOS mother is assisted by the child development co-worker who is closest to her family. The SOS mother may also invite other co-workers who play a role in the child's life, such as a teacher.
- ◆ For youth a development planning meeting includes the youth, youth leader, SOS mother and village director. The youth and the youth leader then informally meet every month to reflect on the realisation of the objectives set at the meeting.
- ◆ The village director may join any child development planning meeting. In particular, the village director may be involved in the child development planning process for the youth so that major financial decisions can be taken quickly.

c) *What kind of written record of a child development plan is helpful?*

- ◆ If a child development planning form is used, it should be simple, user-friendly and ideally not longer than four pages. Such a form may vary from village to village, according to what is most useful for the SOS mothers in each SOS Children's Village.
- ◆ The SOS mother should keep the development plans in her house, so that she can refer to them at any time. An up-to-date file, which contains all previous child development information on the child, is also kept in the village office.

Youth programmes offer self-development opportunities

Standard

5

Youth programmes offer learning and growth opportunities and are part of each SOS Children's Village. Young people develop the attitudes, behaviour, confidence and skills needed to take responsibility for building their own futures and to become successful and contributing members of society.

(Standard)

“Adolescent boys and girls need the help and support of a family while they are learning self-reliance.”

- Hermann Gmeiner -

From the day a child enters the SOS Children's Village they are guided to become independent, self-sufficient, and participating members of society. It is an important milestone in the work of an SOS Children's Village when youth take responsibility for their living situation, for their employment and for providing for themselves. Youth programmes support this process and are an essential part of the SOS family child-care model. They offer youth a variety of opportunities through which they can further develop their personality and prepare themselves for an independent life. The programmes may include education and training, accommodation, head-start programmes, and follow-up guidance.

The youth leader plays a key role in guiding individual youth and in organising and leading youth programmes. The youth leader reflects on what can be offered to support the development, taking into account the social and economic situation of the community. An SOS mother guides her children towards the appropriate youth programmes and then continues to be available to them as a caring parent. The village director and other co-workers support these steps and assume various roles within the youth programmes.

Responsibilities

- ▶ **Youth Leader:** The youth leader is responsible for supporting the development of youth and guiding them to independence. Youth leaders lead the child development planning process for youth living in the youth homes. The youth can rely on and turn to the youth leader for advice and understanding. Youth leaders consult and co-operate with the SOS mother and village director in taking important decisions related to the youth who live in the youth homes. They also offer youth programmes to youth living in family houses. They report to the village director, unless one youth leader is appointed as the overall co-ordinator for youth programmes.

- ▶ **SOS Mother:** The SOS mother prepares her children for the youth home and facilitates their participation in youth programmes. She leads the child development planning process for youth still living in her family house. She recommends when a youth should move from the family house into a youth home. After they have moved out of her direct care, she remains their parent, continuing to offer guidance and emotional support, and she is consulted in major decisions regarding the life of the youth.
- ▶ **Village Director:** The village director is responsible for ensuring that youth programmes are planned and offered to the SOS families. He has the final decision-making authority on what support is offered through these programmes, and ensures that sufficient resources are made available in the annual budget.

Guidelines

- 1 **Youth programmes are organised taking careful account of the needs of the youth and the local situation:** Programmes are planned according to the development needs of the youth, the cultural situation, local economic realities, and available resources. The programmes needed for each individual youth are identified through the child development planning process and start while a youth is living in the family house. The village director ensures that there is a strong link between the SOS family and the youth home.
- 2 **A defined number of youth leaders organise programmes and guide youth:** Youth leaders work with youth living in SOS families and in youth homes. There is at least one youth leader for every group of eight to twelve youth under the age of 18 who are staying in a youth home.
- 3 **Youth leaders are trained throughout their careers:** A newly employed youth leader undergoes an in-service theoretical training programme of at least one month. Youth leaders then attend at least one youth-care training every two years.
- 4 **Educational and career guidance programmes are offered to youth:** Every child and youth receives career guidance, at least once a year, to help them make the choices which will lead to their future independent life and career. During their studies youth are encouraged to find part-time jobs to expose them to working realities and to supplement their income. SOS mothers and other village co-workers offer career guidance on an ongoing basis to all youth.
- 5 **Personal development programmes are provided for youth:** Programmes are provided to help youth learn life skills and to develop further their personality. Training programmes include topics such as the development of relationships, sexuality and social awareness. Community service programmes are organised to give youth the opportunity to participate constructively in community life. In addition, the village director encourages reunions of young adults who are living independently to maintain links between them as well as with their SOS family.
- 6 **Guided-living programmes are offered in or near the village:** Youth move from their SOS family home into a youth home at an age appropriate to their individual development but not younger than 14 years of age. Preparation starts at least one year before they move. A

maximum of eight to twelve youth live together in one group, sharing a kitchen and living space. While living there, the youth are responsible for managing their youth budgets and for running the household, with the guidance and support of one assigned youth leader. Youth leaders interact closely with the youth and provide ongoing day-to-day guidance.

- 7 **Young adults are supported with independent-living programmes:** Youth older than 18 who have a regular income and organise their own housing through a rental or ownership agreement can apply for financial assistance, if it is needed. Such assistance is provided for a maximum period of three years and aims to help a youth to live in independent accommodation. In all cases, the youth contributes at least one third of the rental or loan-repayment costs. Youth who are given support towards renting, purchasing or building accommodation enter into a formal agreement with the organisation, in which the conditions are clearly stated. These youth are largely responsible for their own lives and live without a youth leader. Youth leaders play a counselling and advisory role to them.
- 8 **Youth can apply for head-start programmes to assist them to self-sufficiency:** Where employment possibilities are in short supply, head-start programmes can offer youth the opportunity to get started in their independent life. Financial support to take up low-paying jobs or to start a small business can be provided. When youth need assistance to proceed to a higher level of education, scholarships for career-related education can be provided. When accepting any kind of financial support, the youth makes a commitment to use the funds in accordance with mutually agreed conditions.
- 9 **Youth information is maintained and updated:** The village director is responsible for ensuring that an up-to-date record is kept of the whereabouts and contact details of children who lived in the village, provided they agree to this. These records are updated at least every two years.

'How to': Further Explanations of the Guidelines



- 1 **Youth programmes are organised taking careful account of the needs of the youth and the local situation**
 - a) It is recommended that youth programmes be established within the first five years of a village's operation. The necessary accommodation and community resources should be identified before there are a number of youth in the village.
 - b) Additional youth programmes may be developed and implemented according to local experience and needs.
 - c) Each national association determines a maximum age limit for youth who live in SOS accommodation or who need financial support. Often youth leave the care of the organisation by the age of 21, but in some cases continue to receive support for extended education or small business start-ups until 23 or, in exceptional cases, until they are 26.

2 A defined number of youth leaders organise programmes and guide youth

- a) If a youth leader is on leave, another youth leader is assigned to supervise the youth in their absence.
- b) If a village has four to five youth leaders and a number of youth programmes, one of the youth leaders may be appointed to co-ordinate all their activities. The youth leaders would report to this person, who then reports to the village director.

3 Educational and career guidance programmes are offered to youth

- a) Information about educational and career options may be provided in the following ways:
 - ◆ The village collects information on such opportunities that are available in the community.
 - ◆ Youth are given educational and career guidance by a career guidance counsellor.
 - ◆ People from different occupations are invited to talk to the children and youth.
 - ◆ Youth are given the opportunity to gain work-related skills, through weekend or holiday jobs or community service.

4 Personal development programmes are provided for youth

- a) Various additional programmes can be offered to youth and may include:
 - ◆ Sex education, HIV/AIDS awareness, alcohol and drug abuse;
 - ◆ Communication and conflict resolution;
 - ◆ Community service activities, such as working in local schools, clinics and hospitals, whether through local community or other social organisations;
 - ◆ Family house and village maintenance activities are considered a part of a youth's personal development. Through actively participating in cleaning and maintaining their home as well as the surrounding environment they learn valuable skills and responsible behaviours.

5 Guided-living programmes are offered in or near the village

- a) Youth homes are places where youth are offered challenges and have the opportunity to develop the skills needed for independent adult life.
- b) Steps taken when youth leave the family house and move to a youth home:
 - ◆ Ideally, youth express the desire to move into a youth home and have reached a level of maturity where they show the ability to care for themselves and respect others around them.
 - ◆ As part of the youth's preparation, they may visit existing youth homes and speak to older youth about their experiences.
 - ◆ In some cases youth may remain in the family house when cultural or individual development needs make that the more beneficial course of action.
- c) Steps taken when youth leave the youth home:
 - ◆ Ideally, when youth begin to earn an income they move out of the youth home and into their own accommodation within three to six months.
 - ◆ Normally, youth live in a youth home for no more than four years, by which time they should have been prepared for independent living programmes.

- d) Types of youth homes:
 - ◆ The village may build, purchase or lease a property of a standard appropriate to young adults. Youth homes should be located within easy reach of the village and in a location that offers good education and employment opportunities. For security or culturally specific reasons a youth home may also be located within an SOS Children's Village.
- e) Number of youth homes:
 - ◆ Each village of about 100 children could have one youth home for males and one youth home for females. Each youth home should be under the close supervision of one youth leader.
 - ◆ As a village grows older and the number of youth increases, it may become necessary to have more youth homes within the community.

6 Youth can apply for head-start programmes to assist them to self-sufficiency

- a) Head-start programmes provide an opportunity for youth to further their own development and build a stronger foundation for their future. These programmes are only offered to youth who are likely to benefit from them and are not considered a right for all youth.
- b) Research should be conducted into government, community and business programmes that could also provide these opportunities for youth at a lower cost to the organisation.
- c) Each youth who receives head-start programme assistance enters into a formal agreement with the organisation, making a commitment to meet certain conditions. Where a youth fails to meet these conditions, such assistance may be withdrawn.
- d) A range of programmes may be offered, including:
 - ◆ *Income support*: Where a youth is able to find a job, but the starting salary is relatively low, this salary may be subsidised for a limited period of time until the youth is able to earn an adequate salary. The youth may receive this top-up salary directly or through the employer. Income support may also be offered to secure a youth's first job, to provide working experience as a form of hands-on vocational training. Income support may be provided for a maximum period of one year.
 - ◆ *Business 'start-up' loans*: Loans may be given to youth to start up their own business. The youth draws up a business plan, which is presented to the village director. Based on the soundness of the business plan and the availability of budgeted funds, the loan may be approved by the village director.
 - ◆ *Educational scholarships*: Youth may be supported to attend an educational institution where their abilities and talents can be fully developed.

7 Suggested selection criteria for youth leaders

- a) Empathy and interest in working with young people;
- b) Must be able to live in or near a youth home;
- c) Stable and mature personality, good listener, patient and understanding;
- d) Interested and skilled in arranging educational, career guidance, sporting, cultural and other youth-development activities;
- e) Completed high school education and at least one year of further study in child and/or youth care, psychology or education;
- f) Two to three years of work experience in social work, teaching or a related field; and
- g) Older than 25 years of age.

8 The youth leader's key responsibilities

a) Guide the personal development of youth living in the youth home

- ◆ Be aware of each youth's personal development and ensure that the child-development planning process is carried out with the full participation of each individual young person.
- ◆ Support the youth to develop a sense of responsibility towards themselves and the youth home. The youth take progressively more responsibility for making decisions and choices in their own lives.
- ◆ Listen to the youth and assist them to address personal and/or social problems themselves, as well as supporting and guiding them through difficult times.
- ◆ Lead the child development planning process for those youth living in a youth home, assisting them with the process of setting and meeting important objectives in their lives.
- ◆ Support the youth to manage their household themselves. This may include facilitating the establishment of household rules through a democratic process, and teaching youth to manage money and equipment responsibly.
- ◆ Keep up-to-date with social issues and co-ordinate life skills workshops.

b) Create opportunities for contacts with family and community

- ◆ Ensure that there is ongoing contact and co-operation with SOS mothers whose children are living in youth homes.
- ◆ Ensure that ongoing contacts with each young person's biological family are maintained as long as this is in the youth's best interest.
- ◆ Support youth to develop positive relations with the community by identifying and creating opportunities for interaction and integration.

c) Guide the educational and career development of youth

- ◆ Provide youth with ongoing educational and career guidance, while encouraging them to take responsibility for their futures. This involves guiding youth to further their studies according to their abilities, their personal aspirations and job opportunities available in their community.
- ◆ Keep up-to-date with possible job opportunities and steer youth towards available career information.
- ◆ Maintain regular contact with teachers and follow the general school progress of the youth. Also help the youth with their homework and further study.
- ◆ Co-ordinate community service and recreational activities among the youth.
- ◆ Ensure that SOS mothers are involved in major decisions affecting their children who have moved into a youth home.

d) Support the SOS mothers with the youth in their SOS family homes

- ◆ Make youth programmes available to all youth, whether they are living in youth homes or family houses.
- ◆ Support the SOS mother in preparing her children to move into youth homes and participate in the child development planning of youth who are soon to move into a youth home.

Each SOS family lives as a part of the community

Standard

6

Each SOS family lives as an integral part of the community and shares in community life. The child establishes relationships, learns important skills and develops the confidence to be an active and contributing member of society.

(Standard)

“ . . . in every respect, the SOS Children’s Village must fit into its surroundings. As far as possible, every suggestion of an abnormal situation must be avoided, even if this involves certain disadvantages. For the more normal the circumstances in which the child grows up, the better for its development. The neglected child has one great wish: to be like other children.”

- Hermann Gmeiner -

In its location, design and every other aspect, the SOS Children’s Village is part of the community. Beyond building the village in an existing community and designing its family homes to match the neighbourhood, the day-to-day life of the children within each SOS family is tied to that of the community. The supportive and nurturing environment that SOS families create within the village itself is balanced with being a part of the local community.

It is in the community that the children go to school, attend places of worship, seek health care and other social services. Here, they participate in local festivals, events and celebrations, and find opportunities to develop their interests, skills and abilities through clubs and societies. Through their participation in community life, children establish relationships that help them to grow into mature adults, and develop the necessary skills and attitudes to be responsible participating members of society.

Responsibilities

- ▶ **SOS Mother:** The SOS mother actively seeks opportunities to integrate herself and her SOS family into the community. She guides the relationship of her children with other children and adults from the community.
- ▶ **Supporting Co-workers:** In their dealings with other community members, supporting co-workers actively promote an openness and link between the SOS families and other community members. In particular, they support SOS mothers in finding opportunities for children to interact with the community.

- ▶ **Village Director:** The village director promotes and facilitates links between each SOS family and the community. He also supports the SOS mothers as they build and maintain their individual supporting networks within the community.

Guidelines

- 1 **SOS families live as active members of the local community:** SOS families participate in the social, cultural and religious life of the community, making the most of available opportunities to cultivate positive relationships and share in activities.
- 2 **SOS families have an adequate living standard that reflects community realities:** As far as possible, the living standards of SOS families reflect those of other families in the community, while ensuring that the child's development needs are met. This minimises social and economic differences, helping SOS families to fit into the community.
- 3 **SOS families satisfy their needs using services available in the community:** SOS families make use of community services, such as educational and health care facilities. This is supported by the village director, who ensures that the required budget is made available and monitors the quality of services provided. Where such services are unavailable or of a quality that does not meet the child's needs, the village finds ways to support the provision of adequate services and may consider offering these services from within the village.
- 4 **The village shares in the development of the community:** The village works in partnership with other community members to address local development needs. With this in mind, the village works with the community in the development of adequate community services. Also, the village acts as a resource for the community's weakest members, who may benefit from those social services that are offered by the village.
- 5 **The village supports public relations and fundraising activities in the community:** While the national office carries the main responsibility for fundraising within the country, the village has an important role to play in supporting fundraising activities in the local community. All village staff receive orientation on the importance of servicing donors and presenting SOS Children's Villages to the public. Children are not used to make direct requests for funds from donors and their participation in public relations activities is strictly limited.
- 6 **The village participates in emergency help to the neighbours:** SOS Children's Villages provide immediate and effective help in emergency situations. This is directed towards children and other vulnerable members of the community of which the village is a part.

'How to': Further Explanations of the Guidelines



- 1 SOS families live as active members of the local community**
 - a) As a natural part of their day-to-day life, SOS families establish and cultivate contacts with other community families. Children from the community are welcome to visit children in SOS families, building contacts and friendships.
 - b) The village shares International SOS Day (June 23) celebrations with the community, particularly children and their families. This may involve activities such as cultural and sporting events, community service programmes, and/or inviting prominent community members to visit the village. It can also serve as an open day for publicity.
 - c) SOS families attend places of worship, religious festivals and other related activities in the community, according to their own religious beliefs.
 - d) Children are encouraged to take advantage of opportunities to develop their interests, skills and abilities within the community. They should be encouraged to take part in organised activities, by joining clubs and societies such as sports teams, art clubs, child and youth organisations, local government children's councils, and community environmental groups. Where such opportunities are limited, the village may work with other community members to initiate such activities.
 - e) The village director, SOS mothers and other co-workers may join community service clubs, school boards and other local organisations, where this benefits the village and SOS families.

- 2 SOS families have an adequate living standard that reflects community realities**
 - a) SOS family homes should be furnished and equipped in a way that is not seen as 'out of place' in the local community. In general, they should reflect a modest standard of living in line with the socio-economic realities of the community.
 - b) Living standards should be such that young adults leaving SOS facilities can make the transition into the community without facing a major change from what they are used to.
 - c) The family budget should be adequate to provide for the SOS family's needs and should not be out of proportion to that which most other families within the community are able to live on. SOS families should do their household shopping at local shops and markets.
 - d) Village investments should also reflect community standards and not be seen as 'out of the ordinary' or 'luxurious'. Items such as buses or well-equipped libraries are only provided if they are required and not available within the community.

- 3 SOS families satisfy their needs using services available in the community**
 - a) SOS families meet as many of their needs as possible using community services and resources, even if this involves extra time or money.

- b) In general, SOS families should make use of public transport rather than using village vehicles, including children's travel to schools, training centres or work places.
- c) The village director assesses the quality of community services by finding out what SOS mothers think of those services and regularly visiting service-providers to discuss their programmes. He also evaluates the costs and benefits of such services.

4 The village shares in the development of the community

- a) Where community services are unavailable or inadequate, the village should come together with other members of the community to explore ways in which such services can be developed. Whatever solutions are found, they should make the most effective use of whatever resources are available within the community and not only those available in the village. In general, other community members should be encouraged to contribute to the development process as much as they can.
- b) The village should be seen as a resource for families in the community, particularly those in the most disadvantaged circumstances. For example, the village could offer counselling or other family support services to the community.
- c) SOS families themselves do not have a particular responsibility for community development. They may, however, be involved in activities where they feel that they can make a valuable contribution.

5 The village supports public relations and fundraising activities in the community

- a) The village may organise open days and other events to build up relationships with other community members and provide fundraising opportunities.
- b) The village works with the national office to identify potential donors in the local community and determine how best to approach them. The village also hosts any national public relations events that are thought to be necessary and supports the organisation of such events.
- c) SOS families themselves do not have a particular responsibility for fundraising, but may be involved in supporting such activities if they wish to do so. For example, they may host donors in their houses, or assist with making items to be sold at fundraising events such as village open days.

6 The village participates in emergency help to the neighbours

- a) In situations of war or natural disaster the village can immediately spend up to an amount of half a month's village budget to provide help as required. In such emergencies they can also rely on the support and assistance of the national office. This kind of help is normally short-term and focuses on what is most urgently needed by members of the community. Any such programme is led by the village director and implemented by village co-workers who are assisted by the youth.

Funds and property are used responsibly

Standard

7

Administrative systems are structured to ensure accountability, while building a sense of responsibility in each SOS family and among all co-workers. The consistent application of these effective systems promotes the responsible use of funds and property. (Standard)

“It is a question of creating a hard currency of love, of letting the material help that we provide become effective at the spiritual level, too.”

- Hermann Gmeiner -

Individuals, governments, companies and other donors make donations so that our organisation can care for children. Using all funds and property responsibly is an essential part of ensuring that the trust of donors and partners is maintained. The organisation’s property, including buildings, vehicles, furniture, equipment, as well as information concerning personnel and children, is treated with the greatest respect.

The administrative systems in the SOS Children’s Village are aimed at building financial responsibility and accountability within each SOS family. Every administrative action has an impact on SOS family life, and for this reason administrative systems are kept simple so that they are easy to understand, put into practice and manage. Systems are designed to interfere as little as possible in the processes of family life, allowing SOS mothers the freedom to lead, nurture and shape their own families.

Responsibilities

- ▶ **SOS Mother:** The SOS mother manages her family budget and takes responsibility for as many of the family running costs as possible. She teaches her children the value of money and how to manage it responsibly. She accounts for funds received and keeps records of expenditure.
- ▶ **Village Director:** The village director is ultimately responsible for all funds and property. He ensures that the necessary controls and administrative systems are in place within the village.
- ▶ **Administrative Co-workers:** These co-workers ensure that the village is well administered and professionally managed. They maintain an overview of spending and follow the approved annual budget.

- ▶ **National Office:** The national office strives to balance its control function with building accountability and responsibility within the villages. It provides monthly feedback and financial information so that the administrative co-workers can effectively manage their administration. It also ensures that the necessary funds are transferred to its village(s) regularly for their operations.
- ▶ **Board:** Within the annual budget, the board approves the family budget amount as well as staff salaries. It also approves major maintenance items, the investment in and disposal of assets, and any unbudgeted expenditure.

Guidelines

- 1 **The village has administrative autonomy:** Administration is kept simple and streamlined. The village is directly responsible for as many administrative tasks as possible. This builds local responsibility and places decision-making authority with the people affected by those decisions.
- 2 **SOS families meet their day-to-day expenses through the family budget:** Each SOS mother receives a monthly amount to cover the costs of running her SOS family and house. As many child-related and household maintenance expenses as possible are included in the family budget and are the responsibility of the SOS mother. Children receive any money they may need directly from their SOS mother.
- 3 **Youth manage their finances through their youth budget:** Youth who move from their SOS family house to a youth home are provided with an individual monthly amount to cover their day-to-day living expenses. There may be different allowances for different situations of youth, such as youth who are studying, those who are working and studying, and those who are working. As soon as they are able to, youth are personally responsible for spending and controlling these funds.
- 4 **A simple bookkeeping system is maintained:** A clear and simple bookkeeping system is maintained within the village, in line with the administrative requirements of the national office. Funds are disbursed and controlled in accordance with the approved annual budget and monthly statement of expenditure. The village's financial statements are audited by a representative of the national office and by an independent external auditor at least once a year. An inventory count is conducted annually and reconciled against the fixed-assets register.
- 5 **A confidential up-to-date file is kept for each child:** This file includes child development plans, educational progress, health information, background information and sponsorship information. Files are kept in the office and are confidential. The child's SOS mother, child development co-workers and the village director have access to this information, bearing in mind the child's right to privacy.

- 6 **A confidential personnel file is maintained for every co-worker:** The village director, the co-worker's immediate supervisor and the individual co-worker have access to this file. This contains the contract of employment, annual performance appraisal reports, background information, training certificates, salary and benefit data, and disciplinary information.
- 7 **The sponsorship programme is administered to meet the sponsors' needs:** Information is provided promptly to international child and village sponsors. Progress reports and photographs are submitted as required, correspondence is responded to quickly, and children's admission and departure information is forwarded without delay.
- 8 **SOS property is protected and maintained:** Once a year, besides ongoing maintenance, the village director checks every building in the village to identify the repairs and maintenance required to keep the buildings in an acceptable and functional condition. The costs of such repairs are planned for in the following year's village budget. Co-workers receive the necessary training and orientation to ensure the protection and long-term life of village property.

'How to': Further Explanations of the Guidelines



- 1 **The village has administrative autonomy**
 - a) The national office supports the village in its administration by providing training, guidance and coaching on administrative matters. It may also perform some detailed financial and human resources functions such as maintaining the payroll, implementing labour laws and setting administrative policies.
- 2 **SOS families meet their day-to-day expenses through the family budget**
 - a) *What responsibility does an SOS mother have for managing her family budget?*
 - ◆ Each SOS mother receives a fixed amount each month to cover all family expenses. It is recommended that the amount be provided in one lump sum, once a month.
 - ◆ The family budget includes items such as food, cleaning materials, clothing, energy, transport, school expenses and minor household repairs and maintenance such as replacement of broken windowpanes, crockery, curtains and linen.
 - ◆ Capital spending and maintenance requirements in excess of daily household expenses (such as new doors or a new kitchen) are planned for in the village budget.
 - ◆ If in the normal running of her household an SOS mother makes savings in the family budget, these can be used for family celebrations, decorations or small items of equipment for their SOS home.

- ◆ To prevent an institutional environment from developing, no funds whatsoever are issued directly to children from the village administration office. Any funds that the child receives, such as pocket money or allowances for school expenses, are given to the child by the SOS mother.

b) *How are family budgets accounted for?*

- ◆ The SOS mother is accountable for this money, and keeps a detailed monthly record of her expenditure. Any receipts provided by shops are kept or, if no receipt can be provided, the SOS mother keeps a written record of each purchase. These records are open to review by administrative co-workers at any time, but are normally checked once a month.
- ◆ The system SOS mothers have to follow to account for their family budgets must be simple and should not take up more than two or three hours of their time each month.

c) *How can children be taught financial responsibility?*

- ◆ Purchases are made in local shops. Bulk-buying, where the village administration buys large quantities of particular items and then distributes them to the SOS families, is discouraged, as it is not a normal family practice, is institutional, and prevents children from learning basic skills like shopping.
- ◆ If culturally appropriate, an SOS mother may give her children an allowance from the family budget for small school expenses, excursions, or other costs.
- ◆ SOS youth who live in the family house should, under the guidance of the SOS mother, participate in family budgeting and managing the household's finances. This is to help prepare them for their future life in a youth home or living on their own, where they will be required to manage their own finances.

3 Youth manage their finances through their youth budget

- a) To support them in managing their finances, youth receive counselling and training in basic financial management.
- b) School fees and related expenses are normally paid by the village administration.

4 A simple bookkeeping system is maintained

- a) One person in the village is given direct responsibility for financial activities. An approval procedure is followed for all expenditure. This requires the review and signature of two people.
- b) An inventory list containing all capital goods by quantity and value is maintained for each separate building within the village. It does not include minor items like cooking utensils, crockery, cutlery, bed linen and small tools. A physical count of all capital goods is performed annually.
- c) An external audit of all financial transactions, as directed by the national office, is conducted at least once a year. A national office staff member may also perform an internal audit once a year or as often as deemed necessary.

5 The sponsorship programme is administered to meet the sponsors' needs

- a) Income from sponsorship contributions covers a significant portion of most villages' running costs, and it is thus essential for villages to administer the sponsorship programme efficiently.

- b) The village director assigns responsibility for sponsorship administration to one village co-worker and ensures that this person receives training from the national office.
 - c) The responsible person works closely with the national office, exchanging information and ensuring that all sponsorship requirements are met. Specifically, this person should keep the national office informed of:
 - ◆ Admission and departure of children;
 - ◆ Any changes concerning SOS mothers' details;
 - ◆ Movement of children between different family houses or villages; and
 - ◆ Money-gifts, correspondence with sponsors, and visits to the village by sponsors.
 - d) A primary function of the village is to provide progress reports and photographs of the sponsored children and facilities on the required dates.
 - e) Villages make sure that visits by sponsors are well organised, and that sponsors are made to feel welcome.
 - f) Sponsors' money-gifts, donations and other contributions for each child are administered by the national office and saved for the start into an independent future. These savings belong to the youth and may be spent in agreement with the youth for education, training and head-start programmes, buying of land, renting of apartments, medical care, weddings, etc.
 - g) Regardless of the financial support provided to a child by a sponsor, every child has the same opportunity to study further and begin their independent life. Financial support for youth programmes is determined according to each youth's individual needs, and not according to the balance of their accumulated sponsorship savings. If the required funds are not available from sponsorship savings, they are planned for within the village budget.
- 6 SOS property is protected and maintained**
- a) Equipment and vehicles are normally assigned to a specific person who is then responsible for these items. They are accountable for returning them in an acceptable condition.
 - b) Furniture and equipment, buildings and vehicles are regularly maintained to avoid breakdowns.

Planning and evaluation ensure a quality child-care environment

The quality of child care is continually improved through evaluation and planning. Plans provide a clear framework for action, identifying priorities and enabling co-workers to approach their work in a confident and co-ordinated manner. (Standard)

“A global welfare network like SOS Children’s Villages can only remain alive and dynamic if a continuous effort is made to respond to changing conditions in the society involved and to accept new challenges in the interest of the welfare of the children. With this ongoing process of adaptation to the various social realities of the world, the work of SOS Children’s Villages will continue to lead to targeted developments in the facilities and services offered.”

- Hermann Gmeiner -

Effective evaluation and planning of activities is essential to ensure that high quality child care is provided through the SOS families. Planning allows resources to be put to the most appropriate and efficient use. In an ever-changing world, the village is then effectively able to shape its programmes and guide change in the best interests of the children. This often means exploring new approaches and programmes to meet the children’s needs.

The active participation of every staff member is a key factor in successful evaluation and planning. Through the exchange of their knowledge and experience, needs and priorities are identified which are incorporated into the village’s plans. These plans provide each co-worker with the freedom to act within their area of work, according to the responsibilities assigned to them.

Responsibilities

- ▶ **Village Director:** The village director is responsible for ensuring an effective evaluation and planning process, and for overseeing the preparation of the village plan and budget. He ensures that there is staff participation, and that all aspects of the village and connected facilities are considered in the plans.
- ▶ **Child and Youth Care, and Supporting Co-workers:** All co-workers are responsible for reviewing and improving their own activities and effectiveness, as well as participating in the evaluation and planning activities for the village as a whole.

- ▶ **National Director:** The national director guides the village in the development of village plans, consistent with national priorities. He approves the draft village plan and budget in accordance with the national plans and budgets. He monitors and supports progress, responds to village needs, and allocates resources as appropriate.

Guidelines

- 1 **A village plan is prepared annually:** The village plan is based on an evaluation of the village's development areas such as child development and staff training needs, an analysis of external factors affecting the village, implementation of the SOS Children's Village standards and guidelines, and national planning priorities. The village committee uses the evaluation results to work out the village plan, strengthening weaker areas and building on good practices. Co-workers from different villages are encouraged to share their experiences and practices in order to support each other to attain better results.
- 2 **Two planning and evaluation meetings are held each year:** The planning meeting provides the opportunity for all village co-workers to sit together and share their ideas for the future. It is inclusive, participative and unbureaucratic, increasing staff members' motivation and their commitment to the accomplishment of the village plan.
- 3 **A village budget is prepared each year:** The budget is prepared each year, based on the objectives set out in the village plan. It makes available the resources for the plan's implementation, and guides the day-to-day expenditure within the facility.
- 4 **A report on the development of the SOS Children's Village is worked out twice a year:** Twice a year, the village director sends a village report to the national director indicating progress according to the village plan. The national director provides feedback to these reports, offering necessary guidance and support.
- 5 **Research concerning adults who were brought-up in an SOS family is carried out:** This is carried out on a regular basis in order to keep track of their progress and to provide further input into village evaluation and planning.

'How to': Further Explanations of the Guidelines



- 1 **A village plan is prepared annually**
 - a) The village planning process is undertaken in accordance with the national planning schedule.

- b) The village plan is the document that summarises results from the planning process. It contains objectives and actions, a schedule highlighting the major dates for the coming year, and an accompanying budget.
 - c) The village plan includes the plans for all SOS facilities connected with the village.
 - d) Planning should be enjoyable and should contribute to harmony within the team. Different planning tools could be used to make the process interesting and motivational.
- 2 Two planning and evaluation meetings are held each year**
- a) These meetings may be one-day or two-day meetings, depending on what time frame is needed or considered appropriate. The aims of the meetings are to:
 - ◆ Evaluate implementation of the SOS Children’s Village standards and guidelines;
 - ◆ Evaluate current village activities and practices to see which need to be removed or improved, or if new practices need to be introduced;
 - ◆ Assess the needs of the SOS families and the village, especially child development and staff training needs; in preparation for this, SOS mothers lead a discussion with their children to share their ideas regarding the development of the village;
 - ◆ Evaluate how the Rights of the Child are reflected in the day-to-day activities with children;
 - ◆ Review the previous year’s plan; and
 - ◆ Agree on priorities for the next year and compile a list of objectives to meet the needs of the village and improve weak areas in the village.
 - b) The first step in planning is to conduct an evaluation. Various tools can be used for this, such as group discussions, questionnaires, exercises or games. Whatever method is used, it should allow all co-workers to participate in and/or lead the evaluation activities.
 - c) In general, an evaluation is based on the collective knowledge and day-to-day experience of the co-workers and a sharing of what they believe is necessary to improve the care and services provided to the children.
 - d) External resources may be brought in as part of the evaluation process. For example, a village director from another SOS Children’s Village may be brought in to conduct an evaluation of the village and to provide his suggestions for improvement. Members of the community, such as community school teachers, members of other NGOs and friends of the SOS Children’s Village organisation, may also be asked to contribute to the village evaluation.
 - e) The village committee then uses the results of the evaluation to make plans to strengthen their weaker areas and build on good practices.
- 3 A report on the development of the SOS Children’s Village is worked out twice a year**
- a) Village reports are internal working reports indicating the village’s progress in implementing the objectives contained in its annual plan.
 - b) The Village report is two or three pages long and includes:
 - ◆ A brief summary of results since the last report;
 - ◆ A review of progress towards achieving objectives; and
 - ◆ The major priorities and an updated schedule for the next six months.
 - c) Village reports are different from the sponsorship progress reports and from the annual report. There is no link between the village reports and the other two reports, and they cannot be used interchangeably.

- d) The national director provides written and/or verbal feedback on the village report, ensuring that achievements are acknowledged, problems are appropriately attended to, and guidance and direction are provided.
- 4 **Research concerning adults who were brought-up in an SOS family is carried out**
- a) Information is collected and statistics compiled regarding the young adults' current situations. Recommendations from these adults regarding the operations of the village are taken into account in improving the effectiveness of village programmes.
 - b) The village director ensures that contact is kept with all adults who have been brought up in the SOS families, and keeps track of their progress and major life steps.
 - c) This is a continuing process. Every three years a research report is prepared for the national office, which contains statistics and the status of each adult.

Each co-worker's learning and growth is promoted

A culture that promotes sharing, learning, growth and creativity among all co-workers is nurtured. Individual training needs are assessed and the long-term growth of each co-worker is encouraged. Well-structured human resource practices help to build skills and lead to a greater sense of responsibility and commitment.

(Standard)

“If we want our children to develop in a positive sense, we need people who are willing to accept diversity in culture, religion and thinking, who are willing to accept other people as they are and to let them grow.”

- Helmut Kutin -

The long-term success of an SOS Children's Village and its ability to achieve the desired standards of child care, depend largely on the skills, commitment and initiative of its staff. Individual co-workers work closely together, solving problems and addressing challenges with a sense of collective responsibility and common purpose. Good management practices set the right conditions for the development of motivated, effective teams and individuals who share a strong commitment to children. Co-workers are skilled professionals, who have a caring and people-centred approach.

Human resource development strategies that encourage individual learning and growth are an essential part of this approach. Through good leadership, on-going training and development co-workers gain confidence and are supported to maximise their personal contribution. Each co-worker's long-term commitment to the village is strengthened, thus building experience, continuity and a stable environment in which children can grow.

Responsibilities

- ▶ **SOS Mothers:** SOS mothers form a mutually supportive team that nurtures the development of each of them. Each SOS mother takes the lead in identifying her own development needs and communicates these to the village director.
- ▶ **Supporting Co-workers:** Supporting co-workers learn, share, innovate, and create a supportive environment for SOS families, bringing in external views and knowledge. They contribute to orientation programmes for new co-workers and carry out performance appraisals of those co-workers who report directly to them. They take the lead in identifying

their individual development needs and communicate these to their immediate supervisor. They also assist the village director to implement training plans.

- ▶ **Village Director:** The village director ensures that the national association's human resource management plans and policies are implemented and followed at village level. He is responsible for leading and coaching SOS mothers and senior staff, setting performance objectives and evaluating their progress in achieving these. He sets broad training strategies in line with the needs that are identified.
- ▶ **National Director:** The national director serves as a point of reference, guidance and clarification on all human resource matters. He allocates resources for training at a national level, ensuring that training programmes are available to all facilities.

Guidelines

- 1 **New employees receive a comprehensive orientation programme:** A formal orientation programme is conducted for each new co-worker, providing an overview of the SOS Children's Village organisation, as well as the co-worker's tasks and responsibilities. This builds commitment and responsibility by giving co-workers a deeper understanding of the organisation and the significance of their own contribution.
- 2 **Staff training and development are facilitated:** Staff training and development needs are identified each year during the annual planning process. Structured staff development plans are then drawn up to ensure that co-workers receive appropriate training. This helps co-workers to maximise their contribution and builds greater responsibility. A learning culture is created where co-workers take responsibility for their own growth.
- 3 **Regular performance appraisals are conducted:** Each co-worker has performance appraisal discussions with his or her supervisor at least once a year. During the appraisal, the staff member's contribution is recognised, and support and encouragement are given. Opportunities for growth and improvement are identified, and work objectives are agreed. This lays the foundation for improved work performance and greater commitment.
- 4 **Long service is recognised:** Long service is acknowledged by the organisation. In particular, eligible long-serving co-workers are nominated by the village director for the SOS Children's Village Ring. Staff members are considered whenever there is a vacant position within the village or other facilities. They are given preference over outside candidates, provided they qualify on merit and fulfil all the job requirements.
- 5 **The personal well-being of residential co-workers is promoted:** The village recognises the challenges concerning the personal life of co-workers who are required by their job to live within the village. Creative ways of balancing the challenges and responsibilities of village life to provide space for personal interests, free time and privacy are identified. Extra support is provided in particular to SOS mothers, village directors and youth leaders to enable them to deal with the challenges and demands in a positive and healthy manner. Residential co-workers are encouraged to leave the village during their holidays.

- 6 **Local volunteers with particular skills are invited to work in the village:** Volunteers from within the country who have skills that are needed within the village can be engaged for an agreed time period. They must undergo an orientation programme, and be provided with a formal description of the work expected of them, in which all aspects of their involvement are covered.

'How to': Further Explanations of the Guidelines



- 1 **New employees receive a comprehensive orientation programme**
 - a) A well-run orientation programme is the starting point in welcoming and integrating new co-workers, familiarising them with their work environment, and creating a sense of commitment and motivation.
 - b) A standard village orientation programme usually covers the following basic points:
 - ◆ A tour of the village and any attached facilities, and an introduction to all co-workers;
 - ◆ An opportunity to visit each SOS family informally;
 - ◆ An introduction to the international SOS Children's Village organisation;
 - ◆ An introduction to the national association;
 - ◆ A review of all employment documentation; and
 - ◆ A discussion of the Rights of the Child and how to put them into day-to-day practice.
 - c) During their first month of employment, a new co-worker's supervisor meets with the co-worker at least once a week to provide personal guidance, address questions and concerns, and facilitate the settling-in process. A mentor may also be assigned to the employee for the first three to six months to give extra support. This may be a work colleague or a member of the management staff.

- 2 **Staff training and development are facilitated**
 - a) The village director conducts regular individual reviews and coaching sessions with staff members to help them identify areas for development, set personal development plans, and monitor progress.
 - b) All co-workers directly dealing with children should have a good basic knowledge of child development, appropriate discipline, children's rights, and listening skills.
 - c) Co-workers are encouraged to take responsibility for their own development. A firm commitment is made to providing support for appropriate and relevant studies, in the form of financial assistance, study leave and exam leave. Self-directed training may be initiated by co-workers and may include enrolment for a part-time degree or diploma or attendance at a night school. The village will provide financial support to co-workers who wish to complete their high school (or secondary school) education.

3 Regular performance appraisals are conducted

- a) Performance appraisals are always a constructive, participative and forward-looking process. They build mutual respect and understanding between the immediate supervisor and the staff member concerned.
- b) The appraisal should largely be based on the employee's own evaluation of their work. It is important that the village director links this self-evaluation to his own observations as objectively as possible. The appraisal should also be linked to the employee's job description and mutually agreed objectives.
- c) Informal one-on-one discussions should be held with all co-workers at least once a quarter. This provides an opportunity to monitor progress, give encouragement and motivation, review development needs, and maintain positive relations.

4 Long service is recognised

- a) SOS mothers who have completed seven years of service, and other co-workers who have completed 14 years of service, may be nominated by the village director for the SOS Ring.
- b) In addition to the SOS Children's Village Ring, the national association could develop a system of recognition of long service. Long-service awards may be developed to acknowledge employees who have served the organisation for periods of 5, 10, 15, 20 and 25 years. Such awards may include certificates or tokens of appreciation such as ties, pins or scarves.

5 The personal well-being of residential co-workers is promoted

- a) In addition to annual leave and monthly days off, residential child-care co-workers (SOS mothers, village directors and youth leaders) should be encouraged to take a reasonable amount of time out of their daily schedule for themselves.
- b) SOS mothers, village directors and youth leaders may be further supported with specialised training in stress management, health and exercise programmes, and personal development programmes.

The village director leads the SOS Children's Village

Standard
10

The village director leads the overall development of the SOS Children's Village by promoting the organisation's values, setting objectives with his team, and ensuring that support services are offered to the SOS families. He guides all co-workers and plays a central role in guiding and promoting the professional development of the SOS mothers.

(Standard)

"Partnership in leadership is today the style in all SOS Children's Villages. For the village director this change is not necessarily more agreeable than the old authoritarian system, but the results are incomparably better."

- Fritz Haider -

*(Hermann Gmeiner's 'first and closest colleague',
and the longest-serving village director, for 40 years, from 1950 to 1990)*

The village director is the most senior co-worker within the SOS Children's Village and is ultimately responsible and accountable for all village activities. He focuses on the continuous improvement of the standard of care offered to children. He is a warm-hearted manager who works in partnership with his team, and devotes much time and energy to the management and development of co-workers. Through regular co-operation with the SOS mothers he also maintains an overview of the children's development needs. This ensures that his decisions, plans and actions are guided by what is in the best interests of the children.

The village director ensures that, through ongoing training, guidance and support, co-workers are able to take full responsibility for their area of work. He is the leader of the village and focuses on building confidence, initiative and responsibility among its co-workers. He builds an environment of trust and brings out the best in everyone, enabling them to maximise their contribution.

Responsibilities

- ▶ **Village Director:** The village director is responsible for the leadership and co-ordination of all village activities. He supports the SOS mothers to ensure the well-being of the SOS families and promotes strong links between the youth homes and the SOS families. He leads the financial and general administrative functions of the village and represents the village in the community. He reports directly to the national director.

- ▶ **National Director:** The national director promotes the personal and professional development of the village director, by having regular performance appraisals, offering ongoing guidance and support and providing training opportunities.

Guidelines

(The guidelines also provide a frame for the key responsibilities of the village director.)

- 1 Lead the overall development of the village and its families:** The village director leads and supports the SOS mothers and youth leaders, and other co-workers who report directly to him. He ensures that all co-workers' contributions are focused on the best interests of children. He is accountable for the quality of child care within the SOS families as well as for the administrative and community-related activities of the village. He is also responsible for overseeing the implementation of all SOS Children's Village standards and guidelines as outlined in this manual.
- 2 Guide and support the SOS mothers:** The village director ensures that each SOS mother has easy and direct access to him, and that she can rely on him. Each year, he has a performance appraisal meeting with her to set her development objectives. This is formally followed up at least once every six months. He also has informal monthly meetings with each SOS mother, where they share experiences, talk about her children, review goals and offer each other feedback and support.
- 3 Ensure that support services are provided to SOS families:** The village director maintains an overview of the children's development needs, ensuring that these needs are matched with available resources. He offers equal and ongoing support to each SOS family, and ensures that each SOS family has the necessary support services. These services are carefully planned with child development and administrative co-workers. He also ensures that strong links are maintained between the youth living in the youth home and their SOS families.
- 4 Hold meetings of all SOS mothers at least once a month:** SOS mother meetings focus on matters of common interest to SOS families and on sharing child-care experiences. The village director, together with the SOS mother representative, sets the agenda. The village director leads the meeting, and minutes are kept and distributed to each SOS mother as well as village committee members.
- 5 Participate in children's activities in the village and community:** The village director joins events of importance in the lives of the SOS families and children. This includes an involvement in activities such as engagements, marriages, school celebrations, and sports events. Day-to-day interactions with the children provide the opportunity for a positive relationship to grow between the village director and individual children. Overall, he aims to ensure that every child is legally and culturally integrated into and accepted by society.

- 6 **Lead the administration of the village:** The village director ensures that financial, planning, public relations and other administrative activities in the village are adequately undertaken, and that links with the national office are maintained. He keeps the national director informed of village activities, through meeting with him at least twice a year and by means of twice yearly written reports.
- 7 **Support the SOS families to be a part of the community:** The village director builds positive relationships with people, authorities and organisations in the community who are able to contribute to village activities and provide services to the SOS families. He ensures that an adequate budget is made available for SOS families to make use of community services, and monitors the quality of such services. He officially represents the village in the community.
- 8 **Lead the village committee:** In leading and co-ordinating village activities, the village director is directly supported by a village committee. This committee includes the SOS mother representative; a youth leader or their co-ordinator; a senior child development co-worker; and a senior administrative co-worker. It consists of five or six people and meets at least once a month to co-ordinate and discuss village matters.
- 9 **Participate in village director training programmes on an ongoing basis:** Throughout his career, the village director undertakes structured training programmes. On employment, he completes at least three months' practical on-the-job training and attends relevant parts of the basic training programme for SOS mothers. Thereafter, he has at least two weeks of training every two years. He is offered regular guidance and support by the national director.
- 10 **Contribute to the development of the national association:** He is responsible for learning from other SOS Children's Villages and sharing his own experiences. He also participates in and makes a contribution towards the national planning process.

'How to': Further Explanations of the Guidelines



- 1 **Lead the overall development of the village and its families**
 - a) The village director works together with co-workers using a participatory management style and exercising a strong sense of teamwork. He has final decision-making authority for the village within the organisation's defined framework of operation.
 - b) The village director ensures that all co-workers receive regular training as well as ongoing guidance and support. He takes particular responsibility for supporting the development of those co-workers who report directly to him, and he carries out their annual performance appraisals.

- c) The village director is often responsible for overseeing the SOS facilities that are within the same community as their SOS Children's Village. He oversees planning and general administrative activities. A village director's first priority is, however, always the village, and his energies and resources are directed towards that. Each national association determines the best reporting structure to support its specific operations.
- d) At meetings of the association's national management team and national/regional village director meetings, the village director is able to exchange ideas and knowledge directly with his colleagues at the national office and other facilities.
- e) The village director needs to be aware of the strengths and weaknesses of his village. He is then able to share with other villages the 'good practices' on which these strengths are based, and to seek advice and guidance from others to tackle the weaknesses.

2 Guide and support the SOS mothers

- a) Support is offered to SOS mothers according to their requests. The village director builds a healthy working relationship with SOS mothers, based on mutual trust and respect, and in this way provides them with the support required to fulfil their responsibilities.
- b) The village director maintains an interest in the development of all the children in the village. He can be directly involved in the development planning of some individual children in order to maintain a sensitivity towards children's issues and realities.

3 Participate in village director training programmes on an ongoing basis

- a) Depending on the situation in the country, training may be conducted either in the association's own national training centre, in a regional training centre, in an SOS Children's Village, or at another appropriate facility.
- b) During the three months of on-the-job training in a village, a newly employed village director receives advice, guidance and support from an experienced village director.
- c) The regular training sessions of at least two weeks every two years are based on the village director's professional development needs, according to his job description and as identified through his performance appraisals.

4 Recruitment profile of a village director

a) **General**

Village directors should be able to lead their facilities independently according to good standards of child care and management. This requires that they have clearly identified leadership and human resource management skills combined with an interest in the care of children. They can be male or female.

b) **Desired Personality Characteristics**

- ◆ Desire to work at an SOS Children's Village
- ◆ Strong interest in the needs and development of children
- ◆ Sensitivity to gender issues
- ◆ Willingness to make a long-term commitment
- ◆ Willingness to live within an SOS Children's Village
- ◆ Good physical and mental health
- ◆ Patience and understanding
- ◆ Flexibility, honesty and resourcefulness
- ◆ Outside interests
- ◆ Enjoyment of teamwork

c) **Minimum qualifications, skills and experience**

- ◆ High school (secondary education) diploma or certificate
- ◆ At least three years of post-high school study in a relevant field such as management, human resources, education or social work
- ◆ Five years' work experience in a relevant field
- ◆ Leadership skills, life skills, communication skills

Appendix

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (Summary)

Introduction

Children are born with fundamental freedoms and the inherent rights of all human beings. This is the basic premise of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, an international human rights treaty that is transforming the lives of children and their families around the globe.

People in every country and of every culture and every religion are working to ensure that each of the two billion children in the world enjoys the rights to survival, health and education; to a caring family environment, play and culture; to protection from exploitation and abuse of all kinds; and to have his or her voice heard and opinions taken into account on significant issues.

Principles of the Convention

The Convention has four general principles. The first two apply to all people and the Convention reaffirms them for children. The last two are of particular concern to children.

- ◆ Children must not suffer discrimination “irrespective of the child’s or his or her parent’s or legal guardian’s race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national, ethnic or social origin, property, disability, birth or other status.”
- ◆ Children have a right to survival and development in all aspects of their lives, including the physical, emotional, psycho-social, cognitive, social and cultural.
- ◆ The best interests of the child must be a primary consideration in all decisions or actions that affect the child or children as a group. This holds true whether decisions are made by governmental, administrative or judicial authorities, or by families themselves.
- ◆ Children must be allowed to be active participants in all matters affecting their lives and be free to express their opinions. They have the right to have their views heard and taken seriously.

Children's Rights to Basic Health and Welfare

Every child has the right to:

- ◆ Survival and development;
- ◆ An adequate standard of living;
- ◆ The highest attainable standard of health, and effective health services;
- ◆ Special care, if he or she is disabled, that ensures dignity, promotes self-reliance and facilitates active participation in the community; and
- ◆ Social security and child-care services and facilities.

The Rights of Children and their Families

Every child has the right to:

- ◆ Live with his or her parents or to maintain contact if separated from either one;
- ◆ Cross national borders to be reunified with his or her parents;
- ◆ Receive alternative care when a family environment cannot be maintained;
- ◆ A safe adoption system;
- ◆ Protection from kidnapping;
- ◆ Protection from abuse and neglect by parents or care givers; and
- ◆ Regular review of any placements that might be necessary for care, protection or treatment.

The Convention requires that governments will ensure the rights of parents and families to:

- ◆ Provide guidance to their child;
- ◆ Receive assistance in child-raising;
- ◆ Have responsibilities shared equally by both parents;
- ◆ Receive material assistance and support programmes especially with regard to nutrition, clothing and housing; and
- ◆ Cross national borders to be reunified with their children.

Children's Rights to Education, Leisure and Cultural Activities

Every child has the right to:

- ◆ Free primary education;
- ◆ Access to secondary education and vocational training;
- ◆ An education that develops his or her personality, talents, and mental and physical abilities to their fullest;
- ◆ An education that prepares him or her for an active adult life in a free society;
- ◆ An education that fosters respect for his or her own family, cultural identity, and language; for his or her country; and for the natural environment;
- ◆ An education in the spirit of understanding, peace, tolerance and equality;
- ◆ Leisure, play and the opportunity to participate in cultural and artistic activities; and
- ◆ The opportunity to enjoy his or her culture, profess and practice his or her religion, use his or her language.

Children's Rights to Special Protection

Every child has the right to special protection:

- ◆ In emergency situations such as armed conflict, or when children are separated from family or home;
- ◆ When he or she is in conflict with the law;
- ◆ In situations of exploitations such as child labour, drug abuse, sexual exploitation or sexual abuse, sale, trafficking and abduction; and
- ◆ From discrimination of any kind.

The Civil Rights and Freedoms of Children

Every child has the right to:

- ◆ A name and nationality;
- ◆ Protection from being deprived of his or her identity;
- ◆ Freedom of expression;
- ◆ Freedom of thought, conscience and religion;
- ◆ Freedom of association and peaceful assembly;
- ◆ Information from a diversity of sources;
- ◆ Privacy;
- ◆ Protection from torture or other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment; and
- ◆ Protection against unlawful arrest and unjustified deprivation of liberty.

For the full text of the convention refer to: <http://www.unicef.org/crc/crc.htm>

Translations of the text into other languages are available at: <http://www.boes.org/justice.html>

