

What inspires us in our work

Stories and Dreams
Harvesting
Workshop 2018



SOS CHILDREN'S
VILLAGES
HERMANN GMEINER ACADEMY

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Stories and Dreams Harvesting Workshop 2018

October 2018

Team Education, Hermann Gmeiner Academy

The following paper represents the output of this year's Harvesting workshop. 23 longstanding co-workers from six SOS regions and the international office shared their inspiring stories about moments of flow they've experienced in their work life within SOS Children's Villages.

These co-workers from various work fields shared their valuable insights primarily within the workshop group. This compilation enables sharing and learning of a wider audience.

Read what gives life to our colleagues and what keeps them strong. Let yourself be inspired by co-workers aspirations for a flourishing future of SOS Children's Villages that leads us to support more and more children and families.



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

Content

Preface	5
Learning from Stories	14
What are the fruits being harvested	17
What works well – What gives strength – What can we build on	
Stories and Dreams	30
Programmes of SOS Children’s Villages	
Change is the only constant.....	35
Remain focused in the midst of changing career demands	41
My encounter with SOS Children’s Villages Sri Lanka	49
Changes in SOS Children’s Villages	
Let go	55
Individual Inspirational Stories	
Happiness	61
Failure is not final	65
From despair to inspiration	71
You are forever my Mum.....	77
The report.....	81
Individual Inspirational Stories from the Inside – First-hand Experiences	
Keeping the memory of my SOS sister	87
Saving the SOS family legacy.	93
From need to lead.	99
Partnerships of SOS Children’s Villages with Governments	
Lead up.....	107
Partnerships of SOS Children’s Villages with Donors	
Find your Why	115
Business works best based on trust.	119
Partnership in terms of Teamwork	
Stay positive	127
Leadership in SOS Children’s Villages	
We can learn by trying.....	135
A Look Back	141
Leading a team with diverse knowledge.	147
Human Resource Development in SOS Children’s Villages	
Facing challenges to succeed.....	155
SOS mother as a leader.....	159
Management in SOS Children’s Villages	
You can!	165
Holistic Topics in SOS Children’s Villages	
A loving home PLUS!	171
Harvesting workshop team	173
Bibliography	174
Harvesting short films	174

Preface

Harvesting time is when SOS Children's Villages co-workers from all around the world come together to share stories about the best moments in their work life.

What is Harvesting about?

In Harvesting we, the Hermann Gmeiner Academy education team, invite long-standing co-workers to exchange their rich and varied working experiences through storytelling. Colleagues from different countries working in a variety of functions tell stories from their personal professional experience and share their extensive knowledge of issues like leading people, quality care, being part of the lives of children who become independent adults and much more. All the topics are of special importance for our vision: Every child belongs to a family and grows with love, respect and security.

Objectives for Harvesting Workshops

Harvesting is more than a simple storytelling experience, it is a knowledge-sharing workshop with a holistic approach. Aims are set on three levels: 1. the individual level,

2. the level of the workshop group, and 3. the level of the organisation. Harvesting workshops are designed to

- Appreciate and value co-workers as individuals and as bearers of experiences & knowledge
- Offer tools for creative action towards a desired future for SOS Children's Villages International
- Ensure intensive sharing of knowledge prepared as stories
- Sensitize for diversity through face-to-face exchange in a diverse group of co-workers
- Generate the feeling of closeness among participants and affiliation with SOS Children's Villages International
- Ensure knowledge by sharing with more co-workers beyond the Harvesting workshop group

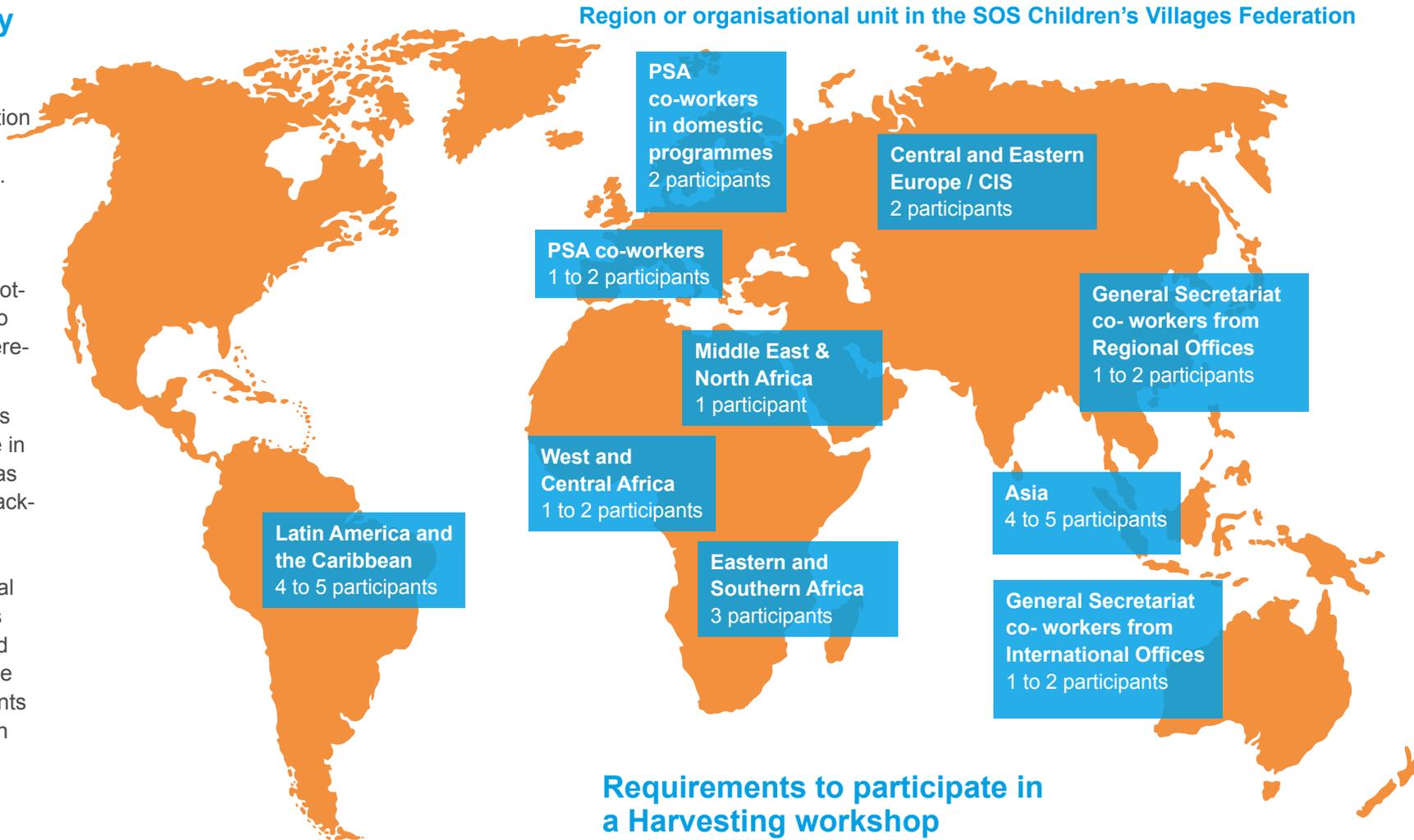
The overall goal of Harvesting still is to discover what works well in daily activities, what gives strength to SOS co-workers and what SOS Children's Villages can build on.



Experiencing Diversity

Mandated and supported by the board¹ of the Hermann Gmeiner Academy, the Academy's Education team invites these co-workers to the yearly Harvesting workshops. Diversity is essential for a fruitful exchange. Co-workers from all Member Associations – from the National Association to the Promoting and Supporting Association to the General Secretariat – are therefore welcome to take part.

We also look for diversity in terms of the number of years of service in SOS Children's Villages as well as geographical and professional background. Ideally, the group should consist of co-workers from all working fields. To ensure an equal distribution of participants across the federation, we have produced a distribution key. This reflects the approximate number of participants per organisational unit and region and allows for:



Requirements to participate in a Harvesting workshop

In order to allow a smooth knowledge exchange participants must

- Be capable of working in English and able to communicate fluently
- Be open to sharing knowledge and willing to engage in an intense learning process
- Have a minimum of 5 years' experience within SOS Children's Villages
- Have a minimum of 5 years left until retirement
- Attend the workshop in full, not least as a matter of respect for the sharing practice

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

SOS Children's Villages: a learning organisation

Harvesting workshops and the workshop network allow learning and growth at different levels.

Each participant in the workshop receives new inputs. New insights are created and individual development fostered not only by the wide exchange of knowledge with colleagues but also the methods employed, such as the coaching processes and the reflection that take place in the workshops.

The insights derived from the workshop process and conveyed in this booklet offer an opportunity for learning at the level of the international federation.

Why focus on what works well?

In Harvesting workshops we focus on what works well in the participants' daily work activities. Building on the Appreciative Inquiry approach (Cooperrider et al 2008), we are convinced that it is more effective to ask, "What do you want more of?" or "What do you want to see grow stronger, better?" than to look for weaknesses, mistakes or problems. In contrast to common ways of thinking, by using the AI approach we look at everything that gives "life"

and energy and thus supports and motivates co-workers.

"Appreciative Inquiry does not focus on changing people. Instead, it invites people to engage in building the kinds of organizations they want to live in. That's hard to resist." (Gervase Bushe)

Research on positive psychology shows that the act of asking questions already influences the co-workers of an organisation in some way. (Bushe, G.R. 2011). People generally show more confidence and readiness to journey to the future, when they know what to carry forward and what to build on because it worked well in the past. In other words:

"Appreciative Inquiry is an approach to organizational and community development that has been used successfully worldwide to cultivate hope, build capacity, unleash collective appreciation and imagination, and bring about positive change." (Bliss Browne)

Storytelling: Appreciation, learning and change

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

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

In Harvesting workshops participants explore and share tacit knowledge by storytelling. Their knowledge becomes tangible and, as a result, accessible. Co-workers are thus enabled to connect their experiences, insights and knowledge to the organisation. It contributes to usable knowledge within SOS Children's Villages and creates a platform for valuing it. This goes beyond the available information sources. Harvesting is not just an instrument for knowledge transfer – it goes far beyond that. It was set

up as a development project for the staff and the organisation, in which exchange between co-workers is the main focus.

Around 40,000 SOS Children's Villages co-workers perform wonderful work, often under very challenging conditions. Harvesting brings successful inspiring work experiences to the attention of SOS Children's Villages. In the workshop, staff members' experiences are turned into knowledge through a deeper perception. This knowledge has an effect on the organisation.

In Harvesting, storytelling is grounded in the Appreciative Inquiry process. It begins by asking questions. To ask questions means to begin to discover, realise and see things: things like the treasure of knowledge embedded in co-workers' individual experience.

Appreciation by deep listening

People easily feel attracted by storytelling as we experience it as a simple and natural means of communicating views and experiences. Storytelling is a natural process as we tell stories whenever we communicate in our everyday life, we tell stories to make ourselves understood by others. One important effect is that people feel appreciated by being invited to share their experiences in the form of a story. Individuals realise how their story fits into the bigger picture of the organisation.

When co-workers experience a flow moment

In the first phase of the workshop we invite participants to think back to a time in their working lives when they felt entirely focused on and energised for a specific task or project in their given function and to tell their story about this “flow moment”. They discover strengths, solutions and alternatives. Workshop participants jointly discover what gives them life at the times when they are at their very best at work. So in this step they realise what is there, what they already have, their assets and joys. Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi (1990: 49) describes the flow as an enlightening moment in which we felt at ease and energised even though we were exerting our maximum effort.

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

Discovering the good and taking it into the future

The inspiring process of AI works as follows:

- **Discovery:** Participants discover strengths, solutions and alternatives. They discover what has given them life and strength at the times when they were at their very best at work. In this phase of the process they discover what is there, what they already have, their joys.
- **Dream:** With their discoveries in their hands, participants move on to the second step: they start dreaming. Dreaming to increase and expand more and more in strength, life and energy. Again we ask questions like: “What could be even better in SOS Children’s Villages?” “What is the world calling for?”
- **Design:** With their dream symbols participants are equipped to begin to design. Like an architect, they now design the future they believe to be worthy of themselves and of SOS Children’s Villages. It is the

time to give shape and structure to their expectations and desires. They give expression to these in a figure for you and all others to see.

- **Destiny:** Now that the workshop participants have the form of what they desire, they begin asking questions, looking for partners, support, measures, infrastructures, means and chances for implementing their product in their normal daily life and work.

Energy flows where the attention goes

What does this mean? In Harvesting workshops we foster growth in a direction in which we at SOS Children’s Villages are already proficient. We choose this approach, not because we think that no more changes are needed, but because research (Cooperrider et al 2008) shows that what we focus on becomes our reality. Looking at the great diversity of the Harvesting workshop participants, it is clear that there is not one reality but many.

We extract the life-giving forces from the participants’ stories. These are collected in a mind map process and displayed as shown below. One person starts sharing his or her live-giving force. This idea is the starting point of the Mind Map. Once another participant shares an idea

we add branches to the map. The participants decide where to put the next word, whether we should open a new branch or whether it links to any of the topics already mentioned.

Life-giving forces are factors that surface in the stories and serve as driving forces for SOS co-workers. When asked “What inspires you?” Harvesting workshop participants express their own personal inspiration, describing it as e.g.:

- The idea of SOS
- Independence of youngsters
- Capacity building
- High quality standards
- Community approach
- Alignment to global framework
- Rights-based approach
- Impact = energy and excitement
- Ongoing change
- Network and communication between stakeholders
- Trust of donors
- New strategic field – consulting
- Working with people outside SOS and much more.

See graphic p. 12, 13.

These overarching aspects illustrate the collective wisdom of this specific group of SOS co-workers captured in their stories. According to the 4-D cycle of the Appreciative Inquiry process, these factors lead to another step in the workshop process (for details about the methodology please refer to the Harvesting workshop curriculum). Having brought these strengths to the surface, participants start to dream about what might be in the future.

How can they each use this on their way into the common future of SOS Children's Villages? You will find the stories and the dreams of each participant in Chapter 4 of this booklet.

Learning from each other

Co-workers learn and benefit from each other's wealth of experience in being effective. Harvesting proves that telling your own story and relating it to the stories of colleagues fosters a feeling of belonging, is an inspiration to take action, provides motivation and gives a feeling of being appreciated. Coming together in Harvesting offers participants the opportunity to share ideas and reflect on what the vision of SOS Children's Villages means for each co-worker's individual task. Listening and telling stories creates a powerful means of building a strong network of relationships throughout the federation.

A collection of the knowledge gathered from storytelling beyond the Harvesting workshop group will be made available separately. This involves learnings from 1-hour storytelling sessions that were organised for knowledge-sharing for SOS co-workers based in Innsbruck and Vienna, beyond the group of workshop participants.

While listening, the audience focused on one of these questions:

- What innovative ideas do you find in this story?
- What can we learn from this story about connecting people?
- What have you learned about fruitful ways of talking to each other?

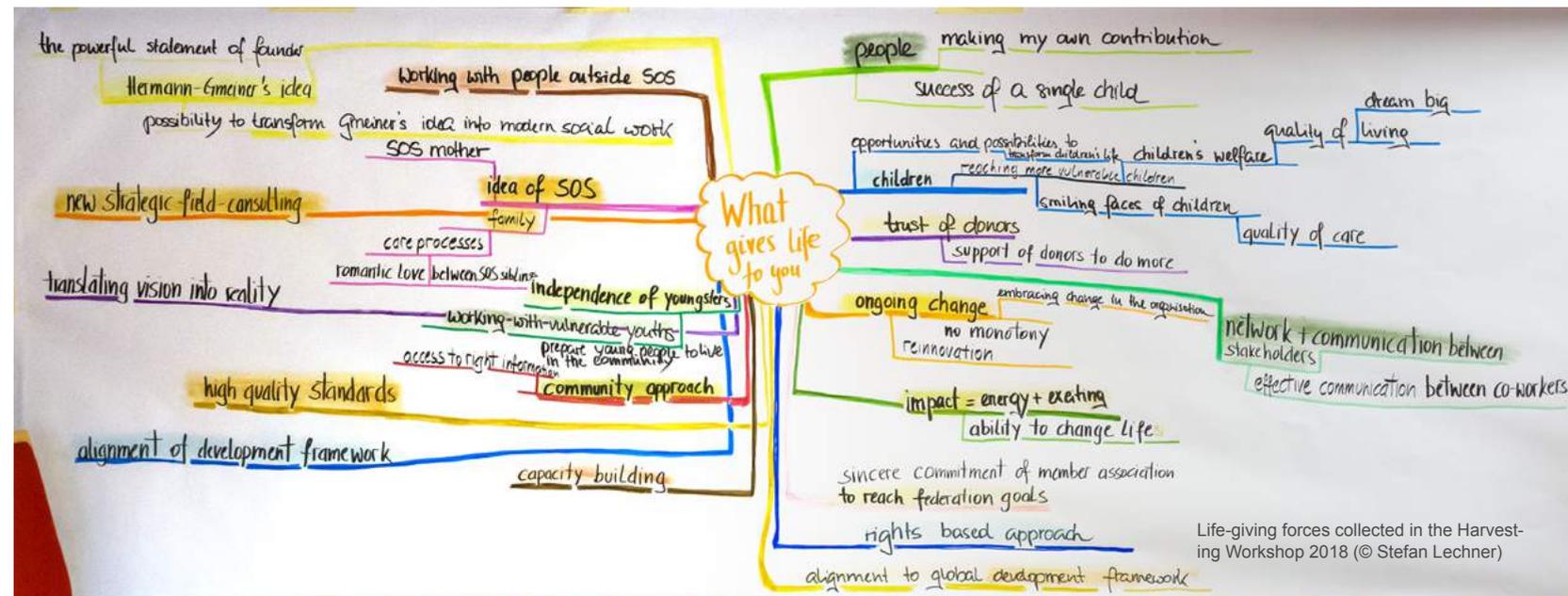
- What can we learn from this story about transformation?
- Which values surfaced in the storytelling?
- What does this story tell us about committed people?
- You can also listen without using a specific perspective. What can we learn from this?

Embracing Change

What are your dreams for the future? By asking questions like these, Harvesting participants already start to think about what they want more of, what they want to see grow in SOS Children's Villages. This encourages positive change. Appreciative Inquiry can be seen as an approach to change management.

The second phase of the process, the dream phase, sets the scene for the individual to exercise his or her potential in "creative envisioning" for SOS Children's Villages. When asked: "What might be within my sphere of influence in SOS Children's Villages?" Harvesting participants dream of e.g.:

- Being able to care for more and more children
- Partnering with more and more governments for better social welfare systems in their countries
- A good life for the children who grow up in SOS Children's Villages programmes



Life-giving forces collected in the Harvesting Workshop 2018 (© Stefan Lechner)

Learning from Stories

Sharing Knowledge

Stories are told during the Harvesting workshop with the aim of extracting the underlying learning. In this chapter we invite you to follow the process of analysis that takes place during and after the Harvesting workshop.

After participants have told their story in small groups of three, they begin drafting their stories in a writers' lab. Every workshop participant presents the title and topic of his or her story. The group then tries to categorise all the stories into topic clusters that represent the chapters of this booklet.

During this process we come to see our multiple perceptions. Not all colleagues have the same perception of the topic clusters or view of where each story should go. Clusters are therefore reviewed jointly. The photo below shows the result of this process. The colours show the final allocation of the stories under the following topics.

Individual inspirational stories

- Some of these were told by co-workers who grew up in an SOS Children's Village so were therefore called "Individual Inspirational Stories from the Inside – First-hand Experiences".

Stories about being part of an international non-profit organisation

- Changes in SOS Children's Villages
- Programmes of SOS Children's Villages
- Leadership in SOS Children's Villages

Some stories were not easy to classify. Participants therefore decided to give them a double classification.

Stories about partnerships of SOS Children's Villages refer either to

- Relationships that SOS Children's Villages have with governments
- Relationships or partnerships with donors
- Relationships with team members, colleagues.

Harvesting Workshop 2018 Discovery Phase

STORIES about a FLOW moment

Thailand	Chirawat	Happiness	Without happiness what is the reason to live?	Nepal	Parnita	Hope to be promised. Failure is not ultimate but a stepping stone towards success
IOR Asia	Sumit	Let bose	Take a backseat	Malawi	Alexander	Help me to lead the lead. A story about a leadership initiative in Malawi
Cabo Verde	Marco	The smiling SOS girl that became an inspiration and also a reference	<small>Keeping the memory of my SOS sister</small>	Ghana	Mavis	Remain focussed in the midst of changing career demands. Coping strategies
Bulgaria	Milena	From despair to inspiration	SOS a factory for miracles	Botswana	Agnes	Find your why and the how will come easily. Sharing the SOS story in fundraising
Albania	Manjola	5 We can learn by trying	Establishing a father's club in Albania	Indonesia	Dewi	Stay positive even in the worst situation 3 Get new energy - motivation
Nigeria	Ayodeji	1 Lead up	Successful engagement in the work with the Government	Palestine	Abdallah	From need to lead Growing up in SOS + working there
Guinea Equatorial	José	Facing challenges to succeed	Solving challenges in Human Res. Dev.	Georgia	Mariami	Saving SOS family legacy Dear Past thank you for all the lessons. Dear Future I'm ready!
Ghana	Shire	Dual motherhood	In between: biological & SOS children	Germany HGF	Barbara	Business works best based on trust. From a corporate donor-ship to a warm-hearted SOS friendship
Germany	Ulrike	Writing under pressure	About good teamwork	Vietnam	Huong Lan	"Mum, wherever I go, whatever I do: 'You are forever my Mum'" A story about a child growing up in the SOS CV
Sri Lanka	Rohan	My encounter with SOS in Sri Lanka	Holistic Development	India	Shailesh	Change is the only constant. Rolling out of a kinship programme
Serbia	Vesna	4 Success Of Synergies	People make an organisation	IO Innsbruck	Christian	A loving home is not enough! Today's opportunities to grow
Syria	Sireen	2 You can!	Discover what you can do. Improving skills.			

Partnership Stories
Holistic Issues
Individual Inspirational
Organisational
Management
Programmes
Government
Donors
Change
Leadership
Human Resource Dev

What are the fruits being harvested

The strategic goal of SOS Children's Villages is

"Many more children succeed in life. We lead the world's largest child care movement."

How can SOS Children's Villages reach these ambitious goals? Several strategic initiatives have been defined to provide orientation for co-workers on how to get there. How do Harvesting workshops link to this overall steering process?

In Harvesting each participant is guided through a resource-oriented process that firstly allows them to gain awareness of their own personal strengths and then inspires them to concentrate these in order to support SOS Children's Villages to grow in the desired direction, as laid out in the strategy 2030 and far beyond.

This summary of acquired knowledge again focuses on appreciating the positive. Looking for answers to the questions mentioned below

touches the personal as well as the organisational level of participants' endeavours. Looking at moments when SOS co-workers are in a "flow", when they are efficient, create impact and feel energised, enables them to stay strong. This in turn contributes to the growth of SOS Children's Villages and participants learn and benefit from each other's wealth of experience in being effective.

How the fruits have been distilled

Before we present the individual stories told during the Harvesting workshop, we focus on the "fruits" of the Harvest. We draw attention to the output of the workshop, the insights and knowledge we have derived from analysing participants' stories. The following dimensions as displayed next were analysed. We have categorised the participants' experiences according to these dimensions and summarised them on a meta level to produce the following recommendations.



What works well

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

A strong focus on high quality in all our efforts is fundamental and especially important with regard to care for children, young people and families

Continue and enhance capacity building in general, and strongly promote the Care Promise to further build and strengthen professionalism. Raise awareness of the commitment to quality care.

Self-reflection is a powerful source for self-determination

Provide professional support in a structured manner e.g. by offering on-the-job training and counselling.

What gives strength

to SOS co-workers

The value of trust is perceived as the basis for everything

Ensure a set-up that allows transparent and open communication and stable trusting relationships as part of the "SOS Children's Villages DNA".

A positive approach in all efforts creates strength

Promote inspirational leadership at all levels and appreciate the potential of focussing on what works

The potential of a learning culture inspires more than too much "security thinking"

Foster a learning culture by openly sharing mistakes as this helps to reduce the fear of faults and failings.

Collective learning and inspiring leaders foster strong motivation

Enable regular sharing and exchange and invite leaders to share their inspirational and motivational thoughts.

What can we build on

within SOS Children's Villages

We know what it means to implement quality in caring relationships and in relationships with partners

Ensure that all co-workers understand our "core business", i.e. caring relationships in all the forms provided; make sure they understand the various types of programmes and their impact

We have strong communication skills that are necessary to enable good stakeholder management, thus leading to tailor-made solutions in the best interests of the child

Provide more support and capacity building to advance professional stakeholder management, especially e.g. in the field of advocacy and communication about our brand (purpose and range of programmes)

We know how to enable participation of local communities, confirming ownership

Guarantee capacity building enabling co-workers to develop the required skill sets.

Being active in over a hundred countries, we are experienced in being sensitive to cultural diversity

Continue to create opportunities for learning and foster cross-cultural exchange. Promote reflection on cultural differences, cohesive forces beyond cultures and inspiring communalities that influence daily activities.

Fruits of the Harvest 2018

SOS Children's Villages programmes

Individual Learning	Learning Opportunity
When you develop communities for a solution in the best interest of the child:	When SOS CV opens its services to the wider community, culture plays an important role.
Know, accept and work with cultural norms and historical bases for behaviours in society instead of fighting against them.	Community work requires a set of skills and a holistic approach to change: e.g.: deep listening skills, the will and knowledge to enable agency in the community, intercultural knowledge, strong communication skills, the ability to ignite motivation for learning and development in the community itself, empathy, openness and ongoing self-reflection.
Stay flexible and adapt your method of work based on the need of the children or the society.	
Take a holistic approach and believe in the change you want to see in your society.	Focus on our vision and think big.
Believe in your new ideas and be ready to put in extra time: starting off a new project often goes beyond your daily tasks.	Collective learning and inspirational leadership foster strong motivation.
Ensure participation of stakeholders and e.g. develop success indicators in consultation with all stakeholders.	Continuous involvement of the local community fosters ownership.
Reach out to many children to support them in living a meaningful life without removing them from their community and roots, if their relatives provide them with security.	Continue promoting the Care Promise, commitment no. 6 (p. 19): "We enhance the integration of SOS families and vulnerable families in community life."
Invite clear guidance from community seniors.	Follow the rules of the community in order to build trust.
Share information regularly and work in an integrative way with community leaders.	Transparent communication using the means of and in the language of the community.

Individual Learning addressed to Management

Apply for e.g. government funding of kinship care model to make programmes self-sustainable.

Learning Opportunity

Build capacity to enable Member Associations to apply for public funding.

Further promote Care Promise, commitment no. 9 (p. 23): "We partner for supporting services and advocate for quality care."

Individual Inspirational Stories from the Inside – First-hand Experiences

Some Harvesting participants grew up in an SOS Children's Village programme. They therefore share experiences at different levels from different perspectives: 1. from the perspective of a programme participant and 2. from the perspective of a co-worker. Their learning outcomes are:

Individual Learning addressed to children and young people in SOS Children's Village programmes

Learning Opportunity

"Do not be ashamed of who you are, do not be ashamed of your family."

Information and ongoing exchange with the local community about SOS' purpose and programmes helps to reduce stigmatisation of children who grow up in SOS programmes.

"Don't be afraid to make mistakes, as mistakes are the best lessons."

Fostering a learning culture helps to reduce fear of mistakes.

"Take risks, and try hard to be independent."

Keep implementing strategic initiative no. 3 "Empower young people. Strengthen their care and employability." (Strategy 2030)

Individual Learning addressed to co-workers

“Don’t worry if we make mistakes; we have the power to stand up again.”

“Don’t be overprotective towards us. Overprotectiveness can lead us to laziness which is the main enemy.”

“I know that you worry about what to say to us or what to do. Calm down and don’t forget the main formula: we just need you to be close and to support us.”

Learning Opportunity

Raise awareness for the SOS Children’s Village Care Promise.

Ensure professionalization of care co-workers as defined e.g. in Care Promise p. 17: “We promote and continuously strengthen the care profession (...)”.

Establish systematic opportunities for reflecting on care relationships like “ongoing training, development and counselling opportunities”.

Individual Learning addressed to Management

“SOS Children’s Villages is the only family we have.” Therefore, SOS Children’s Villages must also remain a safe home based on common family values after leaving care in the SOS family.

Learning Opportunity

Maintain and live up to the SOS value commitment. SOS CV states the value commitment in the care promise. This means, “We keep our promises. We make a long-term commitment to children and their communities and deliver quality services that support them to succeed in life.” (p. 7)

The implementation of this value is described on p. 21: “We promote education, participation and steps to an independent life”. Moreover, “We also make sure that young people can maintain lifelong family ties and seek support from their SOS families after they have left care.” (p. 22)

SOS Children’s Villages’ Partnerships with External Networks and Governments

Individual Learning addressed to co-workers

When SOS Children’s Villages is labelled an institution, take time to explain our care model. Talk about our rights-based approach to childcare.

Learning Opportunity

Share information, enter into dialogue and foster ongoing exchange about SOS purpose and programmes with stakeholders e.g. with the local community. Understanding the mission and vision of SOS Children’s Villages helps to reduce stigmatisation of children who grow up in SOS programmes.

Family strengthening programmes can be a great way to de-stigmatize children in the care of SOS Children’s Villages

If in a country alternative care providers are still perceived as orphanages, give all necessary support to authorities to engage with them. Provide all required documents. You can only work on a change of perception by keeping the organisation going.

Strengthen advocacy about the SOS care model and foster exchange and or capacity building in that regard.

Be aware that to keep up a good relationship is an important way to keep the work going. Sometimes you have to compromise, but still keep bringing up the issues you think need to be resolved.

Reach out and interact with the people and organizations around you. Seek out for collaboration.

Further promote Care Promise, commitment no. 9 (p. 23): “We partner for supporting services and advocate for quality care. We commit to focus on our care expertise and partner for supporting services such as education, healthcare and economic empowerment. We also engage with governments and other decision makers to promote quality care.”

Partnerships of SOS Children's Villages with Donors

Individual Learning addressed to co-workers

Individuals and their dreams are the best way to showcase what SOS does and can achieve.

Engage programme-experienced co-workers in fundraising because they perfectly know how to explain, why somebody should support SOS Children's Villages.

Stay consistent and engage with your audience: This might result in long-lasting and successful partnerships.

Treat all donations and donors with equal appreciation and your network might spread easily.

Learning Opportunity

Focus on individuals supports strategic initiative number 7: "Invest for funding growth" (2030 Strategy).

Knowing the core of SOS Children's Villages efforts helps to "Strengthen our relationship with donors", which is a sub goal of strategic initiative 7 (2030 Strategy).

Individual Learning addressed to Management

It is fundamental to bring our donors as close as possible to our programmes, make them see and feel the dedication and the input of the SOS co-workers which goes beyond the ordinary.

A fundraiser who really knows the story of a child's need before admission and his/her development in SOS Children's Villages makes a difference! It enables them to convince a donor by explaining why they should give. Usually no one remains untouched when they hear the SOS story, but is moved to help in some way.

Learning Opportunity

Never underestimate the power of our core business named "care". This focus is important, for example with regard to strategic initiative number 7: "Invest for funding growth" (2030 Strategy)

Partnership in terms of Teamwork

Individual Learning addressed to co-workers

In the collaboration with other functions, synergy is possible if finance co-workers see themselves as service providers who provide trust and a professional approach.

Learning Opportunity

Ensure that all co-workers see the bigger picture and keep the overall goals in mind. This can be supported by multi-stakeholder management and influential leadership as promoted in the "SOS Children's Villages Leadership Journey: Towards 2020 and beyond".

Human Resource Development in SOS Children's Villages

Individual Learning addressed to co-workers	Learning Opportunity
Remain professional and resist temptations to be influenced by "hearsay" or grape vine or unofficial information.	Be as transparent as possible in order to avoid rumours.
Be patient while responding to the needs and demands of any situation that could influence your career path.	
Your own story influences your work with young people.	Raise awareness for the commitment to quality care (SOS Care Promise, p. 17) and ensure professionalization of care co-workers as defined: "We promote and continuously strengthen the care profession (...)". Offer "on-going training, development and counselling opportunities".
Different coping strategies are needed to handle the varied career demands that might become relevant if you change your position within SOS Children's Villages.	As much clarity as possible about roles and responsibilities helps co-workers to perform well.
Before making a decision, wait until the main circumstances are defined.	
Pass on support and stories of success to others.	Collective learning and positive leadership foster motivation and improve collaboration.
Showing trust in someone or experiencing someone else's trust can push you to amazing things.	Always keep an eye on the impact of the organisation's culture and values.
Do things fully without fear and do not be afraid of extra effort, because this will bring success.	Create room for learning and challenge co-workers, fostering individual development that leads to success.
Hard work and dreams can help you achieve what you want and help others.	A strong vision and inspirational leadership foster strong motivation.

Individual Learning addressed to Management	Learning Opportunity
The recognition given to SOS mothers by SOS Children's Villages inspires and encourages this group of co-workers.	Keep visible forms of expressing appreciation, such as the ring ceremony, which is one such form much valued by SOS mothers.

Leadership in SOS Children's Villages

Individual Learning addressed to co-workers	Learning Opportunity
Certain situations require us to step back, to observe and accept if something is not going as well as it could, and get help or advice in improving the circumstances.	Create room for reflection and ensure leaders are accessible for their co-workers.
Stepping back can offer new opportunities for others to take the lead and to change a process from within.	
Individual Learning addressed to Management	Learning Opportunity
Trust that your team members are able to fulfil a given task but be there to support them if needed.	Support leadership development and continuously strengthen leaders. Offer ongoing training, peer-to-peer exchange and counselling opportunities.
Trust in team members enables commitment.	

Holistic Topics in SOS Children's Villages

Individual Learning addressed to co-workers	Learning Opportunity
Be clear about what you want and relate it to the prevailing circumstances, project it onto the future and assess yourself in order to make a holistic decision.	Foster individual development, and communicate and state expectations as clearly as possible.
Remain honest with yourself and with others, which in many situations may result in a win-win situation.	Maintain and live-up to the SOS values: "Courage. We take action; Commitment. We keep our promises; Trust. We believe in each other; Accountability. We are reliable partners".
Do not be afraid of change. Embrace change with a positive attitude and carry along lessons learnt from the past.	"Lead change for higher impact" as promoted in the SOS Children's Villages Leadership Journey: Towards 2020 and beyond.

Individual Learning addressed to Management	Learning Opportunity
If we do not give up on children, we can achieve success stories.	Ensure the implementation of the SOS Care Promise (2018: 3) that defines "our commitment to quality care for every single child in our programmes. Following a child-centred approach, the SOS Care Promise builds on existing initiatives that promote the quality of our work. It positions the SOS Children's Village as a modern programme for child care and protection with services that evolve according to the changing situation of children in the local context."
Do not dwell on disappointment or negative emotions or you might miss a positive opportunity!	Support leadership, which not only means leading others but also leading ourselves and promoting resource-oriented thinking.
Trust is the basis of everything	Maintain and live-up to the SOS value: "Trust: We believe in each other." Be transparent, communicate openly and entrust co-workers with challenging tasks that enable growth.

Stories and Dreams

Stories about a flow moment. Dreams about a flourishing future

The following stories are about the “flow moments” of experienced SOS co-workers and dreams about a hoped-for future. “What might be?” is the central question in the second phase of the appreciative inquiry process.

Storytelling is an act of trust and it takes courage from each storyteller to put themselves out and share their story. It is important for us to honour that act and to do our best to treat each story in a respectful way. Therefore some stories that have been told in Harvesting 2017 remain with the group.

In order to respect the privacy of people mentioned in stories, names have been changed to maintain confidentiality as indicated.

We aim to present the story in an authentic way. For most Harvesting storytellers English is not the mother tongue. To keep the original character of the story, editing was conducted in a minimal form.

Who are the story authors?

The authors of the stories represent the diversity of the Harvesting participants. 23 colleagues from 21 countries gathered in the Harvesting workshop 2018. Participants come from different hierarchical levels and functions, from various backgrounds e.g. SOS mothers, fundraisers, social workers and representatives of regional international offices. This diversity is a key source of learning and enables the rich harvest shown in the collection of fruits. The stories told have now been compiled in this booklet.

The backgrounds where SOS co-workers live and work are so heterogeneous that it is often hard for us to imagine what the (work) lives of our colleagues might look like. In order to enable us to become immersed in these diverse worlds we start collecting stories from the participants long before we meet each other in person.

We may have questions like the following:

- How have you become the person you are today?
- What drives you in your work?
- How do you describe the context/ country you work and live in?
- How do you regain energy?
- What does family mean to you?

Each participant shares the answers to these questions in a sharing tool which we call “Searching for the treasures in you!” We asked participants to discover and describe the treasures in themselves and in their

- Work
- Family, social life
- Leisure
- Country, home

A summary of their treasures can be found at the end of each story in the author’s description.

Programmes of SOS Children's Villages

Change is the only constant	35
Remain focused in the midst of changing career demands ..	41
My encounter with SOS Children's Villages Sri Lanka	49





Change is the only constant

Rolling out of a kinship programme

An amendment to the Juvenile Justice Act and a change in the adoption guidelines left less scope to increase the number of children in our SOS Children's Villages (CV). In a planning meeting held in 2016, the national management team decided to initiate a new programme to reach out to more children. Then, in a national management team of SOS India meeting at the beginning of March 2017, it was decided to start our Kinship Programme in selected locations on a pilot basis. We were told at this meeting that there were limited funds available for the programme: so no additional manpower would be given to the village where it was to be rolled out. A decision was taken to formulate the guidelines for the programme and responsibility was given to the ICC Department (Integrated Child Care Department which supports the projects in implementing programmes) and zonal directors to prepare and

circulate the guidelines to CVs by the end of April 2017.

When you have to fulfil new requirements

After reaching the hotel room, I started reflecting on how to go about the programme. I knew that when it comes to implementation, a new programme is never an easy thing. I had a memory of starting an outreach programme in 2003, where I had initially faced many problems because the co-workers had no experience in working with the local community. The community mobilisation for the programme was the challenge. However, after an initial hiccup, this programme achieved success.

While reflecting on this issue, something came to mind. When I was village director, on one occasion in an annual co-worker seminar, the then Deputy Secretary General of SOS In-

Shailesh Kumar Singh

Zonal director east, SOS Children's Villages of India, zonal office east, India

“Shailesh joined SOS Children's Villages as a youth leader in 1993. During his 25 years working for SOS, he has been posted to six different programme locations, including the SOS Children's Village Greenfields, where he served as a village director. In his current position, he supports and guides seven projects including SOS Children's Villages, youth >

ternational, Asia, told me that “Change is the only constant” and that a vibrant organisation like SOS needs to be prepared to adopt and accept change with changing times and situations.

Half an hour more

Coming back from the national office, when I shared this information with the various village directors their responses were not very encouraging, as quite a few new things had already been introduced in the last few years and their work had increased tremendously. On top of that, they were not sure how to do it. Receiving such poor responses from their side, I was a little worried about how to go about this new programme. While thinking about different options, something came to mind that the president of SOS India often talked about when I was village director: an SOS concept. One day I asked him what the SOS concept is: he said it was very simple, “half an hour more”. I asked him what he meant by half an hour more, and he said, “Can we work half an hour more for children?” This gave me a lot of strength. I started talking with village directors about this phrase and asked them if they could stretch themselves to reach out to more needy children. After a few rounds of discussion with

them, they agreed to find out if such children lived within a 100-km radius of their location. Both simple persuasion and sharing information removed their doubts. When SOS Children’s Villages started a survey of parentless children who could be placed under kinship care, the zonal office became involved by liaising with the government to make a partnership for selecting the children, getting the necessary approval to place them under kinship care, and getting a grant for this programme in the future.

By the end of September 2017, beneficiaries and caregivers had been identified and the necessary approval was obtained from the government. However, some of the caregivers were not satisfied with our verbal commitment. A visit to the different SOS Children’s Villages was organised for them where they got the opportunity to see our family homes and to interact with SOS mothers and co-workers, which helped them to understand our care model as well as our child safeguarding policy. Afterwards, a memorandum of understanding was signed, clearly defining the role of caregivers and SOS Children’s Villages in the children’s development.

house and family strengthening programmes. He was brought up in a typical joint Hindu family and was married at a young age to an understanding and empowered woman. She is a source of strength to him and his children. During his leisure, he spends time with his

First financial support for the kinship programme

The programme was inaugurated on October 2, 2017, on the occasion of the birthday of Mahatma Gandhi, father of the nation, whose vision was “to put the last first”. Children and caregivers were invited to the different SOS Children’s Villages where they met the SOS mothers and did a round of the facilities available in the Village. People representatives, the social welfare official, people from the local administration and the media organised a small programme for this occasion, which was well attended. All the distinguished guests present on this occasion appreciated the work of SOS Children’s Villages. Announcing the opening of the kinship programme, the community leader said what a very good initiative by SOS Children’s Villages this is, as the parentless children will remain in their own community under the care of their relatives. After the announcement of the programme, the village director provided the caregivers with the first cheque for financial support. This was intended to take care of education and the health and nutrition of the children, as well as expenses for pocket money, birthday celebrations and a festival allowance.

Training and mentors of the children’s community

To protect the children from any kind of abuse, training on child rights was organised for them. Caregivers were given training on common-sense parenting, child rights, child safeguarding, and record keeping. Co-worker education¹ prepared a child development plan for each child in consultation with the child and caregivers. But the problems came with implementing the child development plan, as co-workers could not be present all the time to support the family and child as is the case in SOS Children’s Villages. It was therefore decided to identify a mentor from the same community for the caregivers and child in times of need for each family providing support. In the following two months, a mentor was identified for each family, mostly schoolteachers from the community. Their role and responsibilities were made clear to them. They were

¹ “Co-workers education” is the name given to colleagues who are family-based care co-workers, who look after pedagogy and are part of the SOS Children’s Village. They are neither a unit nor a department but are part of an integrated child care function. No additional co-workers were assigned for setting up the kinship programme. These co-workers have the responsibility to support kinship families in the village of that location by e.g. making child development plans for the children of their assigned kinship family.

family and reads books. He lives with his family in Kolkata, a metropolitan city with 14.5 million people. Kolkata is called the city of joy and has a rich history. It was the capital of India until 2011. There are many places of touristic interest.



also provided with training on child rights and child safeguarding. This reduced the workload for co-workers.

To reduce the load for co-workers further, regular trainings/meetings for caregivers were organised in SOS Children's Villages along with meetings and refresher trainings for SOS mothers.

Jointly define indicators and measure success

Success indicators have been produced by consulting all the stakeholders, and the programme is running well despite the initial hesitation and resistance. We have reached out to many children to provide them with a meaningful life without removing them from their community and their roots. Now they are living in security under the care of their relatives. All of them attend school regularly. Some of them have performed well in their studies and achieved a good rank in class. They have also been encouraged to participate in extracurricular activities. Some of them have won prizes in games, singing and dance competitions organised by their schools.

This has been possible with clear guidance from their seniors and regular sharing of information and persuasion at Village level.

The support of the government and community is very encouraging as they found our system very effective and caring. We have now applied to three state governments for recognition of our kinship care model. Once we get the recognition, we will apply for government funding to make this programme self-sustainable.

My Dream

Government recognition for family-based care

SOS's work in India was not recognised as family-based care under institutional care. After an amendment to the Juvenile Justice Act, the children's act for care and protection of children in India, provision for group foster care was made in 2016 after a lot of advocacy in which SOS Children's Villages India also actively participated.

As per the act, "group foster care" means the family-type care facility for children in need of care and protection who are without parental care. It aims to provide personalised care and to foster a sense of belonging and identity through family-type and community-based solutions. The group foster care facility is therefore in tune with our family-based care.

I dream that we get all the projects of my zone recognised under "group foster care". Since this is a new provision, certain parts of the clause need clarification, for which advocacy and awareness raising is taking place. In addition, the state rules vary from province to province.





Remain focused in the midst of changing career demands

Telling a story about a flow moment in my work life to the world is something I never dreamt of, but here I am telling you my story after having discovered it myself. I wish you a joyful reading.

How it all begun – My first experience with children and young people in the SOS Children's Village – The teaching days.

It all began in the year 1999 when I was teaching integrated science, which is physics, chemistry and biology. I was teaching in a Second Cycle Institution after I had completed National Service following my first degree. My assistant headmistress, who was the wife of the village director of the SOS Children's Village in Tema, the harbour city of Accra, Ghana, one day asked me if I was willing to support some SOS Children with extra tuition. I agreed and looked forward to meeting this group of children whom

I considered very special because of the quality of care they were receiving. I secured an appointment with the village director through my assistant headmistress after which I prepared myself to meet the village director and the children in the Village.

I recall now how I felt at that moment when I entered the Children's Village for the very first time. The serenity of the environment was indeed a refreshing sight to behold. After the pleasantries with the village director, I was ushered into the room where the young people were waiting for me. Just as I entered the room with the village director, it was like beginning a new chapter of my life. I realised from the initial interactions that the young people were anxious to find out how they could benefit from my teaching sessions with them. I was also very conscious of the fact that I needed to be constantly innovative in the strate-

Mavis Agatha Abla Ekpe

is family strengthening programme coordinator at the SOS Children's Villages family strengthening programme Kumasi, Ghana

“Mavis' motivation is driven by the fact that young people are the citizens of tomorrow. She believes that everyone can only give back what he or she got. In her work, she strives to ensure that the youth she works with grow up in a secure environment. She is convinced that we all become winners when we notice sometimes small but significant improvements in the lives of the families we support. Her extended family plays an



gies I used to maintain the interest of the young people in the various teaching sessions. This was very necessary to ensure that the learning sessions had a positive impact on the lives of the young ones whose challenges with science needed to be addressed. This complementary relationship between the SOS young people as my students and me as their science teacher continued until the need arose for SOS CV Ghana to set up a Girls Youth Home for young women in the Tema Village.

My life as a youth leader – A new role – Challenging but fulfilling days

With my increasing interest in supporting the young people further and with the village director's encouragement, I took advantage of the opportunity that was available and applied for the position as the female youth leader. I was offered the post in February 2002 at the end of an elaborate recruitment process.

The beginning of any new role has its challenges but, with the support of my family, staff in the national youth department at the head office in Accra, and the Tema village director I quickly learned and adapted to my new re-

sponsibilities as the first female youth leader of the youth home situated outside the Children's Village in Tema.

I have always been very passionate about mentoring and guiding young people through their adolescent and developmental stages. My motivation continues to be driven by the fact that they will grow up to be adults and, as individuals, family members and citizens, they can only give what they have. I therefore have a strong drive to ensure that they are exposed to real life situations while being protected by the systems and structures in society.

The beauty of the youth leader role was the fact that, although I considered it a more challenging one than when I was teaching, I always felt fulfilled knowing that I had a much more regular and consistent mentoring, coaching, counselling and guiding relationship with my young people. Having a more varied mandate with diverse responsibilities, an entirely new experience and a new environment all contributed to the beauty of taking on a new role even though it was with the same young people.

I must admit there were times when I had mixed feelings about managing both the high and low moments of the adolescents. Professionally managing the socio-emotional battle the young people experienced and manifested really tested my resilience on several occasions. There were also times when I was flowing fully and truly enjoying my youth leader role. I recall the moments of flow when the young ones confided their innermost fears to me and I had to give them all the support and encouragement they needed.

Leaving the youth home never crossed my mind until one day I received a call from the national pedagogical advisor. Amidst everything he said, the phrase I clearly remember was "Management is considering changes in the youth home system and you will have to decide if you are interested in the new model". This was indeed a very great blow to me because I never saw it coming.

To convince myself further, I tried to understand what the exact meaning of his statement was, its implications for my relationship with my girls, how management intended to address this new model, how all this influenced my career path and the options I had.

A management decision led to the change in which the youth leader would now have to live in the same physical space as the youth and share the same resources with them. I realised this change was not in my interests. It was different from the initial terms of engagement and would not allow me to have the "private space" I needed to be in the best frame of mind to give of my best.

During all this, I also sought external professional support from neutral human resources personnel on what one needs to do in such situations.

After a great deal of reflection on all the information I had gathered, I had to make a decision. However, two things were very clear to me at that point. Firstly, I still wanted to continue working with SOS Children's Villages. Secondly, I was not comfortable with the new model of youth home that was being considered by management. Considering the above, I decided to leave the final decision to management. However, I did not hesitate to express my concerns to management anytime I had the opportunity to talk to any of them. Management took a relatively long time to make a final decision, so I had to find ways of

important role in her life. She has a two-year old nephew whom she especially adores. She devotes herself to celebrating the steps each family member takes, be it the growing of teeth or a graduation ceremony. Mavis is a busy person with work, church activities and family responsibilities. She also tries to make time to listen to music and to follow social and

political discussions. Mavis lives in Kumasi, a town in the Ashanti region of Ghana. Kumasi has a lot of culture and a rich tradition with the utmost respect for the "Asantehene" who is the traditional leader of the Ashanti people and someone who wields a lot of power.



coping with my inner turmoil and the outer stress of uncertainty over what exactly was going to happen next with my career. As part of coping with this stress, I took all my 31 days' annual leave for the very first time. I travelled to Spain during this leave period for a long vacation, which included sightseeing, religious adventure and pilgrimage to religious sites. This gave me the opportunity to reflect further, away from the emotional upheavals, in a neutral environment and a place very far away from anyone involved in the issue.

What was standing between me and my goal was the unsuitability of the new youth home model for me, even though I still wanted to continue working with the organisation.

I recall that throughout the period of management's planning and re-organisation of the youth home model, I felt deep inside me that I had a "call" to go on supporting children and young people. I really felt engaged in that situation, especially when the young people got wind of the possible changes and began to make emotional statements. Their concerns got to me and that was when I felt that something special was about to happen. I decided I was going to leave the final decision about whether the organisation still needed my skills, knowledge and experience to management. The rewarding moment was when the organisation decided it still needed my skills. I considered this decision a win-win situation.

Experiences of a family strengthening programme co-ordinator – Another dimension – Adapting to a new role

After a series of meetings with management it was agreed that I had to relocate from Tema in Accra, the capital of Ghana, to Kumasi, the second most populous city in Ghana, which is about five hours' drive from Tema and 45 minutes by air. In Kumasi, I had the huge task of beginning the family strengthening programme (FSP) with the MFSII project sponsored by the Netherlands government.

In September 2011, I changed roles from living with and guiding youth who had lost parental care to supporting vulnerable families in the local community facing social issues who had children on the verge of losing parental care. My team supports the families to improve their socio-economic conditions while building their capacity to make use of all the resources at their disposal. The joy of seeing children back in school because they are assured of sustainable support from their families to further their education drives my team members on. Very challenging family-life situations also put our social work skills - theoretical and practical - to the test. We all become winners when we record very small but significant improvements in the lives of the families we support.

With this new portfolio, the initial challenges of relocating to a new community and starting all over in a

new area, changing from individual and group social work to community social work, the uncertainties about the demands of the new portfolio, personal and family demands, as well as the appropriate application of on-the-job knowledge and skills have all been comprehensively addressed. The passion to continue working with children and young people as well as the influence of both youth leader and FSP co-ordinator roles on children's wellbeing was clear right from the beginning.

The good end

I wanted to continue working with the organisation even though I made my point to the management team that I was not comfortable with the changes in the youth home model and here I am, still working with SOS Children's Villages after all these years - 16 years and counting.

The key messages of my story among others include:

- You must know what you want, relate it to the prevailing circumstances, project it into the future and assess yourself in order to make a holistic decision.
- You must be honest with yourself and with others, which in many situations may result in a win-win situation.
- Do not be afraid of change. Embrace change with a positive attitude and carry along lessons learnt from the past.
- Remain professional and resist all temptation to be influenced by "hearsay" or grape vine information and any information that is not official.
- Before taking a decision, wait until the main circumstances are defined.
- Be patient while responding to the needs and demands of any situation that could influence your career path.

Different coping strategies were needed to cope with the varied career demands. The various efforts that will result in children having access to the resources they need and the ripple effect in their lives cannot be emphasised too much.

Follow my Dream >

My Dream

The real world

My dream is to have a world where every child has both a male and a female figure in one's life. Every child is a sign of the future and therefore the resources for holistic development should be guaranteed for each and every child born on this planet.

The elements symbolize my dream world of both human and material resources. The Human resources comprise of the male figure (extreme left), the female figure (middle) and the child (extreme right). The material resources (oblique and horizontal designs at the bottom) signify all the material resources a child may need to grow and develop holistically.

Those who have access to and manage the resources should be able to either provide or link the child to the resources that the child needs to grow.

As human resources I can think of:

- The male figure (biological or non-biological),
- The female figure (biological or non-biological),

- Social services providers (private and government),
- Traditional authorities (family, clan, community), government agencies, non-governmental organizations, social workers and philanthropists.

In my dream I am a facilitator. I want to ensure people are well informed, educated, equipped and convinced to support in various ways for the child to grow. I will know my dream came true when children are happy, healthy, in school and have an environment that gives them the right to grow up holistically.

A child grows up and gives back to society what society gave him or her while he or she was growing.

Every child is a sign of the future and thus needs both human, male and female and tangible and intangible material resources in adequate quantities and proportions during his/her different stages of life. That is my dream world!





My encounter with SOS Children's Villages Sri Lanka

I began my employment in SOS Children's Villages Sri Lanka in 2004 as a senior co-worker. My first appointment was to the SOS Children's Village in Anuradhapura, which is in the North Central Province of Sri Lanka. Following this, I transferred to the SOS Children's Village in Nuwara Eliya, which is in the Central Province of Sri Lanka. That was in 2004. The present National Director of SOS Children's Villages Sri Lanka, Mr. Divakar Ratnadurai, was the village director of SOS CV in Nuwara Eliya at that time. I assisted him with administrative work and with activities in the Village, while also involved in pedagogical work with the children.

Taking over the SOS Vocational Training Centre in Monaragala

In 2007 I took over the SOS Vocational Training Centre in Monaragala. This was a sudden arrangement. The short account here is about the SOS Voca-

tional Training Centre in Monaragala and how it has developed since 2007.

The SOS Vocational Training Centre (VTC) was a new project at that time, and the setup was new to me as well. The purpose of the VTC was to assist youth, especially from poor families, to choose a career to support their future, after having mastered a suitable vocational skill.

Initiating an Integral Formation process

The male youth attending the programme at the training centre were from different backgrounds. Getting them together for a common purpose was not that easy for me at the time. While administering the programmes at the training centre, I realised the necessity of initiating an integral formation process for trainees for their improvement in addition to their formal training. Young people were first taught to discipline themselves. They

Edirimuni Rohan Jemcy de Silva

is director at the SOS Vocational Training Centre, Sri Lanka

Rohan has worked for SOS since 2005. The most important things for him in his work are development, continuous improvement and shaping the lives of vulnerable young people. He believes that development is a process and we have to shape it with a holistic approach. He is always proud to see poor young people from Sri Lanka find and develop

were trained to be receptive to comments and corrections. The wayward behavioural patterns of some trainees were disciplined.

Integral Formation at VTC provides all the components for the trainees' overall growth in every aspect. The following are some of these aspects: character formation, meditation, religious worship, religious exercises, spirituality, sports, teamwork, group dynamics, sharing, review of life, regular evaluations, manual labour, gardening, housework, community living, accountability, cleanliness, discipline, cooking, teaching languages, music, drama, recreation, outings and recreation programs. A holistic approach after all for the growth of individuals.

Well-mannered student body

It was necessary to build a well-mannered student body at the training centre, in order to establish a holistic approach towards the young people whose life situations had been threatened with vulnerability for many social reasons. This was a challenge. Strategies were gradually put in place for trainees to overcome inferiority. Directions and guidance were given for them to form themselves to become responsible young people in society. These were some of the methods put

in place to develop the student body at the VTC.

Government recognition

After a lot of hard work, we managed to take another important step: the SOS Vocational Training Centre in Monaragala was registered under the Tertiary and Vocational Education Commission (TVEC) in Sri Lanka. This was one achievement. Curriculums were developed under the direction of the TVEC to comply with its standards. The training programmes run at the VTC therefore have government recognition. The VTC currently provides a National Vocational Qualification Level 3 certificate for its trainees. Alongside this a quality management system was established to assess every dimension of the quality of the services being provided for the young people.

Ideal locale

The SOS Vocational Training Centre is well known to the public for the services it offers young people, especially in areas of vocational training. Simultaneously, exposure programmes outside formal training are organised for trainees as part of their Integral Formation. This is meant to offer opportunities to trainees to

experience new situations, counteract new arenas, and learn new things and so on. The TVEC in Sri Lanka has declared the VTC for which I am responsible as an ideal locale for vocational training offering a high quality service to young people.

Dedicated instructors and the VTC output

Instructors at the VTC have worked hard to raise the standards at the VTC, which is very commendable. If it were not for their dedication and insight, the VTC's mission would not have been possible. The VTC has produced around 1,500 qualified technicians during the last eleven years. These include doctors, engineers, teachers and employees in the government and private sectors.

My Dream

My dream is to see that trainees at the VTC benefit to the full from the standard courses offered by the VTC. Also to see that these young people are in well-paid steady employment to support themselves and their communities.

The green steps symbolise career steps showing that young people can

To summarise, I would like to mention the community effort of all those who have been involved in all aspects of the development process of the VTC. During the last 11 years or so, the SOS VCT has continued its services throughout challenges and difficulties, which I won't go into here. It is evident that the VTC has had an impact on the lives of the young people who have been trained there. They are prospering in life as worthy citizens in society and are thankful to the VTC for what they are today.

The SOS VTC continues its services with dedication to serve young people, especially from poor families, in the areas of professional training and Integral Formation as the prime objective of its mission.

get good qualified jobs. The flag stands for qualified technicians in the world. I dream of teachers and government employees. I want to see more and more people perceive SOS as supporting careers.



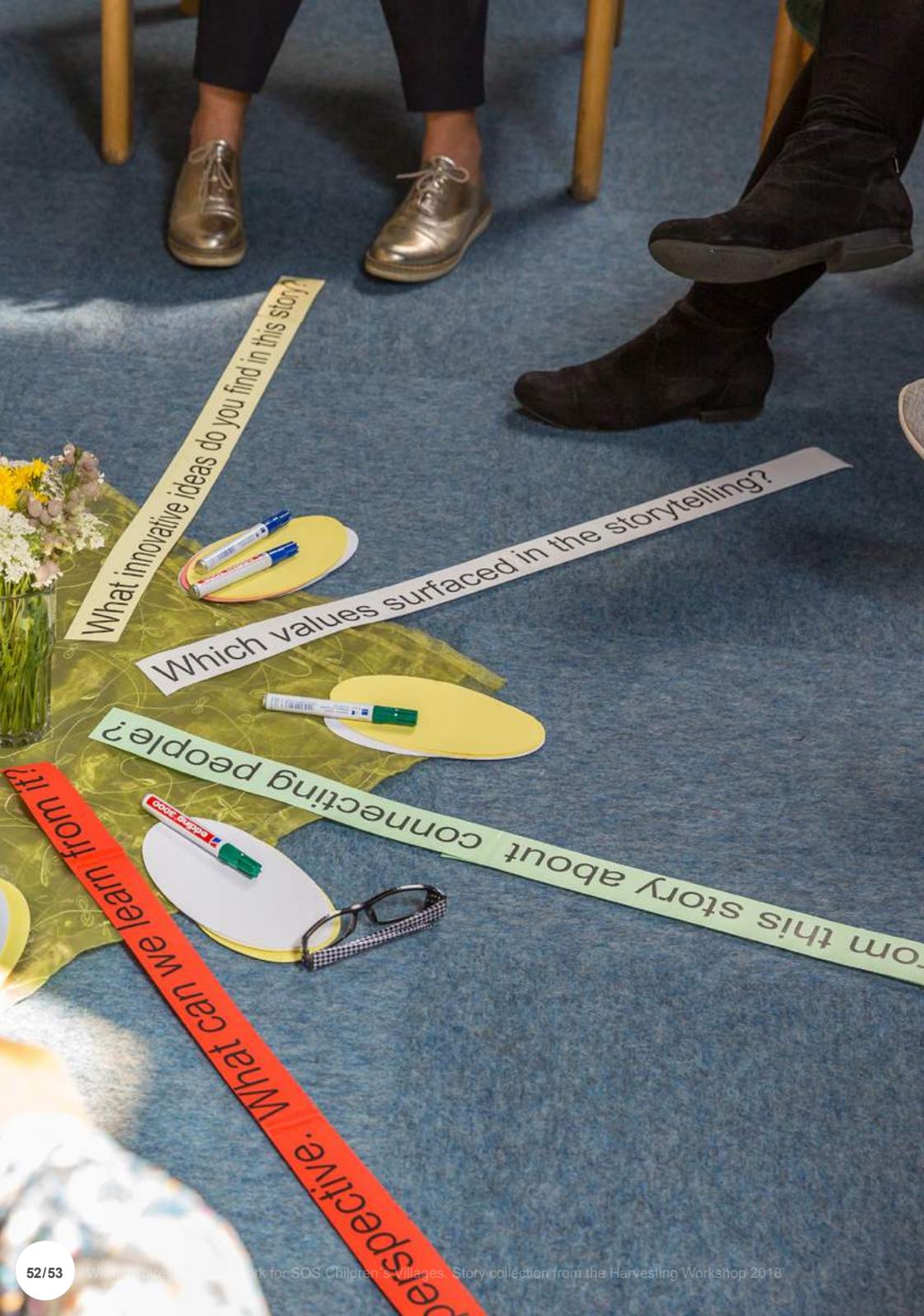
their potential and graduate from the Vocational Training Centre to become strong, resilient members of society who can support themselves and their communities. His family is very important to him for a sense of belonging and affection and provides a trusting and peaceful atmosphere. He was born in Sri Lanka as the eldest son, and says his family has provided

him with unlimited opportunities that have led him to the position he is in today. In his free time, Rohan enjoys gardening and landscaping and he does gardening at the SOS VTC along with the residential youth. Prayer is also an important part of his life that keeps him close to God in times of turmoil.

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Changes in SOS Children's Villages

Let go 55





Sumit Issar

is strategy advisor and assistant to the deputy chief operating officer, programme and strategy at the SOS Children's Villages International office, Region Asia in Faridabad

Let go

Take the back seat

In the final months of 2016, November to be specific, we piloted Mid-Term Planning (3-year planning) in one of our member associations. This was a new concept introduced in the federation and had a completely new template. It was a major extra task for the piloting country because, in addition to developing their annual plan for the next year, the country was also developing its strategic mid-term plan (MTP) for the next 3 years.

Seeing and acknowledging challenges

It was decided that the Children's Villages International (CVI) representative along with me, the strategy advisor, would join this MTP workshop in the piloting country. The CVI representative was meant to represent the GSC and the strategy advisor was to facilitate this important workshop. But due to a last-minute, unforeseen emergency, the CVI representative had to cancel his participation in

the workshop. So I was tasked with joining the workshop and producing a successful outcome in the piloting country.

As this was a strategic workshop planned for three days, the country participants included a mother, a youth representative, representation from the national board, national management team, village directors, project directors and other stakeholders deemed important by the national director.

One day before the beginning of the workshop, I had a detailed discussion with the national director of the country and Joe, the strategy focal point of that country, about the agenda, format, input and expected outcome of this important workshop. We were all set to take off!

The next day we started our workshop, and everybody seemed enthusiastic but, by the afternoon, I

“Sumit has worked for SOS since 2012. Sumit describes his job with a quote from Confucius: “Choose a job you love, and you will never have to work a day in your life!” Living in an area facing a multitude of challenges, Sumit gets great joy from working with those vulnerable children who have no one. Sumit works directly with 14 member associations within Asia through all their challenges. Sumit grew up in Delhi, alongside brothers, parents and grandparents who gave him a great sense of belonging and security. Though



could sense that people were not very participative because Joe had to translate many words, sentences and meanings from English to the local language. In the evening after the conclusion of day one, I sat down with Joe to try to find out ways and means by which we could ensure greater participation and more input from the people in the field (such as the village and project directors). Some of the thoughts that crossed our minds were to either translate the complete template from English to the local language (this seemed a herculean task considering the lack of time) or Joe could translate all the words and sentences from English to the local language every day. This would again take up a lot of time and we would not be able to finish our workshop in 3 days. After many deliberations until late into evening, we came up with a joint idea that I was honestly a bit unsure of. I would let Joe take on the role of lead facilitator (which I was supposed to play) and conduct the workshop in the local language. I would be in the workshop to support the lead facilitator and assist him by taking notes.

My reluctance about this new idea was for the simple reason that I was letting somebody else step into my shoes. I wasn't very sure how well this would work. It would be double the work for us, as we would take notes during the workshop and would have to complete the template later in the evening afterwards. But we agreed to this for the simple reason that this plan belonged to the people sitting in the workshop, and if they somehow didn't own it, they would be reluctant to live by it or even follow it.

Success in trust and taking a back seat

So, letting it go, the next day the lead facilitator had changed, the language of the workshop had changed and then, suddenly, I saw very enthusiastic participation by everyone present. Even the participants who were very quiet the previous day were speaking loud and clear, though in their local language. I could hardly understand a word but was very excited, just by taking notes, which my lead facilitator told me in English, and for the simple reason that the people who had to

own that plan were now really making that plan.

A positive outcome thanks to a positive attitude

By the end of the third day we were ready with the mid-term plan for our pilot country. The best part about this plan was that it had inputs from all the participants of the workshop, it had

inputs from the regional office, and all the workshop participants felt ownership of the plan, which was the most important aspect!

This experience in my working life taught me how important it is to sometimes let go and take a back seat, put trust in the abilities of others, even under challenging circumstances - and have a positive attitude.

My Dream

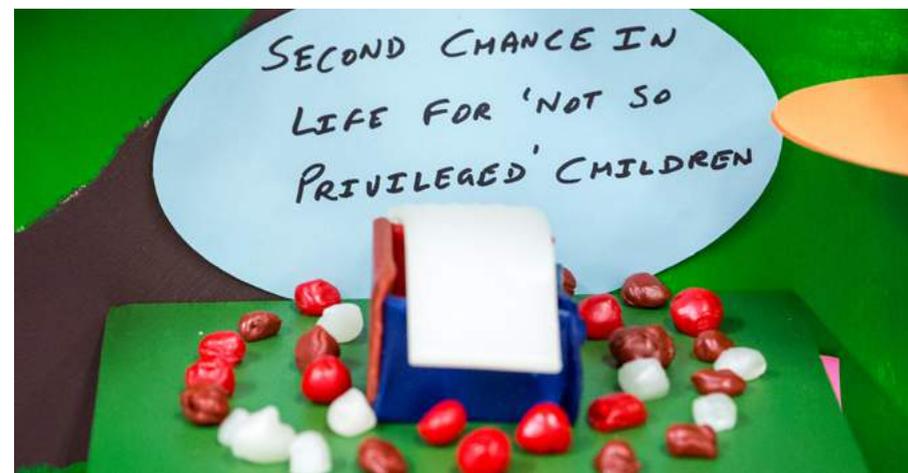
More and more children have a loving home

My personal dream, "Second chance in life for 'not so privileged' children" goes in tandem with our strategic goal. It is related to the first goal of our Strategy 2030 i.e. 'By 2030, we ensure that many more children have a loving home and an equal chance to succeed in life'. I will only know whether this dream has come true at the end of Strategy 2030, as right

now we are in the 'Build capacity and quality' stage and will only start to 'Grow and extend impact' after 2020. So, in a way, there is still a long road to implement this.

In an ideal world, my dream would really be that every child in this world has 'A loving home' and 'No child is born to grow up alone'

Delhi is a very congested city, Sumit enjoys walking through the green parts of the city for quiet introspection. Delhi is a perfect demonstration of multi-ethnic India in which past and present coexist. Old Delhi and New Delhi show both the grand past and modern ambience. Delhi has always been a great place for fine arts and traditions. Now it is a firmly established centre for management, industrialisation, media, information technology, politics and social reforms, attracting people from all around the globe.





Individual Inspirational Stories

- Happiness 61
- Failure is not final 65
- From despair to inspiration 71
- You are forever my Mum 77
- The report 81



Chirawat Siribamrungsuk (Art)

is village director of the SOS Children's Village Phuket in Thailand

Happiness

is the reason to live

In my everyday life, I feel the flow with everything. Every day is filled with happiness and I am thankful. What a perfect life! How can I do that? What is the key to happiness in times of pressure?

Pressure in the job environment

I work with SOS Children's Village Phuket as a village director. At the beginning I was very happy and excited. I aimed to use my full ability to raise the children and support the mothers. I worked hard. I sacrificed myself for both my family and SOS families. I expected everything to go well. However, I was wrong. Life was not that easy! I had very little experience. For the first 2-3 years I was unable to meet people's expectations. Nothing seemed to satisfy anyone. Many problems made me too stressed. I began to feel down and depressed. I became moody and aggressive. I started to yell at my wife and my son. Our family became unstable. My health was suffering. I often had a cold or headache and I was tired... I was burned out! I

was not happy anymore. Finally, I felt I had had enough and decided to quit.

Before I resigned, we were visited by Ms. Avon, the first village director of Thailand. We had some helpful conversations, and she asked me to promise that I would not leave the children! Of course I agreed with her but what was I to do? I decided not to quit and to stay on as village director.

Finding yourself through individual learning

I then started to learn more by myself, I learned what university had not taught me. I read books, listened to audiobooks. I learned so many things about my work. Moreover, one day, I decided to consult a psychologist. From my learning and therapy, I finally found an answer: it is a peaceful mind. Actually, I had learnt many things and known many people, but I had never got to know my own mind!

As the proverb by King Solomon goes: guard your heart above all else,

“His passion is to support each child in their development. He focuses on “ETHICS”, as ethics are not only about religion, but also about life. He strives to improve himself by learning and passing on his knowledge to co-workers and children. He was born and grew >

for it determines the course of your life.

I realised that the key is to dig deep into my own mind, to observe it and see what is actually happening in my mind at this moment, whether there is happiness, peace, anger or worry. It is important to notice negative emotions quickly and get rid of them as soon as possible. In this way, whether the situation is good or bad, I am ready for it! I have no need of people or a situation to make me happy. I am happy because I am happy!

I worked intensively on this way of looking at reality and I do not mean that I have already succeeded. However, every day has lessons to learn, and every day I need to consciously consider everything. As I write this now... I am telling myself too! I need to practice every day, in every real situation.

I have five things for my mind practices every day:

- Meditation – Meditation makes me calm and peaceful.
- A thankful and grateful mindset – Believe that everything that happens today, good or bad, will lead to a good result in the future.
- Enough deep sleep and time to relax.
- Accept the reality (especially the reality of people) and respond with positive thinking and actions.
- Happy without a reason – Sometimes in a bad situation and facing a difficult problem, I just give a simple smile to myself in the mirror!

I will never stop learning and sharing my knowledge with my co-workers, and I've tried to make an opportunity to teach happiness to children as a life skill: if they have the skill of happiness, success is not too far for them!!!

My Dream

The ethics village

In my dream, everybody in the village has strong ethics. Ethics leads everyone to success. The image is of a religious place. I always dream about the success of my children. This will be possible if everyone in SOS Children's Village Phuket is strong in their own religion by relying on their ethics.



up in the peaceful city of Chiangmai. He grew up in a very small family with his mother and a younger brother. Life changed when his mother passed away. When he came to SOS CV Phuket he recognised that working as a village director is more than a job, it is life. In

his spare time, Art reads books or listens to audio books. Knowledge for him is like the glue that brings everything together. Art comes from Thailand... the land of the smile! People from all around the world come to visit the beautiful country and islands.

”



Parnita Khadka Basnet

Director SOS Children's Villages Youth Facility
Biratnagar, Nepal

Failure is not final

but a stepping stone towards success

“The future cannot be defined by today”. This sentence relates to my career and to me. Here I am to share my story, which can also be a lesson for me in my career.

Hard work and reward

I was born into a middle-class family near the capital of Nepal. I have my father, mother, one older sister and a younger brother. I am the middle child. My sister and brother have sharp minds and did well in their studies. Sadly, I was not blessed with this ease in studying. I was aware of my parents' dream, but I just dreamed of being an official in a respected organisation, even though I did not have satisfactory results at school. At the age of 13 or 14 I realised that I must improve my results to achieve a goal in life, so I focused on the value and the dream of life. Life was good. I finished my high school in Kathmandu. I did not do as well as I and, of course, my parents had expected.

I got my bachelor's degree before I was married and landed in Biratnagar, in the eastern part of Nepal, which was not my choice of a place to stay for too long. It was too hot and humid for me, but fate had something else in mind. I got married to a man who was from Biratnagar. But I did not forget my childhood dream of being an independent woman. Maybe it was my ego. I did not like being introduced by my husband's job (engineer's wife). I wanted my own status. Meantime, I was struggling to find a job but, at last, I was able to get a job at the SOS Youth Facility Biratnagar where I started as a counsellor in May 2004 and where I worked for 13 years. During my career, I got the opportunity to climb gradually up the path, and now I am the director of the youth programme. I was able to achieve my dream, which I had dreamed of from childhood, whether it was possible or not. The same platform allowed me to gain new experiences in life. However, I was not a professional counsellor. I had to handle young people with different backgrounds. We get satis-

Parnita joined SOS Children's Villages as a girls' counsellor in the SOS Youth Facility Biratnagar and is now director. She sees teamwork and positive thoughts as essential for guiding young people. If you want to shape young people, it is only possible with passion and empathy. Parnita sees her husband as her motivator and her children as the encouraging

faction when we work with challenges, so there I have been working with different backgrounds, characters and attitudes too. During 14 years of experience, I have overcome many challenges and been successful.

A unique challenge

Amongst these challenges, I would like to share a story about a young person who was very arrogant, destructive and aggressive. His academic performance was very poor and no one had any hope of further studies. All the members of the SOS family had advised him to join vocational training, but he did not like that direction. He did not have good relationships with his family members and friends. He was isolated and did not participate in any development programme. He somehow managed to complete his school level and moved to the Youth Facility Biratnagar. In spite of his educational background, he showed some interest in further studies. However, his aggressiveness and arrogant attitude remained. In the facility, he had no group of friends and spent his leisure time alone. Sometimes he played guitar sitting on the balcony. I observed his daily activities. He did not want to speak to me and

the other co-workers. I spent time with him on many evenings having formal and informal conversations. I slowly tried to build a relationship. I thought it might work as counselling for his development. In the meantime, we offered him training lasting 15 days on “Leadership and positive thought” in Biratnagar. What a miracle! When he came back home, his attitude had changed, demonstrating motivation and dedication. In order to motivate him, we took a risky decision. We decided to recruit him as a president of SOS Social Services Club, the club founded by the SOS Youth Facility Biratnagar family. Our decision again proved to be right. That responsibility taught him to get involved in social work, networking and mass gatherings. Gradually, leadership qualities appeared in his character inside and outside of home. At the same time, he successfully completed his Bachelor in Hotel Management. His positive thoughts supported him for further development. He has now completed his Masters in Hospitality Management and started his professional life.

Going from nothing to everything: a success story

I have seen this young person’s life change from nothing to everything in terms of dreams and aspirations. For me, being a part of our youths’ success has always been an inspiration in itself. Their success has always driven me to aspire to more. The social work that we do in and around our areas has taught us many important lessons in life. We not only help others but also help ourselves in cultivating a better understanding of humanity. The process of growing up alongside the young people has been an amazingly energising experience for me. It helps me truly stay young.

Follow my Dream >

source. In her free time Parnita cares for needy people in the community. She serves as a regional chairperson in the Lions Club of Nepal. Her home country Nepal is dominated by the world’s imposing Mount Everest. The dramatic peaks of the Himalayas occupy eighty

per cent of the territory. The small, hospitable country is a popular destination for tourists. The SOS Youth Facility where Parnita works is located in Biratnagar. The city is 237 km from Kathmandu and close to the Indian border.



My Dream

Success

I dream of a healthy environment without pollution. We help young people to become independent as planned in the 2030 strategy. Young people have the value of my love, which enables them to have a very happy life in the future.

My dream refers to natural and emotional elements that are needed to succeed in life. The sun, mountain and river are natural elements that surround us. Without these elements, we could not dream a single step of life. Our children are admitted to SOS Children's Villages due to various calamities in their childhoods. At this time, they are surrounded by these natural elements. However, these aspects are not enough for the development of a child or young person. I therefore indicated love and care as the emotional part in a home for a child, which can only be provided by the SOS Children's Village. The motto of SOS is "A loving home for every child". They have a home, mother, and brothers and sisters in a

family circle. Care and affection are built up in the four pillars of a home. The process is carried on in the SOS youth facility where everything that young people require for building a career is available. The healthy environment supports them in achieving a good education and opportunities. Good communication and sharing of knowledge can work as a bridge to let young people widen their ideas of career development. The success rate will therefore increase. We also plan new ideas for those young people who are below average. Early planning will definitely reveal the path for a young person.

As a senior co-worker I have to play a huge role in my dream. I dream that a maximum possible number of young people will complete their education or vocational training and then be involved in a respected job. No one will abandon the opportunity to achieve success in life. At present, youth employment is a major problem in our country too. The easy way out

for them is to choose to go to a Gulf country to earn a little money by doing hard risky jobs. This culture has had a big influence on low performers in our organisation from the school level. Focusing on this major problem, SOS Children's Villages International has named youth employability as one of the goals in the 2030 strategy. Based on the strategy, SOS Children's Villages Nepal and the SOS Youth Facility Biratnagar have made an annual plan and a programme for young people in which they can receive the necessary education and training to get a sustainable job in the market. By 2020 the SOS Youth Facility Biratnagar will explore various job markets to involve young people in sustainable jobs.

When a young person is able to generate their own income, then the support from the facility ends. This period supports them in the final integration into society. This is not only a success for young people but is a success for the organisation. SOS Children's Villages Nepal has been implementing a tool called the five years integration plan for young people who are 18 years old. This plan describes their development steps for achieving a career in life. It is reviewed twice a year with measurable indicators. This lets me keep track of the success which I have planned for my responsibilities.





From despair to inspiration

SOS: a factory for miracles

It is a story about inspiration, although it did not start as such - rather, it started as a story of complete despair and it ended as a story of total despair. It is also a story about magicians and miracles, but above all, it is a story about two girls I met when I started working for SOS Children's Villages Bulgaria.

A difficult beginning – the first SOS baptism

It was in 2012 that I first visited SOS Children's Village Tryavna. The beauty of the village and the hospitality of the director and the SOS mothers delighted me, but my heart quickly sank when I saw the two sisters Nicky and Vicky. "Saw" is an exaggeration, because they were afraid to look up into my eyes - they only looked at the ground, heads down. Even though they were four and five at the time, they hardly looked their age. I tried to speak to them, but to no effect - they

barely spoke. Later, in the evening, we were supposed to have a joint dinner at their house and even though the table was covered with so many delicious things, Nicky and Vicky ate only bread. My eyes filled with tears when I saw Nicky dip her bread in water and eat it this way. This was my baptism in SOS Children's Villages - total despair. Of course, their SOS mum explained that Nicky and Vicky had come to her only two days ago and that this was something normal, yet I could not register it as "normal", nor could I believe her that in a week or month or year things would change - the SOS mum was not a magician and I did not believe in miracles. Besides, what kind of publicity was I supposed to think of? I had my camera with me and I was hoping to take some happy pictures, tell some happy stories. I was a public relations expert and I knew that this would sell well. Well, all my PR dreams were shattered.

Milena Spasova Partsuneva

is communications manager at the national office of SOS Children's Villages Bulgaria

Milena is passionate about storytelling and sees it as an important instrument for communicating the brand of SOS. She is convinced that talking about "moments of truth" is more effective than using other traditional and social media channels. The ultimate challenge is to build strong relationships and to establish long-lasting support that is



An encouraging continuation – the second SOS baptism

I visited Nicky and Vicky six months later. This time, they looked at me and they even smiled when I gave them chocolates - obviously, they had started eating other things than bread. After another five or six months, I saw them again. Their SOS mother could not make them shut up. Nicky was already a first grader and she had straight As at school, but I was especially delighted when she shared with me that she wanted to become an actress. Obviously, I was living my dream as a PR expert. No, I was living my second baptism at SOS - total inspiration. At the end of the day, the SOS mum turned out to be a magician and so were the social workers, the speech therapist and the psychologist who had worked with Nicky and Vicky. The two sisters were living proof that miracles happen at SOS Children's Villages and magicians work there. I felt so inspired that I wanted to shout it out to the whole world, but before that, I had something else to take care of - Nicole's voice. "I want to become an actress" was still echoing in my head. This tiny girl, who barely spoke when I first met her, who was afraid to look in my eyes, now wanted to

become an actress. I could do this. I could help her become an actress.

So I immediately put "shooting a movie about SOS Tryavna" in my communication plan. I went with the shooting crew to the village and explained to Nicky that we were making a movie and that she was the main actress - I had never ever seen such a happy child as she was then. The movie was dedicated to the 20th anniversary of SOS Children's Village Tryavna and, of course, apart from Nicky, we interviewed other children and mums. Once the movie was ready, I had to negotiate with a TV station to broadcast it because what was the use of the movie if Nicky could not see herself on the TV? I sent the movie to bTV, the biggest private TV in Bulgaria and asked them for a partnership for the anniversary. They were touched and inspired by the movie and became our media partner.

Under the partnership, they broadcasted the movie one Saturday at prime time. They also produced a short promo to advertise the movie itself and broadcast it five times a day for a whole week - so I guess Nicky saw herself on TV approximately 26 times! And that was not all. The TV

station asked me to invite one SOS family to participate in their most popular TV talk show. Can you guess which family I chose? Nicky, Vicky and their SOS mum came to Sofia and quickly became TV stars. I am sure Nicky felt like an actress - in the morning she was in a TV show and in the evening there was a movie with her on the TV.

The dreams of one child as an inspiration and a failure

So far, so good, but what followed really surprised me. People started calling into the TV station to say how impressed they were by what we do at SOS Children's Villages. They wanted to become donors. And here came the best part: the TV station itself decided to organise a charitable sale of their wardrobe and donated the money to SOS. For the first time, we had a media entity becoming our biggest corporate partner. If I stop here, the story would have a happy end, and it would have been classified as an inspirational individual story. If you prefer it this way, you could stop reading now, but the sad part is that there was a continuation.

Three years later, Nicky and Vicky's father got out of jail and suddenly decided that he wanted to take care of them. The social services believed that he could do that, because the presumption is that the biological family is the best environment for a child, and sometimes social services in Bulgaria do not bother to find out what really is best for the children. The two sisters now live in misery, their marks at school have dropped dramatically and there is simply no future for them. This was my third baptism at SOS - total disappointment - for I could not believe that such a powerful organisation is weaker than the law and could allow such things to happen.

mutually beneficial. Her parents taught her to do what she loves, and she still lives that motto. What she shares with her husband and son is a passion for travelling, diving, movies and the mutual understanding that all problems can be solved over a good talk. There are three things in her life that she always carries with her – a good book, her photo camera and

her bathing suit (to be ready for a swim at any time). What inspires her most is travelling to a new place and meeting new people. Milena was born in a small town called Kazanlak – a historical place also called the valley of roses and the Thracian kings. She now lives in Sofia, the capital city of Bulgaria, for her home is where family and friends are.

”

My Dream

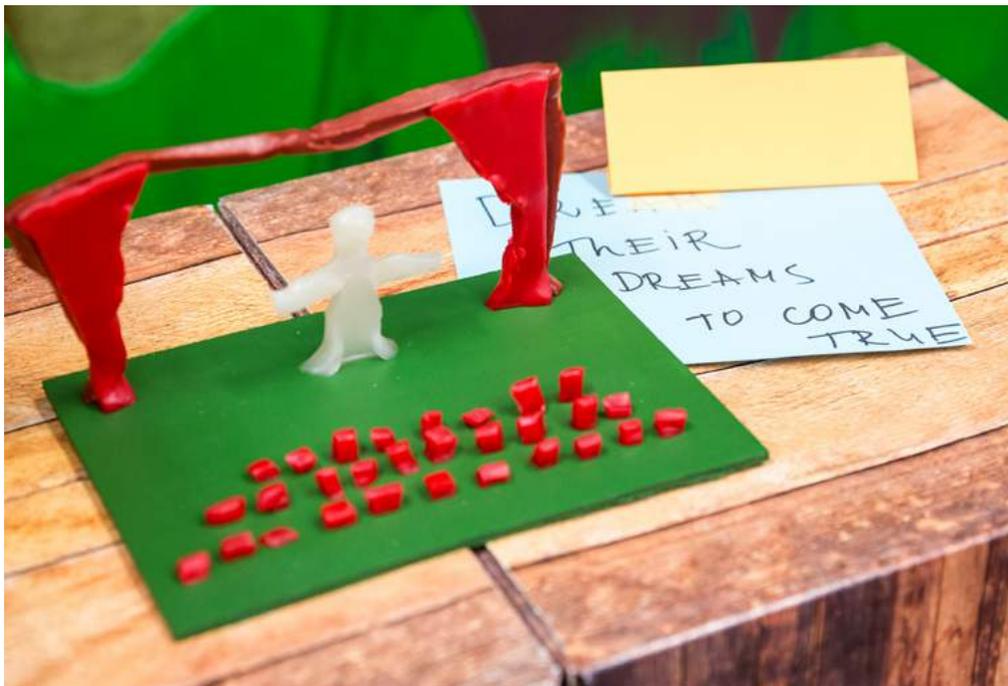
Dream their dreams to come true. Support an individual girl to become an actress

In the picture, we can see a theatre stage and a little girl performing in front of a huge audience. The little girl is already on her way to fulfil her dream and become an actress.

It is my role to support not only this girl and her SOS family, but all the children in our programmes, based on their needs and interests. In this specific case, it means providing lessons in acting and performing, providing

opportunities for performing, whenever possible help with courses, teachers or at least fundraising for them and bringing media to the spot.

I will know that my dream has come true when, hopefully, I will one day receive an invitation from the girl to attend some school play, movie, or theatre performance in which she is participating.





Nguyen Thi Huong Lan

is donor services director in the national office of SOS Children's Villages Vietnam in Hanoi

Mum, wherever I go, whatever I do:

You are forever my Mum

I would like to share a story with you about a child who has grown up in the SOS Children's Village of Viet Tri, Vietnam.

Light of his life

One day in February 2001, a heavily pregnant young woman between the ages of 18 and 20 came to the health station and introduced herself without bringing her identity card. She wanted to give birth at the health station for the reason that the baby was going to be born out of wedlock.

A day later, after finding out that the pregnant woman was having difficulties giving birth, she was rushed from the health station to the general hospital of the province. She was diagnosed with a breech birth. The medical team decided to perform a caesarean section.

A week after giving birth, the young mother wrote a letter to the health station giving up the custody of the child. She wanted the health station to raise the baby or send him to the SOS Children's Village of Viet Tri. She left the health station without any information. The health station sent the baby to the SOS Children's Village in March 2001.

The SOS Children's Village of Viet Tri took him home and proceeded to register the birth certificate for him. He was named Tuong An. Since then he has grown up in the loving care of SOS mother Hung and in perfect harmony with his SOS siblings.

Tireless efforts in achieving a childhood dream

Tuong An was tireless in his efforts to attain a high level of academic achievement. His favourite subject at school was mathematics. He also took

“Huong Lan has been working in sponsorship since she joined SOS in 1993. Together with her sponsorship colleagues, she tries to tell the stories of children and young people in the care of SOS programmes to sponsors to make them feel connected to the work >

an interest in biology. The laboratory experiments always fascinated him and, in time, Tuong An developed a love of biology. He always made an effort and studied very hard by reading many books. He was awarded many prizes in the biology competitions for excellent students at the municipal and provincial levels.

Thanks to his efforts and determination, Tuong An successfully passed the entrance examination to the prestigious high school for talented students in the Phu Tho province. He ranked second in the special class majoring in biology. He was even awarded second prize in the biology competition for 11th graders at national level. Given his high achievements, as an exception, Tuong An has been accepted at Hanoi University while attending grade 11 of high school, without taking the university entrance examination.

It will take him one more year to finish high school. However, his goal is to gain entrance to the medical university. Tuong An tries his best to achieve his childhood dream.

“I like most sports, but football is my first love!”

Tuong An is one of four children from SOS Children’s Villages taking part in the Cityzens Giving Young Leaders Summit being held by the Manchester City Football Club right now. Tuong An and other friends from around the world have been equipped with the coaching skills and confidence to deliver football sessions.

As the World Cup gets underway, Tuong An, joining other “Young Leaders”, will be hosting a World Cup themed party and football tournament for the staff at the Etihad Campus in Manchester, United Kingdom.

“Mum! Wherever I go, whatever I do, you are forever my Mum!”

It was his SOS mother Hung who kindled his interest, courage and determination to set himself short-term and long-term goals. Her love for him remains unconditional and unchanged. And Tuong An has made all possible efforts to pursue his goal of becoming a doctor.

My Dream

Dream House

It is my dream to see mothers and children live together and mothers support them in developing their childhood dream.



they are supporting. Huong Lan was born and grew up in Hanoi. She shares the house with her family and feels happy to see her niece and nephew growing up in the good care of their grandparents, parents and aunt. She enjoys her role of being an aunt that is almost like a friend. Huong Lan lives in Hanoi. In her free time Huong Lan enjoys going for walks. She

also likes to work in her garden, where flowers and orchids grow. She loves the city because of the quietness of summer noon, the narrow alleys and the bicycles carrying flowers for sale in the early mornings. She loves the way mothers teach their children. Nowadays Hanoi has changed significantly, but she tries to carry on the life she loves.





Ulrike Freiherr van Beek

social pedagogical family assistant at the SOS Children's Village Sauerland in Germany

The report

A piece of good teamwork

Actually writing a report is not the hardest thing for me. But it is not easy under time pressure! And we were under time pressure, my colleague Frank and myself, and we still did it! We wrote our report for the child welfare department (cwd) and for the parents we've been working with as well. We made it right on time! And it wasn't just on time – it was a good report too! We were satisfied and our boss was too!

In the beginning

About every six months we have to write a report about our work in/with the families – for the family and for the cwd. So my colleague Frank and I wrote a report about a family we've been working with as a tandem team for about half a year. Since I wanted to take part in an international workshop, we had to have our report finished earlier than originally planned. At the same time it could not be done too early because it needed to be up-to-date. So we faced the challenges first of finding a timeslot without any

other work obligations on our side, and second of completing the report in the minimum time but nevertheless of producing a good result – a decent report. We agreed on two dates to write the report together. I was almost sure that it would not be enough time because of all the other work to be done before the workshop which left no other available time.

Our reports are mostly oriented to the aims the cwd formulated along with the family we work with. In this case six (!) main aims had been defined. When we met for the first time, we went through these aims and started writing what was easy to describe.

Effectively working together

What helped was that we quickly agreed upon who would do the writing part on the pc – it was me. It also helped (me) that Frank stayed calm and focused without getting nervous about the lack of time. When we noticed that we were running out of time we just put down some keywords

“Ulrike has been working for SOS since 1994. Since 2014, after finishing her part time studies, she has been working in a new workplace within the facility. Here she can not only use her experiences working closely with children but also collect new experiences working with entire families, a job that is both challenging and exciting. She finds it important to be authentic in her job, and is still learning a lot from her team and the families >

of what we found most important and which must not be forgotten. This meant we would get a good start the next time we met to finish the report.

At this point I still thought we wouldn't make it on time. A few days later Frank and I met again. This time it didn't take very long to be "into" the report again. We just "passed the ball to each other", meaning that one sentence followed the next. Frank had the idea of putting some of the six aims together because they appeared similar to us. Another idea was just to describe all the different topics we were talking about and things we had done in and with the family. Enumerating and describing these steps and activities and putting them into the right words worked perfectly between the two of us. And of course the keywords we had written down in the first place helped us a lot.

When you feel the "flow"

We were "in a flow" and time seemed to fly. And so what I wasn't expecting happened – the report was done on time! We were happy and satisfied with our work.

And we realised that we had actually done much more than just producing a good report in time. In the end we noticed that we had done a good job in this family. It was quite a challenging process and developed in a different direction than what the family had hoped for.

A few days later, our team had a supervision session. When we were asked what had gone well over the last few days, what we have done well, I told them about writing our report. My colleague Frank smiled and said: "That is exactly what I wanted to talk about!"

My Dream

Guiding the first steps

The title of my dream is "Guiding the first steps". I would like to start working with mothers so that children at risk of losing parental care will be able to stay with their biological mothers.



she works with. To Ulrike, family has always been important. It means to share a lot of things like emotions and knowledge, to show limits and let go, to learn from one another, to live traditions and be open to new things and to pass on these values like honesty, enjoying life and humour. In her free time, Ulrike likes to go cycling, take photos and listen to music,

and she sings in a choir. She grew up in Germany and now lives in Dortmund, although she likes to return to Uckermark where she grew up. She likes the people in Dortmund, their honesty and straightforwardness, and how the area grew from grey and industrial to a big, green place!





Individual Inspirational Stories from the Inside – First-hand Experiences

Keeping the memory of my SOS sister	87
Saving the SOS family legacy.	93
From need to lead.	99



The smiling SOS girl became an inspiration and a reference point

Keeping the memory of my SOS sister

I tell a story about my SOS sister, whom I would like to call “smiling girl”. We grew up in the same house in the SOS Children’s Village of Assomada.

An SOS childhood

My name is Marco Paulo Monteiro. I am 32 years old and I grew up in the SOS Children’s Village of Assomada from the age of 4 years. Assomada is located on the biggest island in Cape Verde. I remember arriving as though it was yesterday. It was like entering a very new and different world. I came from a poor family: my mum could not care for me because of her difficult social situation. My father too. He did not give me his name and even refused to assume his role as father and help my mum care for me. We were three brothers living together, but according to my mother, she could not care for me because she had to go to work. We were at great risk because

sometimes she used to leave us alone in the house and many times she arrived back late at night and we were hungry, crying.

This is why I said that in 1989, when I entered SOS Children’s Villages, I entered a new world. I had a new home: family, brothers and sisters, and a village and community. I could join children who had the same story, and some of them had an even harder story. I really had the best childhood. I could play, have food on time, feel safe, experience trust and, most of all, I had my SOS mother’s love. I could feel, “now I am at home”.

I lived in family houses until I was 14 years old. In 1999, I moved from the family house to the youth house, which is in the village too. That was a new step in my life. I started an intensive preparation for independent life. At that time, at the age of 14, I could

Marco Paulo Monteiro

is national youth leader for SOS Children’s Villages Cape Verde at their national office

“Marco has worked for SOS Children’s Villages since 2012. He grew up in SOS CV and that is where he learned values that now lead him in life. He strives for humility, empathy and team spirit. He believes in the power of trust when working with colleagues, children and youth. Through working with disadvantaged families and communities, he has learned to see life in a different and more realistic way. For him family is the basis of



cook, iron and clean my room and other's spaces on my own.

Meeting a girl who turned into an inspiration

While living there, the smiling girl was admitted to the same house where I lived. I remember her face perfectly from when I saw her for the first time. She was simply smiling. I frequently visited my family house and normally played with other brothers and sisters and she was always smiling, even though sometimes you could see that something was wrong, she kept smiling. As our SOS mother was religious, I used to participate in church activities. After I left SOS Children's Villages in 2006, the smiling girl invited me to become her godfather at her religious confirmation and I promptly accepted. She used to call me "padrinho", meaning godfather. The smiling girl had some minor special needs. These were not visible, but you were aware of this when talking to her.

I continued my life outside SOS and I left my special SOS sister. You know, as a former SOS youth, one of my dreams was to work in SOS Children's Villages one day. For me, this would be the best opportunity to try to give

back all that SOS had done for me for many years. In 2012 I was working in another NGO, but SOS Children's Villages Cape Verde invited me to work as a national youth leader. My dream came true and I had a chance to stay close to the smiling girl.

I remember the day that I was invited. My older SOS sister, Maria José, now working as national advisor of human resources and organisational development in SOS Children's Villages Cape Verde, came to me during an activity with all the former SOS youth. She said she would like to invite me to join as a national youth leader, to coordinate a semi-independent programme. It was so good. I did not think twice. I said "yes", I accepted. I started working for SOS Cape Verde in July and in August 2012 I had to prepare the 1st edition of a national youth training for independent life. That was my first challenge. In the programme department we therefore prepared everything as a team. This training is similar to a camp where all the young people aged between 14 and 24 who have grown up in SOS Children's Villages are divided into two important groups. They go away from the village and stay in a camp in Praia for training for two weeks. Every July and August all the young people

from 14 years upwards in the care of SOS participate in the summer camp called "Summer Youth Training for Independent Life". We offer basic training and orientation to develop their employability skills. We discuss how to plan their lives, how to write their CV; we visit learning institutions such as universities, professional training centres, companies. We also organise talks with entrepreneurs where they can discuss and evaluate the way SOS Children's Villages is working with them e.g. we discuss what the young people do well and where they need to improve.

For me, this was one of the first special moments I had as an SOS co-worker. This kind of activity with the young people allowed me to learn a lot from them and to get to know them well. Moreover, I do not know why, but I remember that smiling girl. She always came to me and talked to me. I also remember asking her during some conversation between us, whether she felt ready to leave SOS? She said, "Yes, because I will stay with my biological mother."

The strength in smiling

In the next year, 2014, she left the SOS Children's Village Assomada. One month later, her biological mother died. Even now I remember the day when the SOS youth and I went to visit her. She kept on smiling even though I could see in her eyes how sad she was.

During her semi-independent living period I visited her in her biological family as part of one of my main roles. She was able to attend some specific, additional professional training. She attended counselling, and I followed her closely. The smiling young girl, my SOS sister, started to face problems. It was a new and strange phase in her life. She also had a special health follow-up from our side and from the health services because of some health problems. It was difficult for her to get a stable job because of her disability. We helped her to start her own small business in street vending, along with her eldest sister. One day, I remember, I found her working. She was happy and said she liked it because she started to earn her own money. She said that she wanted to leave her biological sister and start living alone. Her sister agreed but on the condition that they should be

everything. He is a father of three children. Having his own family gives him the chance to strengthen his confidence and to have a safe harbour. His commitment is to pass on confidence, security and love to his children and enable them to pass it on to new generations. Marco spends most of his free time with his family. He enjoys watching videos and

playing computer games with his son. He was born in the city of Praia, the capital of his country, in a peripheral borough. In 1989, when he was 4 years old, he was welcomed into the SOS Children's Village of Assomada, a rural town, located 43 kilometres from the capital city. ”

close to each other. Like all the other semi-independent youth, I used to visit her regularly. The smiling girl gave up selling because she was pregnant. She joined her boyfriend and they lived together.

Learning from others

For me, the positive thing is that she was a determined girl, even though she faced many problems: she lost her mother at a critical moment in her life; she had to face trouble with her biological brothers and sisters; and she also separated from her boyfriend. After starting her own family, she was almost unable to keep her baby girl because she faced some court cases. She called me several times, we talked and messaged on Facebook, and she regularly visited her SOS mother in the Children's Village of Assomada, just to talk and have counselling. Her SOS mother and I talked a lot about my SOS sister. She saved her money and could build her own little bedroom, just to have privacy and an independent life. Unfortunately, she did not have many more chances in life to keep fighting. She died unexpectedly due to health problems while she was asleep.

The mission of SOS Children's Villages

For me, smiling girl represents all other SOS brothers and sisters, in my country and even those around the world, who have faced different kinds of difficulties after leaving SOS

Children's Villages, and are now successful in their lives and have their own family and job.

SOS Children's Villages must continue to be a safe home for all young people. SOS Children's Villages must continue to be the place where young people who leave the caring environment of an SOS Children's Villages programme for their independent lives can come back to re-establish their spirit, share their experience, talk to their brothers and sisters and to their SOS mother or to co-workers about their lives. It has to be the space where young people can go with their children, wife or husband. We must also keep this promise to all young people, offering a safe home. We as an SOS family must keep this as one of the main and special values.

Despite the changes we face, there are also positive things. I think we have to be careful as a family not to lose our soul, not to lose our treasure. Many young people who grew up in SOS Children's Villages programmes around the world lose their biological family - and as I am one of them - I believe that is why God gave us an SOS family. It must be our reference. Yes, a reference that inspires us to keep moving.

My My Dream

Trust in you and your dream will come true

My dream symbol shows courage and determination in life. This will improve the recognition of our care model. It shows that young people can succeed in life. Family, love and security are the tools for an independent life. Each young person when leaving the SOS Children's Villages starts his/her own road. The white colour represents the peaceful beginning. The red colour and also the little points in red represent the bad things young people face in their lives. The green colour means that no matter what challenge comes up you must keep your hope. Some kids, while they are on the road, may see or remember the flow moment, as all the values they learned in SOS Children's Villages. This memories are captured with the blue lines that can be one example for a flow moment. But there can also be storms, again followed by nice moments. The little figure represent an SOS youth. The heart designed in blue-red symbolises when care leavers achieve their aims. And the four little figures behind the heart represent all the dreams: have a nice job, car, family, money ...

My dream is that every youth can have their own stable family and that SOS Children's Villages must let them know: "Whenever you need me, you can come - like in any other family."

My role in this is to do my best as a reference for all my brothers and sisters who are being cared for in SOS Children's Villages programmes, preparing them for their road after leaving SOS for their independent life.

I will know that my dream came true when I see each young person, having their first job, being happy every hour, month or day. I dream of them, telling me they have their first child, they keep fighting every day with courage and determination to achieve their dream, no matter what challenge they will face.





Saving the SOS family legacy.

Past, thank you for all the lessons.
Dear future, I'm ready!

Does my mother have a job? No, I think she does not... However, how is it that we have a house?

My journey with SOS Children's Villages began in my early childhood, when my twin sister and I were 1 year old. Since then I have been a part of this big family. I was raised in SOS Children's Village Tbilisi and, when I turned 16, I joined another programme, the youth house. Now I am in a semi-independent programme and working as a programme co-ordinator for a youth project called "Mentor's Club", which helps SOS youth to gain more knowledge and skills for becoming more independent in everyday life, and also helps them to handle the challenges and tasks which are important for success in both their professional and private lives. So this is why my story will be about my childhood and about the job that I have now. First, let me explain

how I discovered the SOS Children's Village concept and learned all about my SOS mother. I had an amazing childhood with lots of adventures and friends who I met in SOS and who are my brothers and sisters now, but I did not analyse the fact that there was a world behind the SOS Children's Village. The SOS reality created my first memories of the world, and my SOS mother was the first person who I discovered loved me and protected me. We had a safe environment with all of the resources we needed, whereas the whole region of Georgia lacked resources such as running water or light, there were no jobs and people were really struggling with their lives and with raising kids.

I never thought about SOS Children's Villages as an organisation or something like that: it was my home and this definition was enough for me. I never experienced that I was different

“Mari has been working for SOS since 1997. She is a bachelor student in psychology and is very enthusiastic about her first official job at the Mentor's Club. The Mentor's Club project was developed entirely by SOS youth to connect young people with experienced professional mentors. Mari and her twin sister were raised in the SOS Children's Village in Tbilisi, Georgia. The SOS family really is her family. In SOS, she found many important people, lifelong friends, great teachers, aunts and uncles and her SOS mother >

Mariami Revishvili

is project coordinator at the "Mentor's Club – Strengthening Opportunities for Independent Living" at SOS Children's Villages Georgia at Tbilisi, Georgia

in some way until I turned six years old and went to public school. I remember how surprised and confused I was when my classmates told the teacher that the reason they did not have their homework was because the light had gone out in their district, and the teacher was satisfied with this explanation.

My confusion kept growing when I had a lesson about different professions and the teacher asked the whole class about their parents' jobs, about what they did for a living. I just wondered in silence, "OK, Mariami, let's think... does my mum have a job? No, I don't think she has... but how do we have money?" I kept questioning myself and was not able to answer the question. After that, I discovered all about the SOS concept, about my SOS mother and the reasons why my classmates had a different environment and backgrounds. Moreover, I felt so blessed and lucky to have my mum with me, a person who can protect me, who is ready to love me and forgive me.

A simple question can help you find friends

However, my school was also not aware of what SOS Children's Villages was all about. Due to the Soviet

Union background, Georgian people had the wrong idea about children's homes. They viewed us as children who were in trouble with the law and were difficult to raise, and considered us as "bad kids" or "rebel kids" who are not normal. If something got broken in my school or someone got hurt everyone blamed the SOS kids. The parents of other children were not happy that we were their kids' classmates, and the teachers did not expect us to be as talented as other kids. Nevertheless, everything changed with the help of the SOS co-workers' support. They never let the teachers or other parents hurt us, and they absolutely refused to change school, even when the school principal wanted us to leave. SOS mothers and the village director protected us, because we had a right to an education and to socialise. SOS Children's Villages therefore started a new programme - a family strengthening programme. They opened an office in our school and my classmates' parents found out more about the SOS community. SOS helped them with life problems and with their kids. Soon school started to accept us. That is how I managed to get friends from my class. SOS opened a computer lab in our school, which was a big thing then. No one had ever seen a computer before in my class, we did not

even have mobile phones or any other technology and now we had a whole class full of computers and another subject to study. So you can imagine many kids waiting when the teacher opened a computer laboratory class in the hall. A group of my classmates were whispering something, and then one of them came up to me and asked me: "Do you know how to turn on a computer?" That was a first step from them. After that class, I invited my classmates to visit the SOS Children's Village and at the end of my last year of school, every classmate said, "We wish we had a chance to grow up in SOS."

Discovering SOS children's power and voice

We had socialised in a school environment, but there is still stigma towards us, and I guess that Mentor's Club is one of the proofs that SOS kids are fighting to raise their voice against it. It all started with a late-night talk with my friends. We were discussing our plans and problems and we ended up with the idea that most of us really lack information and skills in some important fields which cannot be covered by universities and which are important for an independent life. We do not know how to find a job, or how to write a CV or résumé, or how to

find out what different professions are about. We lack a lot of communication skills, time and finance management, and how to handle anger. Luckily, at that time a big group from the SOS Children's Villages Germany office came to Tbilisi and we discussed this topic. They advised us to write a project proposal for the Mentor's Club. So we started working on it with a lot of support from the co-workers from SOS Children's Villages Tbilisi. Our efforts bore fruits. We got a positive answer and, last spring, we started the project. I discovered that somehow I became a role model for other SOS children from different programmes: they told me their stories about challenges, frustration and depression or anxiety, things which I had already overcome. I discovered that I understood them better than anyone does and I already had some advice and strategies which could help them. I never expected that I would start being an advocate in both directions: for SOS children and for potential mentors.

I was in a meeting with a mentor negotiating some logistic information when he suddenly asked me if SOS children knew how to read. I got so angry and was wondering whether it would be better to scream at him or to just run away? However, something

whom she loves a great deal. Mari believes that SOS provides children with more than just food and a place to live, but also kindness, love and a place where you are respected, protected and forgiven. In her free time, Mari loves reading, music and movies, and watching TedX or reading new surveys. She is currently working on a survey on the

correlation of humour and personality traits. Georgia, its culture, language and alphabet are among the oldest in the world. Georgia has unique and beautiful nature, traditions, history and wine. Most of all, Georgian people love to dance and love guests. They say that the guest is a gift from God... ”

popped up in my mind. I have been brought up in a peaceful environment, and my mother did not raise me to react angrily, so I started to explain all about SOS Children's Villages to him and what it is like: who we are, what values we have. Surprisingly, that man became a very good friend of the Mentor's Club. So the Mentor's Club is not simply about acquiring information and knowledge, it is also about being proud of your family.

We started with five youngsters and ended up with 72. We even worked with youngsters from SOS Children's Villages in a different city in Georgia. For the first time we had a chance to meet SOS youngsters from Kutaisi. The Mentor's Club is now working on another social enterprise project, selling the handmade items of SOS youngsters.

For me, the moment when I realised that I was doing something important was on the "effective communication course". One SOS girl said that she was always too shy to ask a bus driver to stop the bus at her stop and that is why she always took the bus to the last stop and then walked back. That may sound stupid but I realised her fear of being listened to by someone who is a stranger. She was afraid to be criticised or judged. At the last session her feedback was: "For the first in my life I got off the bus at my stop." She overcame her fear. That

was a moment in which I felt we had reached the goal.

So I would like to tell every child or young person in the care of SOS Children's Villages all over the world:

- Do not be ashamed of who you are, do not be ashamed of your family.
- Do not be afraid to make mistakes, as mistakes are the best lessons.
- Take risks, and try hard to be independent.

For all SOS co-workers:

- Do not worry if we make mistakes, we have the strength to get up again, and do not be overprotective towards us. This can lead to laziness, which is the main enemy.
- I know that you worry about what to say to us or what to do. Calm down and do not forget the main formula: we just need you to be close and support us.

My Dream

SOS is bringing up independent children

I wish that more children from SOS Children's Villages could live a more independent and more responsible life. SOS Children's Villages plays a big role in the life of children in its care. It is not only about enabling children to grow up but in raising them to be responsible citizens.

I made figures of a child living in SOS Children's Villages feeling safe. The girl takes various steps and becomes independent. SOS co-workers have an important role. They are not only co-workers. I dream of SOS Children's Villages with co-workers who are not overprotective. Overprotectiveness can lead to laziness. Co-workers are there to support us. They are like a comfort blanket when it is dark but they let children and young people in the care of SOS make their own way.





Abdallah Khalil Qamhawi

family-based care coordinator at SOS Children's Village Bethlehem in Palestine

From need to lead.

Growing up in SOS and working there

I married when I was forty two years old – something very unusual in my country – and after causing suffering to the national director of SOS Children's Villages Palestine who I greatly respected, a mentor who was like a father and brother to me. He was serious about my marriage. Like a father he wanted to have a grandchild. We were looking for a suitable bride according to our traditions but I always rejected the idea of traditional marriage. I met my wife by accident and now love surrounds me from all directions. The marriage ceremony began according to our traditions and this great father was with me step by step. I will never forget him and his family.

When the SOS vision and mission became clear to me

After a year of marriage we had a child who lit up my life. He does not yet know what is going on around him, but he feels the affection of his parents. This was the moment when I realised the vision and mission of

the SOS Children's Village. I realised how lucky I am. From a child of eight months I was surrounded by all the love and affection which I received from my SOS mother from my first day with her. I was not alone. We were eight brothers and sisters. I got a family like any other child. A family full of love and joy, sharing respect and happiness, etc. and also with some family problems as well. This is the meaning of the real family.

We used all the services around us like schools, shops, markets, ... but the best part was when my mother sent me to bring something from the town. It was not far from our home. On my way back home I passed one of the holiest places in the world where thousands of pilgrims and visitors from all over the world come. It is the church of the nativity in Bethlehem, one of the Palestinian cities. It is well known amongst the large number of holy places such as churches monasteries and mosques. The estimated population of Bethlehem is 25,266 inhabitants. The number of families in

“ Abdallah has worked for SOS since 1998. He is proud of his team and being the leader. He believes leadership skills are a way to identify team demands, motivate them to work and stimulate their efforts. We can use the experiences of others to develop leadership and ensure continuous learning. Abdallah sees family as the symbol of emotional, psycho- ➤

the city is about 5,211 and the number of housing units is 6,709. The city is characterised by a large number of indigenous Christians who live safely side by side with Muslims.

I stayed in Bethlehem after I left care in my SOS family. I rented a house near the SOS Children's Village although I did not finish school.

Another important part of family

This was the time when someone else came into my life. This was a lady from Switzerland who had known me when I was a little baby. At that time she was working in the institution where I was placed as a baby before I came to SOS Children's Villages. This Swiss woman cared for me there. She loved me so much that she wanted to adopt me but this was not possible. She then went back to Switzerland. The only thing this woman knew was my name and the baby photo of me she had. One day she went to the Sea of Galilee where she met another woman who had also worked in the same institution at that time. This former colleague of hers then helped her to find me and she did! We established a good relationship. At that time I wanted to become a cook,

and having the support of this woman whom I still call "mum", I tried to study cooking in Switzerland several times but I was not given a permanent visa. I got a travel visa and went there many times, always hoping and trying to prolong the stay to a permanent visa, but it was not possible. It was only approved when I was in my mid-twenties but then I refused to do an apprenticeship in Switzerland.

My call to give something back to SOS Children's Villages

In 1998 the village director asked me if I would drive the children to school early in the morning for free. I said "yes", because I felt it was time to give something back to my family. I agreed without hesitation. After two weeks the SOS director called me and asked me to meet him at his office in the village. I went there and he told me that he would like me to work for SOS Children's Villages. I could not believe it. I started working as a driver and put all my efforts and the maximum love and joy into make life easier for the children and mothers. It was my dream to see them happy. This job was not the village director's dream for me though. With his insistence my life changed. I finished my high school successfully

and got my BA degree in Banking and Financial Sciences and at the same time I was appointed assistant to the village director.

So, after five years of work preparing the solid ground for young people to be active and successful in their lives and in the societies they belong to, I left the youth house with the full support of the ND and the great youth care co-worker team. Soon after that I became the family-based care coordinator for the SOS Children's Village programme in Bethlehem.

At this moment I felt the flow. It is not easy to steer this boat, and I began to feel how heavy this responsibility is. I was full of fear and felt as though I was in the middle of the desert without signposts to show me the way. But I started to consider my education, my experiences and my childhood and the full support I got from the inspiration of father and brother, Mr. Shalalkeh, the national director, and from the team I work with. This is where my journey began and my boat was in flow again. I will not let the boat sink, always taking into consideration the best interests of the child.

The child is the centre of our approach

This is why we accept all the changes and challenges within our organisation which create a better future for the children. One of these challenges is the community approach.

The family is the basic building block of society and the basis for raising children. It is the symbol of emotional, psychological and social stability. From this standpoint SOS Children's Villages welcomed me as a child with lots of love, affection, safety and respect. I lived with a great mother, I did not realise that she was an SOS mother. She gave me everything a child needs from his or her mother. I grew up with 8 brothers and sisters, as a real family and we are still a family which cares for, supports and helps each other. I am now the uncle of more than twenty six people. I married in January 2015. I and my wife love each other so much; we have one child and we are waiting for the second one to be born in December this year. My life has become happier since I married the woman I love and also when I heard the word Papa from my son.

logical and social stability. He is glad to have been welcomed as a child by SOS with a lot of love, affection, safety and respect. He cares deeply for his family, his mother and eight siblings. He is married with one child, and awaiting another! In his free time Abdallah loves cooking, especially for family and friends, swimming with his son, reading and watching

films. Abdallah sees his home, Bethlehem, as a small town with a big meaning, and one of the most important Palestinian cities with a lot of churches, mosques and monasteries. The city has about 25,000 inhabitants and about 5,000 families. The city is characterised by large numbers of Christians living peacefully and safely alongside Muslims.

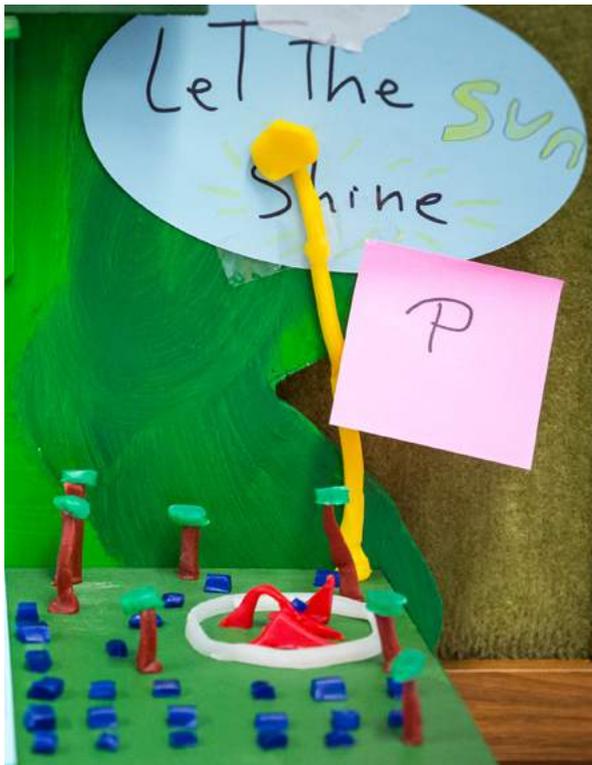


My Dream

Let the sun shine!

I dream of a childhood where each child lives and stays in his or her community. In the picture of my dream you see red elements which represent a playground. They are surrounded by palm trees. These represent experienced and involved leaders who advocate for integrating children with the community children. SOS children's Villages opens up their facilities and SOS children are like any other children, they are not stigmatised anymore.

Around the playground you see a white circle that stands for the children's safety. The yellow element is a sun. It symbolises that any child who has to grow up without their biological parents and is in alternative care has a life without institutional features. The alternative care families are integrated in the local community.





Partnerships of SOS Children's Villages with Governments

Lead up..... 107



Ayodeji Augustus Adelopo

Programme Director, SOS Children's Villages Nigeria,
Lagos Programme, Nigeria

Lead up

Successful engagement in the work with the Government

SOS Children's Village Programme Lagos, Nigeria recently concluded a partnership with the Lagos State government to organize a stakeholder's engagement and capacity building on alternative child care. The event was collaboration towards strengthening alternative care practice and policy in the spirit of the United Nations Guidelines for the Alternative Care of Children¹. The 3-day event was a success and created other opportunities for the movement in Lagos state on alternative child care.

This relationship with the state however, had not always been rosy; in fact, some three years prior, the Lagos state government had threatened to shut down the SOS Children's Village Isolo and had given a 3-months' notice to that effect. I recall that afternoon in my office when I heard the siren of a police vehicle in the SOS Children's Village and shortly a

knock on my door. As the door sprang open a stern looking woman walked into my office ignoring my greeting while demanding "Are you the director here?". I calmly replied in the affirmative and no sooner had I replied than she gave me an envelope. "Please acknowledge receipt!". Not knowing what was contained in the letter I did as she requested and before I could say a word, she warned that we had better complied otherwise the state would not hesitate to do the needful! The letter was from the state government requesting SOS Children's Villages to regularize it's registration with the state or risk shut down in three months! I had no doubt about the resolve of the state to shut down SOS Children's Village Isolo going by the melodrama I just witnessed. Later, I got to know that the woman who had delivered the letter was a deputy director – just to show the seriousness of the matter.

¹ https://www.unicef.org/protection/alternative_care_Guidelines-English.pdf

“His role gives him the opportunity to work with different persons from varied backgrounds. He appreciates the different perspectives that exist in society and sees it as enrichment. His role as Programme Director requires him to see to the overall development and often serve as a connector between different teams. Ayo is a father to three children and >

Continuous efforts to explain what SOS Children's Villages really does

The relationship between SOS and the state government began on a good note with the state government providing a 22,000 square meters (5.4 acres) land for the construction of the first SOS Children's Village at Isolo in 1973. However at some point there was a gap in the relationship, which worsened when the state government signed the Child's Right Law in 2007. The state developed a not so good perception towards the SOS Children's Villages model of long term care and aversion to adoption. It subsequently labelled the organization an institution. Furthermore, the state required us to register as an orphanage, which was in conflict with our rights based approach to child care. Unfortunately, all alternative care providers were perceived as orphanages by the state. It was so challenging that in one of the visits to the state for consultation it became apparent that top government personnel might never step into an SOS Children's Village, a sign of apathy for the model of care of the organization. SOS was not on the government list of alternative care providers in the state albeit after 42 years of operation in the state. The state had tolerated our operation for so long but no longer.

To address this challenge the national management gave all necessary support to engage with the state. We provided all required documents and paid all required fees. We also met other conditions and eventually SOS Children's Village Isolo was given full approval and all motion to close down the facility was aborted. To keep up a good relationship means work.

Our operations were opened up to government supervision and monitoring. This began a new chapter in our relationship with the state. Again, SOS received referrals from the state for short-term care and all appeared to be well again.

The relationship however witnessed another twist when a child was brought to the SOS Children's Village Isolo without a care order or a letter from the director at the ministry. Admission of children into care requires legal document of care order or a letter from the ministry directing a home to take in a child for care and protection. We politely declined admission on legal grounds. A phone call was also received from the state officials requesting we take the child in with assurances that authorizing document will be sent in at a later date. We continued to decline stating the legal requirement as the reason. The

child was later brought to the village after two weeks with the necessary document. This brought a little strain to the relationship at the time but we continued to manage the situation through engagement and open communication.

New opportunities grounded in mutual respect

Today, the relationship is that of mutual respect between SOS Children's Villages Nigeria and the state government. SOS has continued to engage with the state to review its laws on alternative childcare to

reflect the spirit of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Children (UNCRC) and The United Nations Guideline on the Alternative Care of Children (UNGAC). SOS in partnership with the state government and other stakeholders has agreed to set up a technical working group towards repositioning alternative childcare practice in Lagos State. Also SOS Children's Villages has sent in a position paper to the state on expanding the options of care in the Lagos state. These ongoing partnership and discussions indicates a good outcome and in the best interest of children in Lagos state.

through this experience learned to appreciate the efforts of his parents. Despite their low income, they gave him a very good education. He is convinced that allowing individual difference and uniqueness is important. In his leisure he enjoys taking walks and watching films. Ayo love Lagos, the city where he was born and still lives. Lagos never sleeps!

It is the economic hub of West Africa and one of the fastest growing and most populated cities in the world, estimated to be about 21 million. Lagos has rich coastal lines and beaches. The greatest resource in Lagos and indeed Nigeria are its people; diverse, creative, and resourceful.

”

My Dream

Leading the way

My dream is connected to my story. It is about the model of alternative care.

The **green colour** symbolizes the opportunities meaning the options of care. Organisations are taking a culture of learning. In my dream SOS Children's Villages Nigeria is the leader in alternative care. We were behind but in future we are leading and others are following us.

The **red parts** contained in the structure show what our followers do is based on the context. This implies providers of alternative care will respond based on the situation of the child by giving the appropriate, suitable option of care. It means the type of child in need of alternative care determines the service and not vice versa.

The **yellow roof** symbolizes that the Lagos State Child's Right Law explicitly recognizes alternative child care and makes provisions in the spirit of the UN Guideline on Alternative Care of Children.

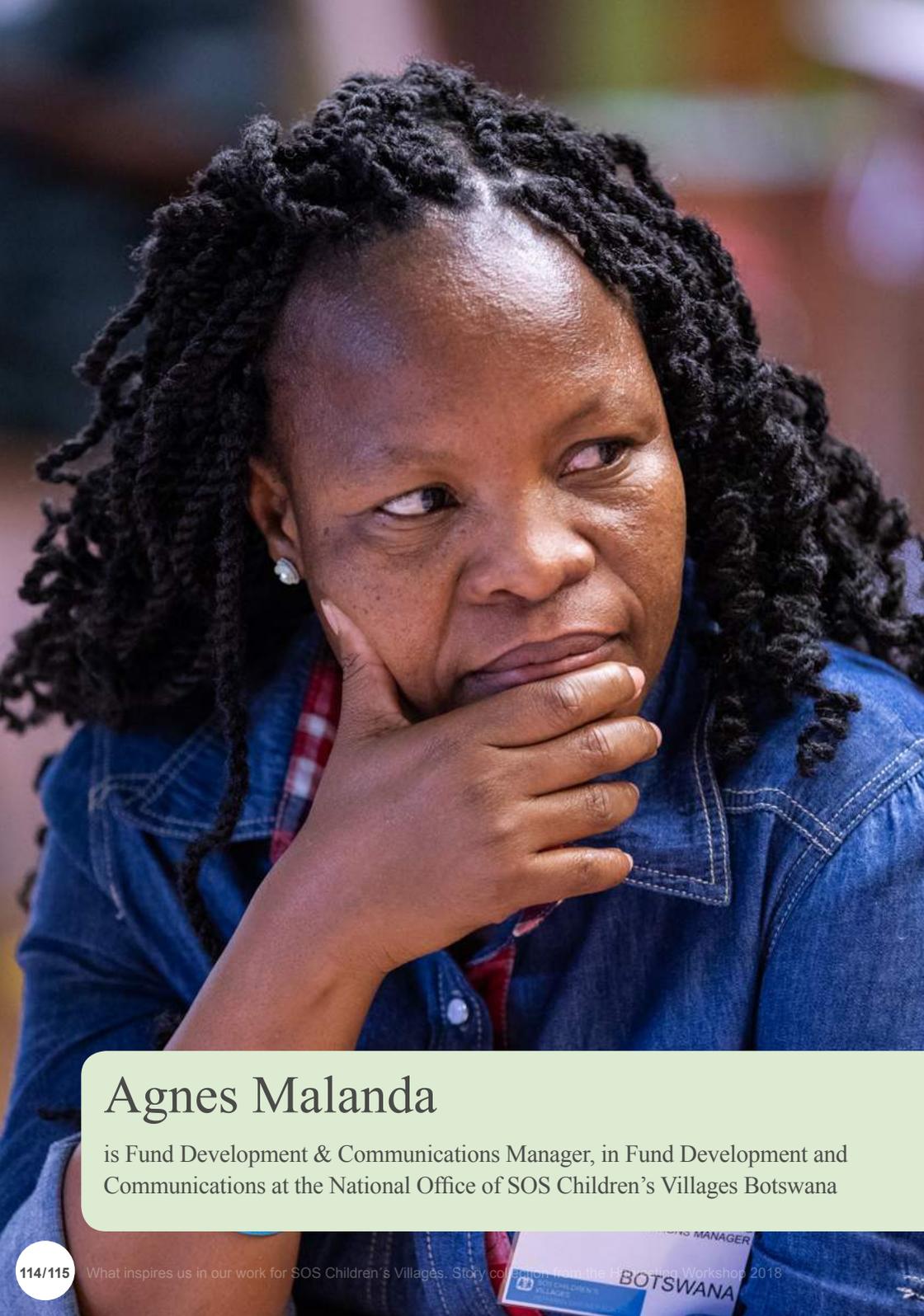
My role will be to galvanize stakeholders, provide linkages, mobilize resources and facilitate the process of creating an alternative care system that is right-based. I will know that I am on the right track when all alternative childcare providers in Lagos State adopt the UN Guideline on Alternative Care of Children in their operations, which therefore improves the quality of care children and young people in the need of alternative care receives.





Partnerships of SOS Children's Villages with Donors

Find your Why	115
Business works best based on trust.	119



Find your Why

then the How will come easily

My story is about a successful fund-raising partnership that started with a small donation, and through purposeful donor nurturing a long-term partnership developed. It all started when I assumed the responsibility of fundraising. Having worked as a program social worker before, I was at an advantage to tell the SOS story because I had had personal contact with different children's stories. One incident in particular left a huge mark on my life and influenced my everyday work ethic.

Thinking and acting in an emergency situation, and finding your reward

A few weeks after joining the organization as a social worker some years ago, the village director was on leave, and I received a call which was a desperate request for admission of a very sick and malnourished child into the SOS Children's Village. The village was at full capacity at the time and we had just completed the construction of an additional house; waiting

for the occupation certificate from the municipality.

My efforts to speed up the inspection process in order to obtain the occupation certificate proved futile. Upon realization that every second counts for the life of the child, I knew that I needed to make a quick decision. I asked the social worker to bring the child despite the situation; and I made a temporary arrangement for the child to be received in one of the family homes.

Upon arrival, I realized that the child was in critical condition. I immediately took the child to hospital, and her treatment was followed by different therapy interventions. It took some months before the child could fully function like other children. Amazingly, a child who arrived in a devastating condition recovered beautifully and blossomed into a wonderful young lady today.

From the story of that girl, I knew that I am involved with an organization

Agnes Malanda

is Fund Development & Communications Manager, in Fund Development and Communications at the National Office of SOS Children's Villages Botswana

“In her role she interacts with the public and shares the story of SOS Children's Villages. For her, each team member stands for this story and is equally important. Agnes comes from a family of five children. Her family is her stronghold, a well-knitted safety-net. She left home early and her family sees her as the adventurous one. She now has two boys who >

whose impact is immeasurable. That caused me to wake up every morning dedicated to do my best to change more lives, not only for the children in SOS Children's Villages but everywhere where I can make an impact.

Fast-forward to six years later when I assumed the position of a fundraiser. The story of that baby girl and of many other children whom I received into SOS Children's Villages stayed with me and is the reason why I tell the SOS story with so much conviction. I believe truly that when the WHY is strong, the how is easy. I tell the SOS story all the time and have never met someone who hears the SOS story and is not touched and moved to help in some way.

From donations to lasting partnerships

One day I met a lady and we started conversing. I shared with her the story of SOS Children's Villages and she was truly moved. A few days later she still could not forget our conversation and she visited my office and donated a few used children's clothes. I thanked her profusely and immediately added her into our database and started sending her updates. Despite the fact that she made a small donation I treated her with much appre-

ciation. After some time of constant communication, the lady introduced SOS Children's Villages to her in-laws, who happen to be one of the high net worth families in the country. I got to meet the mother-in-law who, after hearing the SOS story from me, couldn't keep it to herself. She pulled all her strings and used her influence to mobilize supporters and resources for SOS Children's Villages Botswana. Every year the funds they raise from their personal donations and their networks for SOS Children's Villages increase.

Today the relationship has turned into a partnership and annually the family contributes over 150 000 dollars towards clothing, school uniforms and Christmas gifts for our Francistown SOS Children's Village. Through continuous sharing of our unique story the relationship has opened more strategic fundraising partnership opportunities. Currently there are three high level fundraising projects that this family is helping SOS Children's Villages on.

Learning and Improving from past partnerships

All this became possible because an SOS story was told. We used the lessons learned from this partnership

to form other meaningful partnerships. One of these helped us to fully digitalize all our three SOS Children's Villages. I targeted an employee, shared

My Dream

All for one

The flower has different sorts of petals. This flower represents different things. In a nutshell it communicates the coming together of all people from different walks of life to support SOS Children's Villages programmes, to support the children in our care.

The flower can represent a boardroom: the petals represent people with different positions and portfolios in decision-making for the support of SOS Children's Villages.

It also represents people from the wider community according to their varying positions, colour and class in order to support SOS Children's Villages to provide for the children.

My role will be to facilitate, to pull everybody together for the realisation of the dream. I will come up with different approaches for each target group. My dream will come true when

the SOS story and that influenced her decision to fund SOS Children's Villages Botswana for the full digitalization of our three SOS Villages.

more individuals, companies and the government support SOS Children's Villages Botswana.



are ten and eight years old. In her leisure time Agnes derives pleasure from developing individuals in her community. She runs a cycling club for underprivileged children. To give them exposure and to build their confidence, they even compete in national competitions. Agnes was raised in a small village not far away from the capital city Gaborone. Because of

the village's proximity to the city, she grew up experiencing both: the traditional lifestyle of farming as well as the city-life. She constantly witnesses developments in her country. Botswana is also rich in wildlife and the beautiful Okavango Delta, which is one of the Wonders of the world, is the country's pride.





Barbara Blaser

Corporate Partnerships Marketing Manager at Hermann Gmeiner Fonds Germany e.V.

Business works best based on trust.

From a corporate donor trip to a warm-hearted SOS friendship

I do vividly remember a moment when I felt the flow. This was in 2015 on my first intercontinental SOS trip. At the time I was working as the Corporate Partnerships Marketing Manager at SOS Children's Villages in Germany. My boss called me during my Easter holidays and asked if I was prepared to accompany one of our major corporate donors on a trip to Ghana. I was extremely excited, but also a little nervous. There were only five weeks for preparation. I had not been to Ghana nor to any other Western African country before, nor did I know the donor or any member of the delegation who was travelling. But I decided spontaneously that this was a great chance and that I could make a real difference.

The beginning of the trip: A new adventure

I started my research on Ghana straight away in order to be well prepared for the first phone call with the donor. My excitement rose when I found out that the consulate for Ghana was right in my little town just outside of Munich, and I could walk there in order to get my visa. That was the first moment which made me feel: This trip is meant to happen! My boss was wonderful; she trusted me fully, gave me hardly any instructions and just supported me whenever I had questions. One African colleague in our office supplied me with all her insights both on the SOS-programs and the Ghanaian culture and with the right contacts in the country. I realized I just had to ask and would get the help I needed.

“ Barbara is in charge of marketing activities for corporate donors at the Hermann Gmeiner Fonds Germany. She loves the mixture of organizing and being creative. Barbara gets inspired by listening to the fascinating story of SOS colleagues from all over >

The initial communication with the donor wasn't all that easy. Neither of us were quite sure what to expect. A seven-day-trip with five of us in the group (a diverse mixture: two women, three men, four representatives of the corporate donor and me, one Ghanaian and four Germans) could truly be a challenge. How would our personalities work together, do our interests go along well, will we get tired, ill or just sick of each other? We all know an intercontinental trip can be a challenge, even amongst best friends. There was of course also a risk, but I wanted to turn our trip into a success and an ever-lasting memory. When it comes to a challenge like this I tend to be a perfectionist. I put a lot of energy into it and felt a first glimpse of flow happening.

I knew that the communication with my colleagues in Ghana would work best if there was trust. I also knew that the visit with a group of corporate donors could put the SOS team in Ghana under some pressure. I was very appreciative of the fact that they were now facing a lot of extra work on top of running the entire children's programs. I wanted to show the donor a lot more than the children's village itself and got into contact with the national director and village director.

Due to the limited time for preparation it was best to speak directly to them on the phone. And besides some communication hurdles like phone lines dropping out and completely new accents I trusted in our organization: Things will turn out to the best interest of everyone.

Working for Trust

I met the group at Frankfurt airport. Everyone was polite and focusing on doing the right thing. We arrived in the capital Accra in the evening. There were taxi-drivers fighting for us, and it was very hot. It felt just like having arrived in an unknown adventure. We checked in at the hotel and had our first dinner together. The next morning we flew to our final destination. I hadn't received a confirmation from the SOS Children's Village that we would be picked up, but I promised our donor that everything will be fine. Walking out of the airport of our final destination, I was overwhelmed to see that the village director himself had personally taken the time to come and meet us. There was a warm welcome at the Children's Village, an air-conditioned Meeting Room ready for us and nice, healthy food and drinks. We knew we were looked after.

For the following days we had meetings about SOS Ghana and the local programs, and a presentation from the corporate donor himself. There were a lot of interests to cover and quite some expectations to be met. The exchange was very fruitful. However, we were still business partners slowly getting to know each other in a cool meeting room of an enclosed SOS Children's Village.

This changed instantly the moment we got into our shuttle bus to leave the SOS Children's Village and visit the local social centre and some family strengthening programmes (FSP). After a warm welcome by the passionate FSP leader and her team we started driving to some wells that SOS had built for the local community. At the first spot there was a serious talk given about the impact the wells make especially for the girls and women in the community. The girls can go to school rather than having to walk for kilometres to carry fresh water home for their families. And the women who run the fountains generate an income for themselves and their families.

At the second day well we had an experience that changed the whole dynamics of our group and the trip itself. It really connected the donor

with the beneficiaries and showed in a wonderful way the impact of SOS Children's Villages on a community like the one we were visiting: The woman who was running the fountain was the centre of attention and full of smiles. Other women came to get their water and all of a sudden hundreds of children started showing up from every corner of the community. They were laughing, running, jumping and dancing. There was pure joy on all sides: the donor's, the beneficiaries' and the SOS co-workers'. From that moment onwards, there was a real flow. We started travelling like a team. Everyone trusted in the success of our trip itself, in the SOS organization and the corporate donor. A long-lasting friendship amongst all of us developed.

The Effect of Personal Moments on a Business Partnership

Our journey now felt like a breeze. Everybody had smiles on their faces and trust was established. We visited many more local programs together and were greatly inspired by the diversity and great impact of the SOS work. Ever since then we have been good personal friends. The business relationship is built on trust and flows easily. There is an ongoing com-

the world, as she sometimes misses the close contact with the programmes. Barbara grew up in a family that almost felt like an SOS Children village. She grew up with a lot of aunts, uncle and cousins around. She keeps close bonds with her extended and her direct family, most of all with her two sons and two step-sons. In her leisure Barbara enjoys reading and

traveling. She also likes going to exhibitions or the opera. Barbara feels blessed to live in Germany, a country with a rich culture and history, that also encourages talking about the dark part of the history. Germany has a well-functioning democracy and she is proud of what Germans give back in terms of diplomacy and donations.



mitment by the donor for the SOS programs. Communication happens easily and everyone works in the best interest of the children.

To me, there are a few messages in this story: I find business works best if it is based on trust, and in order to establish trust, you need to share personal moments. For SOS I think it is fundamental to bring our donors as closely as possible to our programs,

make them see and feel the dedication and the input of the SOS-workers which goes beyond the ordinary.

Whenever I have a dull moment at my desk and need inspiration, I recall the moments in Ghana. And whenever there is a challenge I take it on, because I know that good things always develop if we face them with a positive and brave mind-set.

My Dream

May the sun shine on our brand

My dream is called “May the sun shine on our brand” and the picture shows the SOS Children’s Villages logo in green as the brand colour in Germany is green. Our brand urgently needs to be energised by positive sun and warm fire. We need to bring extra passion because currently we are losing a bit of the valuable energy. The fire should be re-ignited and then it continues forever.





Partnership in terms of Teamwork

Stay positive 127



Dewi Novita

Village Secretary, National Office, Indonesia

Stay positive

even in the worst situation

The reward of hard work and teamwork in times of pressure

One year ago, our SOS Children's Village Jakarta team attended the LKSA¹ Berprestasi competition in East Jakarta. This competition is intended to appreciate Indonesian child social welfare institutions and programmes in order to improve their services. It also became a forum for the government to monitor the welfare activities for children in foster care. Participants are asked to present their activities, vision and mission and achievements and are being surveyed on the spot.

We were invited for a briefing contest that allows organisations to present their activities and achievements and went there with little preparation. We had created a presentation on paper, but not a PowerPoint presentation. Apparently, we were actually expected to improve our presentation. So, after returning from the meeting, my

¹ LKSA = Lembaga Kesejahteraan Sosial Anak is the child social welfare institution in Bahasa Indonesia

colleague Mr. Nugie, educator and deputy village director of SOS Children's Villages Jakarta at that time, worked on this presentation and I prepared the photos and documents that we needed. A few days later, the jury team came to our Village in Jakarta to see our presentation. The result of our hard work turned out to be a success: We won the first place in the contest and deserved to go on to the provincial level.

On the provincial level, we repeated the same process. It started with data collection, doing a field survey and then making our presentation. This time, we did the presentation in a hotel along with other child care and youth organizations that also participated in this contest. They came from all over Jakarta.

Dealing positively with bad news and a lack of success

We felt we were the best parenting organization and that we do the best work with a well-targeted system and

“Dewi is aware that there is much more behind an administrative job than just administration. She knows that she serves the children and mothers, and this is only possible if you work with your full heart. Dewi was raised by her mom after her father died when she was 3 months old. Living far away from her relatives makes Dewi feel lonely. She feels



well-structured programme. We also did a good presentation which was supported by pictures of the children's daily activities. The presentation was made with honesty, and we showed everything we do and our strengths. We compared it with orphanages¹ who also did the presentation. We felt that we did the best, but apparently the jury team had another assessment. According to them, we were not the best and it turned out we only got the third prize. A few weeks later the jury team finally announced it officially.

I have to admit, we were very disappointed. We wanted to know what exactly the other participants had done in order to get the first prize. But then we thought: No, it is not good just to think about failure, because we actually did not completely fail. We remembered back to when we presented and that we had enough time to greet and get to know the other participants well. Mr. Nugie and I greeted and invited the other participants to

¹ In Indonesia, institutions and programmes like ours are not yet recognised and familiar, so in cases where our category of "family-based care" does not exist, we are unsure of where to position ourselves. That is why we had to choose the category "orphanages", even though a LKSA term exists in the government. However, in general discussions, we still use the term institution/programme and we keep on explaining that SOS Children's Villages is a family-based child care programme.

lucky to have many close friends, who are almost like relatives and make her feel like she has a big family. She is married with one daughter. In her free time Dewi spends most of her time reading. She also enjoys sewing patchworks like quilts. Dewi was born in

work together with SOS Children's Villages. As a result of these conversations, we ended up having many friends and new knowledge. This really gave us a new insight.

Mr. Nugie is a great colleague. He brings a new atmosphere to the spirit and performance in SOS Children's Villages Jakarta. This greatly affects me. I got very excited about doing this activity with him, although I often felt tired because of long trips in often in jammed traffic situations. It all paid off – even though we only got the third prize – because we made new friends.

The reward of new partnerships resulting from a positive outlook

The result of the encounter with youth organisations in Cakung that are based in East Jakarta is that we got new knowledge, which is very useful for our teenagers in SOS Children's Villages Jakarta. Our teenagers had a chance to exchange experiences and knowledge with other young people, which is a really good experience for them.

One day, SOS teenagers were invited to visit the Karang Taruna Cakung (the Youth Organization) to directly see the activities what they did there:

for example designing and printing patterns on t-shirts, planting vegetables on empty land and recycling newspapers into pretty handicrafts such as key chains, flower vases, fruit baskets, etc. Surely enough, this made the teenagers of SOS CV Jakarta become more excited because they got new knowledge and new ideas. The next activity was a collaboration with the Muslims orphanage. They came to SOS for performing arts. The two organizations all sang, played music and danced together. The interesting thing is that when the activity occurred, we invited elderly people who live at the elderly nursing home that is located next to SOS Children's Villages Jakarta. This activity

became very useful and good, as the collaboration was able to entertain the elderly people who live alone and away from family.

Indeed, we felt disappointed when we won the third prize at the LKSA Berprestasi Competition, but we surely cannot stay in disappointment. We have to keep moving forward and looking for other positive things that we can do for SOS Children's Villages advancement. From this experience, we discover the positive things behind our failures. It's the best we can get. It becomes energy for us to go ahead and create new works for SOS, especially for our children.

Yogyakarta in Java Island and moved to different places during her school and university studies. She now lives in Jakarta and loves the city for its diversity, but also the connection between all Indonesian people.



My Dream

Happy life

In my dream I envision a harmonious situation in my life. We human beings cannot live without other people. We synergize with others in our lives and we must continue to take positive energies that others radiate in our lives.

Besides work I dream of harmony in my family, with friends, amongst co-workers and with the children. The small marbles you see in the picture represent the people around me and my family such as co-workers, friends and people being SOS Children's Villages' guests. In the circle of love are my husband and I. The other forms are the places or factors that make the harmonious state that I want to achieve. I also dream to see some beautiful places in the world like the Fujiyama Mountain in Japan which is represented in my dream picture as white triangle in the left upper corner.

I know my dream will come true, because I am in a solid organization, full of good people who have a lots of positive energy. Surely sometimes there is sense of disappointment or conflict, but that's life dynamics. That is where we become strengthened by taking the positive side of everything that happens. For this reason, every night, I try to meditate by emptying my

mind and practicing to bring the rest of the day into peace and sleeping peacefully. When I wake up early, I have new views and strengths to start my days to step by step achieve what I dreamed of. This will have a good impact on SOS Children's Village with me as a torch or as an encouragement for my colleagues.

Although I am only a secretary, I have ears ready to listen to the complaints of colleagues and children. That is my contribution to SOS. There are times when they meet me, they tell their problems related to children or work. I give them a positive reinforcement and energy, without any sense of judgment. Sometimes I also make a joke, so that they can relax and are no longer disappointed or restless.





Leadership in SOS Children's Villages

- Change is the only constant..... 33
- We can learn by trying 135
- A Look Back 141
- Leading a team with diverse knowledge. 147



Manjola Koço

Family Strengthening Project Coordinator, “Family Strengthening Project Don Bosko”, at SOS Children’s Villages in Albania

We can learn by trying

Establishing a father’s club in Albania

I am Manjola from Albania. Mother Teresa was from Albania too. I think she is an inspiration for everyone who works with children. Mother Teresa is a good example and inspiration in my country. Inspired by her I studied social science and I became a social worker.

The Beginning: Thoughts of a Fathers’ Club

I have been working for SOS Children’s Villages since 2011 as Coordinator of the family strengthening project¹ (FSP). In this year, two years

after the implementation of the FSP in Don Bosko in 2010, social workers noticed that male caregivers were not involved at all or had low involvement in family dynamics and as result they tend to attribute their child’s upbringing and development issues to their wives. We were conscious that when fathers become more involved in parenting – and in working with mothers as co-parents and partners – you get healthier families and healthier children. Engaged fathers experience better overall health, greater work satisfaction, and higher self-esteem. We knew how important the father’s role in the family is, as a father and a husband. Furthermore we didn’t want to be recognised as a “female program” but as a “child and family program” where services were offered for the whole family. At that time we were also working on having a clear identity for better recognition inside and outside the organisation.

We were thinking about how to increase the father’s role within the family and enhance their caregiver

¹ “FSP aims at enabling children at risk of losing parental care to grow up in a caring family environment and to support reintegration after the separation of children from their families of origin. In Central and Eastern European, CIS and Baltic countries SOS Children’s Villages is working with different target group groups within the FSPs, always aiming at improving the life of children for the better. Working with children and families in the frame of FSPs is seen as an individual support process (...). All FSPs run in strong partnership with other stakeholders (...) to address the complex and multi-dimensional problems faced by children at risk of losing parental care as well as to have a greater impact on the lives of their families.” (SOS CVI, Global Intranet)

“Manjola has worked in this position for seven years. She sees the family as the basic unit of the society and she sees working towards strengthening this unit as investing in this society’s future. What she likes most about her job is the good communication she experiences in her team and with her supervisors. This positive spirit of communication



abilities to be closer to the children's developmental needs. We wanted to change the situation and worked hard to involve fathers in a project, but we didn't know how to do it. We didn't have experience in this unexplored field, and user manuals and the internet offered limited information in those times. Nevertheless, we decided to start the "Fathers' club" and to learn by trying. So we called fathers, explained our ideas and invited them in for the first meeting, but in the first meeting no one came. They found different excuses, but the real reason was the mentality. In Albania during the communist regime until the nineties, women were targeted as the main person offering care, protection and support to the children. It was closely linked with some initiatives of strengthening a female role in society.

Flexibility and Adaptation: Setting the Groundwork for the Fathers' Club

For the fathers, caregiving was a new experience and they felt confused. To them, looking for daily work was more important than being part of this club.

We were disappointed but we didn't give up. We tried to find a different

way to establish this club, so we decided to visit each father in his own house, as a way to be closer to them and have an open communication with them in regard to what the Fathers' Club would represent, what kind of engagement was expected from them, and how they might benefit from this. Of course we also took their inputs into consideration. We invested a lot of time and effort in building up a trusting relationship. We were flexible in order to respond to their time schedule and working hours by adapting our agenda. In the beginning, the group was led by male social workers in order to reduce barriers, and the first meetings were informal, just to get to know each other. They were organised outside FS premises. Sport activities were a good motivation for them to socialise, to strengthen the group and to learn group rules. Home visits were helpful to persuade them to be part of this Club.

In the ongoing meetings external experts were included, like a paediatrician, physiologist and education assistants who taught them child education, emotional wellbeing, conflict solving, communication among family members, positive parenting models and so on.

Learning by Trying

Today, on average 28 to 30 fathers participate in the Fathers' Club regularly. The Fathers' Club is a platform to raise awareness in terms of child rights, domestic violence and its consequence, caregivers' obligations and parental responsibilities. Group sessions are offered on topics such as self-esteem and self-confidence and trainings are conducted related to child education, emotional wellbeing, conflict solving, communication among family members, positive parenting models, building and strengthening their ties with other family members, the importance of playing with children and so on. Sport, cultural and recreational activities outside the SOS premises are being organized.

A lot has changed in the past years. Today, the Fathers' Club functions as a social network where the fathers are supporting each other, especially with employment issues and child education issues. They are investing in becoming better fathers, husbands and citizens.

Trying was our way of being successful and achieving our goal. Now we are proud of all we have done with this Club.

Gezim¹ a father of three sons, said: "If my father had had the opportunity to participate and be supported like I am; I would never have been in this situation. I would have had better chances to succeed in life."

¹ Name changed to protect privacy

makes it easier to overcome challenges and difficulties in everyday work. Manjola was born in a happy family and has three siblings. In her family, faith in God and love for your neighbours were of utmost importance. Integrity and dedication are two values she took from her parents. In her free time Manjola likes to read and enjoys cultural events.

She is grateful for the things she has in life and tries to enjoy everything life offers her. Her home country Albania is located in south-east of Europe with an area of 28,748 square meters, and a population of 2,893,005 people. After the fall of communism in the 1990s to the present day the country is in economic, social and political transition.



My Dream

Build Bridges to improve the answer to children's needs

Many children in Albania need help for a good education and good families.

The picture of my dream shows two shores that are connected with a bridge. The side where the child stands is empty and a lot of things are missing. There is no good education, health services and community services. In the other side the environment is pretty, full of colours, and sunny as this is a metaphor for good education, good health and community services. It is very difficult for the child to pass from one shore to the other side. His family does not have capacity to help or to support him to pass in the good side. He needs a bridge for this. This bridge symbolizes the SOS Children's Villages organisation and co-workers.

Our role is to support his family to raise their capacities like

- Parent capacity: how to take care for the children, how to have good communication as couple and with children
- Capacity for employment
- To collaborate with our partners in community to integrate the children better.
- To raise children's awareness of their rights
- To advocate for children rights

This is a big dream and needs a lot of efforts and time to make the good change in children lives. This year we and our partners advocated for children's rights in education. The Government in consequence decided to give school books for free for all children that attending elementary school. I dream that they decide to enable all children to attend school regularly. We are working and supporting family and children in continuity to pass problems and difficulties.





Vesna Lekic

Finance Director at SOS Children's Villages Serbia

The Beginning of SOS Children's Villages Serbia.

A Look Back

Last year, with a few colleagues, I attended the celebration of 25 years of the SOS Children's Villages in a neighbouring country. The celebration was brightened with the ring's ceremony for SOS mothers and a special program that colleagues prepared. In one part of the program a film was shown about the development of that SOS Children's Village, where colleagues from various departments told their stories and shared their feelings.

Looking at the film, I started recording of my own film in my mind, wandering into the past, comprehending the present and imagining the future of SOS Children's Villages Serbia.

Personal Experiences in SOS Children's Villages

The story began in 2004 with a few of us. In 2005, we got the first child, the first moments of happiness and great expectations. Some of us were not able to deal with the challenges and they left SOS Children's Villages Serbia. Some of us have been

strengthened and focused and we developed ourselves on a personal and professional level. Some of us have realized that SOS Children's Villages Serbia has the potential to grow and we "rolled up our sleeves" and bravely went into the development of the organization. In my film, my colleagues would say the following:

National Director

"I have fresh memories about establishing the local entity, the SOS Children's Village in Kraljevo. With a lot of emotions, we decorated family houses until the first SOS mother came. She redecorated it all. I remember the accommodation of the first children, the first graduation, the first marriage, the first grandchild and the first ten years working in one SOS Children's Village. At the end of 2013 we got our first public grant and from that moment we became active on the territory of the whole Republic of Serbia, establishing the new local entity: the National Office in the capital city, Belgrade. I am grateful for the fact

“Vesna has been told she does not look like someone who works in finance. How does someone who works in finance look like? She sees financial workers as service providers who need to be able to work in synergy, provide trust and a professional approach, a laughter and good black coffee. She has worked for SOS Children's Villages in



that dedicated and hard-working people surround me. Everyone's desire is to protect, support and strengthen as many children and young people through regular and alternative programs. Each of us is a fundraiser. We make our own steps towards self-financing. All of us are responsible in usage of the entrusted assets and money. All of us have the possibility of working in a good environment and with the latest technology. I am happy that SOS Children's Villages Serbia is one of youngest Member Associations with great potential. In my role of the director, I am giving the best from my side to lead the organization."

National Director of Program Development

"SOS Children's Villages Serbia accommodated the first children in April 2005. Three beautiful boys found their place in the family house "Birch" in the SOS Children's Village Kraljevo. Currently, we are taking care about more than 100 children and young people in the Children's Village Kraljevo, in the youth programme and in the semi-independent living program.

Every child has a story in itself, with its potentials and fears, with its

desires and abilities and with its will and resilience. Since 2014, we have worked with families at risk and provided financial, psychological, medical and educational support for more than 700 beneficiaries. We started with youth employment projects and we plan to strengthen 300 of them by the end of the year in various ways. We reacted quickly in 2015, during the refugee crisis, and helped thousands of children and young people through various activities that we carried out with them and their parents.

We are currently developing other forms of alternative care and we are actively working on service licensing. I am so proud that I am working in an organization in which the priority is the wellbeing of children, young people and other beneficiaries."

Human Resource Manager

"I am pleased that every employee is aware that facilities and equipment do not make the organization, but the people themselves. Each of us deeply believes that we are doing a great job, no matter if we are delivering services to beneficiaries in a location or if we are doing office work. We invest in people, we care about them and

that is why we have more and more employees. If we have issues we do not run away, we are problem-solving oriented and we are devoted to the vision and mission of SOS Children's Villages.

In comparison with my previous jobs in profit organizations, I am surprised with the passion that employees have, one that is not money-driven. SOS mothers live with their children in family houses. They create a positive movement with children and they are doing their best to avoid all constraints in raising children. Our organization is unique and well known as an organization that is taking care of staff."

Fund Raiser

"If we go back to 2004, to our beginning, we started with zero local revenue. Slowly we started promoting the vision of SOS Children's Villages and now we are intensively working on visibility and recognition of the brand. We activate various channels to raise funds, from the individual to corporates and from government grants to public funds. For us, there are no borders and our goal is to achieve 100% self-financing until 2024. As the youngest team we are

aware that we should learn from the stories of the older colleagues and to transfer them to donors with the same passion of those colleagues who told these stories to us. We are increasing the number of friends of Children's Villages Serbia and see the trend of commitment donors increasing. We are launching the individual giving campaign with the strong belief that we will achieve our goals. We are proud of all approved project proposals. For example we received funds from main public donors in Europe and the world, such as UNICEF, Mercy Corps, the European Commission, German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development-BMZ, ADRA, embassies and more."

Finance Director

"Everything that my colleagues are doing in any single field, from programme development to fundraising, from employment of staff to promotion of the organization, from strategic planning of actions to purchasing milk for the child in the village, from maintenance and administration to managing, from beginning to the end, all of this must be recorded in finance. All records must be transparent and

Serbia since 2005. Vesna is the eldest in a happy family, and is married with three daughters. Her family gives her great strength and support every day, and she feels like she is part of the SOS family as well. She can come to her job every day with great energy, feeling that she is going from one family to another, and her job is also a way of life. In her free time, Vesna surrounds herself with family, friends, and goes on walks with her puppy. She enjoys

travelling and meeting new people, and cooking for those who come to visit. She also likes to read and watch movies and series. Serbia has over 7,000,000 residents. The capital city is Belgrade, which has a rich cultural history. Serbian words like "vampire" have been adopted by many world languages, and the beautiful White Angel fresco from Mileseva Monastery is famous worldwide.



entered in reports. All reports, procedures and documents need to be checked by the internal control and external audit units. Everything should be saved in paper and electronic form. All the time finance, administrative and maintenance employees are to be at the disposal of all beneficiaries, staff, donors and other stakeholders. Everyone can count on us, colleagues and beneficiaries, donors and vendors, state and other NGOs. We can rely on each other. We will try to stay focused on the content, to think outside of the box, to give support at the right time and to respond to all donor requests.

In 2004, a few of us shared one computer and an office of nine square meters and now all of us have a laptop. New technologies connect us and make the job easier. Many tasks have to be done but we are one brave team working in one brave organization.”

The Future of SOS

That would be my film about SOS Children’s Villages Serbia: A collection of messages from colleagues in key positions interwoven with footage of children and young people in our care from various locations.

One moment takes me into the near past and distant future. I am in the year when we have more beneficiaries, employees and local income and when we achieve self-financing. In the year when we are able to say: “We were some of the key people who helped in the development of SOS Children’s Villages Serbia.” In that a year when we will proudly continue to take the “SOS” in heart and soul and transmit our knowledge and observations to younger colleagues.

We are on the right track and in the right organization and with our synergy, we are contributing to the movement and progress of SOS.

Harvesting

We have a mission and we are the owners of our dream. My dream symbol shows a white base that symbolizes the worldwide SOS Children’s Villages organization. The basket stands for the national association SOS Children’s Villages Serbia. The fruits represent the beneficiaries and the flowers are the employees.

I dream to see SOS Children’s Villages Serbia as a stable, self-financed organization one day. We should achieve sustainability six years before the 25th anniversary in 2030. Currently we are facing big changes and lots of efforts are given into achieving self-financing by 2024, e.g. this year we complete establishing of national management team (NMT).

Our national management team (the protagonists of my story) had a good vision, strategic thinking, was aware of risks, took decisions on time from 2017 to 2024. These efforts will culminate in the 25th anniversary on 25th October 2030. I dream that we will celebrate our success on 25th anniversary. In my dream I am in the year when we have more beneficiaries, employees and local income and when we achieve self-financing.

Being a member of the NMT I am responsible for strategic planning, risk management, finance management, integrity and compliance and other operational and managerial duties. My role is to design my dream and incor-

porate it into SOS Children’s Villages Serbia’s strategies for period till 2030. This will finally lead to the conclusion at the 25th anniversary where the key people who helped in the development of SOS Children’s Villages Serbia will celebrate this success.

By 2024 we will know whether we are on the right track or not. We should establish reliable channels for local fundraising. We should have proper programs and projects which are fulfilling beneficiary’s needs. We must employ enough co-workers to avoid burnout and fluctuation.

In the period from 2024 to 2030 we will use time for corrective actions and on 25th anniversary the five of us can be relaxed and enjoy the success. That year we will proudly continue to take SOS in heart and soul and transmit our knowledge and observations to younger colleagues.





Alexander Alexious Nguwo

is family strengthening programme coordinator for the Blantyre programme, SOS Children's Villages Malawi

Leading a team with diverse knowledge.

A story about a leadership initiative in Malawi

It is not long ago that I got surprising news. Let me tell you the story about how this all came about and what the role is that I plan in this story.

A new initiative

SOS children's Villages Malawi is implementing strategic initiatives (SI) to achieve the SOS Children's Villages global strategy 2030. During the mid-term planning meeting, members of the national management team decided to take on board one new SI in 2019, which was "Simplify SOS - create a simpler, digital and agile organisation".

Honour and trust

Soon afterwards, the senior management team (SMT) had an emergency meeting to discuss the way forward and choose the lead person for the new initiative. That very same day I was called to present myself at a ven-

ue where senior management were holding a side meeting. I still remember the moment when I responded to that call by one of the senior managers. The SMT suggested that I lead the initiative and asked me if I was ready to take up this challenge. To my surprise, I realised that all the other team members were from the national office and of a higher position. I was the only one who was from the programme. I felt proud to be entrusted with this task, but still felt anxious as to whether I could meet their expectations. What made me feel strong was that I knew the SMT supports those with additional tasks within our organisation. I was aware that the task I was asked to do was a challenge, but I was convinced I could take it on together with my team and the support from the senior managers.

“ Alex joined SOS Children's Villages in 2003. He wants to inspire people to write their own story instead of following the story written for them. Bringing people out of the passenger seat and into the driver's seat is his aim. Alex sees family as an integral part of every human. His family relationships played an outstanding role in preparing him for life >

How I started it...

After the announcement and the briefing on what the assigned implementation was all about, I called my team for the first meeting. I wanted to make sure the team realised that I needed their support to fulfil the task. I knew that being a good leader is crucial for success and I wanted to be a good leader, one that shows his commitment. I wanted to communicate clearly about what needs to be done. I also wanted to make sure that we all have a good understanding of each other's strengths and expertise. All this had to be communicated to my team. We had a big agenda to work through. I started by giving them all the information needed. After that, we went through a detailed process of agreeing on responsibilities. I was guided by my belief that leadership is much more likely to be successful with clear and agreed differentiation.

During the ongoing discussions, I noticed that the team members have varied backgrounds, experiences and thinking styles. I felt that this diversity, if not well understood, could pull my team apart. However, if properly leveraged, it could lead to higher levels of performance. I really wanted to make sure that in my team we would build

on each other's strengths and support each other. This initial meeting was a crucial one and, at the end of the day, we all felt exhausted. However, in this interactive process, team members had an opportunity to share their viewpoints, anxieties and experiences. I wanted to make sure that, as team leader, I did not tell my team how to do the task; but rather tell them what needs to be done and enter into a joint discussion. I was surprised about the results that came out of this.

During the meeting, I found myself torn between different roles. I had to exercise leadership and to keep people working together, but I also noticed that many helpful ideas were emerging from the team discussions, but no one was taking notes. The ideas were in danger of being lost or forgotten. I suggested that someone take on the role of recording the main points of the team discussion in order not to lose the brilliant ideas that emerged during the meeting. I knew that high-performing teams create and operate on a few crucial ground rules. A thought crossed my mind: "What can we do now in order to truly embody these principles? As a team, should we not reflect the inputs of all the team members through a transparent process?" I initiated a discus-

sion on the ground rules that reflected the unique character and dynamics of our team, helping to ensure higher levels of effectiveness.

Only with my team can I succeed

My team noticed that I count on them. Leaders do not lead alone but with others. I got encouragement from the senior managers who gave me confidence, but I was aware that success in leadership begins with commitment. When I was given the responsibility to lead a team with a major influence, I had the opportunity to see leadership in its most intense and powerful form.

During the meeting with my team, it was very challenging to come up with the draft strategic objective so that the team might focus before the 2019 annual planning process. Members did not know what to do since the strategic initiative was completely new. However, I realised that effective participation and involvement within the team can be a powerful tool for success. I suggested that each member of the team should draft one strategic objective. Then all the objectives were written together on a flip chart. I asked members to select key word(s) from each objective and then merge the words into one strategic objec-

tive that group members can take on board during the 2019 planning for the member association. It worked, and I felt that I am the type of leader who optimises the talent of the group members. I knew how to identify, build and engage talent to get results. I identified the skills required, drew talent to the organisation, engaged the people, communicated extensively and ensured that group members gave their best efforts to maximise outputs. I expended enormous personal energy and gave great attention to whatever matters to the team. I inspired loyalty and goodwill in others because I myself act with integrity and trust. I believed that, as a team leader, I must excel at personal proficiency. Without the foundation of trust and credibility, I could not ask others to follow me.

Individuals may have different styles (introvert/extrovert, intuitive/sensing, etc.) but, as an individual leader, I must be seen to have personal proficiency in order to engage followers who are ready to start the implementation of strategic initiative number 6 in 2019.

in the community. As a parent, he loves his children unconditionally. He knows that his children will not remember him for the material things but for the love he gave them. In his leisure time, he tries to balance a range of activities. He spends time with his friends or swims in the beautiful water of Lake Malawi. Walking is a great way to clear his head. His

home country Malawi is landlocked, with a population of around 17.1 million people, and covers an area of 1180 km². Malawi's economy relies mostly on agriculture and has nice tourist attractions. The country's capital is Lilongwe, but the biggest city, Blantyre, where he lives is a commercial hub with a population of around 1 million people.



My Dream

Steps to effective leadership

"The ultimate measure of a man is not where he stands in moments of comfort and convenience, but where he stands at times of challenge and controversy."

Martin Luther King

My dream is to take ambitious steps towards effective leadership. My dream symbol is a transformation of the Maslow pyramid. The colour red stands for the challenges and pressure we experience as leaders.

Brown shows a futuristic perspective and yellow means seeing the light, and results in more time to learn. The green parts stand for strong decisions and becoming creative. The blue stands for effective leadership skills and, at its best, other people can also learn from the leadership styles. I see all these aspects as important components of effective leadership and want to contribute towards developing a strategy to make this a reality.



Human Resource Development in SOS Children's Villages

Facing challenges to succeed..... 155

SOS mother as a leader 159





José Abeso Asumu

Human Resources Manager and Planning & Monitoring
Evaluation Coordinator-Guinea Ecuatorial

Facing challenges to succeed

Solving challenges in Human Resource Development

In my daily work as a HR, I learn a lot from people. Every day you realize that each person is like a world. For instance, what seems good to one does not have to look good to the other. The social and cultural context greatly influences the way people think and act. So, you should be more careful and tactful when you manage each person. Every day you discover how important it is to listen people, analyse each word and emotion before reacting. SOS Children villages operated in Equatorial Guinea for more than nine years without Human Resources Department. This situation was a turning point in terms of managing culture changes, implementing new strategies and procedures. I would just highlight some topic and challenging moments in my story:

Explaining HR department role for staff

I remember the first day that many employees asked me more about Human Resources Department. It took me some days organising focus group and explaining to my colleagues and Head of Units the role of the HR Department. They were very surprised because they discovered that HR department is not only recruitment, payroll, Hiring and dismiss people, etc. They discovered other functions for HR Department as an strategic position in term of promoting a good Leadership within the National Association, working for the motivation for all staff in order to have a better performance, encourage internal communication, advise staff on Labour Law and internal Manual, Promoting, retaining talents, create wellness and recreation programs, staff planning, Performance evaluations, etc.

Jose's passion is finding the right people for each position, which makes him a committed Human Resource Manager. As he also carries out the function of planning, monitoring and evaluation, he holds a holistic view on the organization. Jose lived in Spain for over 15 years and came back to his country in 2010. He immediately started working for SOS

The first step

I remember very well the first month we had to update the file for all staff and when we prepared the Job description Book. It was a difficult issue in order to clarify and separate task and responsibilities.

I also remember the period that The National Association lacked an additional legal instrument to solve the various specific aspects that were raised day by day. The Local Labour Law is very generic and does not take into account the specific cases. After a few intense months of work and with the support of the Regional Office and the Local Labour Inspectorate, we were able to take forward the Internal Regulation. Since then, managing staff has been substantially improved in several aspects that previously created unnecessary controversies.

Promoting motivation and internal communication

In term of motivation, HR department with Management Team prepared a motivation Plan for all staff. Some aspects were implemented in the budget for the first time, such as: birthday's celebration, excursions, awards for the best employees, etc.

An Internal Communication Plan was elaborated in order to break the different communication barriers that existed. This Communication Plan was discussed, amended and approved by the entire Management Team. Thanks to this Plan the internal communication improved a lot.

Changing the way of thinking

Two more topic that comes into my mind are: the first moment we implemented the Code of Conduct. Although it may seem simple for any new employee, however, but I still remember the first time we encourage people to sign the Code of Conduct. Some veteran staff were quite resistant to sign it. After carrying out several awareness campaigns all staff accepted to do it.

The other topic was about the first retirements. In our culture, people do not like to be retired. It is thought that being retired means that someone is no longer useful for the society. I remember that it took me a lot of effort and time to convince the affected employees, the advantages offered by the Local Law for retirees in terms of free medical care, life pension, etc. Despite such resistance, the first retirees are satisfied and grateful at present.

Children's Villages. Jose was born into a big family and now has five children himself. For him family is what gives meaning to life. He tries his best to balance work and family life. In his leisure time Jose enjoys doing sports like running and walking. He needs physical exercise to function well. He also tries to follow political debates and the successes of his

My Dream

A brilliant future from SOS work and family balance



Solving challenges in Human Resource Development as part of Organisational Human Resource Development.

My dream is symbolized by a triangle. On the left we find a house, which represents the family life of SOS co-workers. In the other vertical, we find SOS acronyms that represent the beneficiaries and the organization. At the top, we have a bright sun, which represents hope and the goal to achieve.

My dream is focused on the staff, especially the SOS mothers who deal with day-to-day of care of children and whose job has no price.

My dream is also focused to the staff that occupies strategic positions, those who have more responsibility.

Day to day they dedicate most of their time to SOS Children's Villages.

In my dream we are in the year 2024. The new reality is that SOS Children's Villages Equatorial Guinea is more self-sufficient. We then have more resources so that we can serve more beneficiaries. In that situation, as a human resource development responsible I am designing plans to improve the working conditions of all co-workers and especially SOS mothers.

I dream that in 2030, all the co-workers are fully motivated in their position and everybody is happy in terms of balancing their work in SOS Children's Villages and their family life. In my dream the sun shines in a special way, for all the staff and beneficiaries.

favourite team FC Barcelona. Jose describes his country Guinea Equatorial as one of the most beautiful places in the world. It has lush forests, beautiful beaches and a pleasant climate. With approximately two million people, it is a small country. Its people live in peace and harmony. Most people are Christians.





SOS mother as a leader

The challenges of a co-worker finding a way to balance life and work

My passion for children has led me to be engaged as an SOS mother in Ghana. After having raised my own two biological children, I wanted to extend that affection to needy children. Being an SOS mother, I have a major role to play in the children's lives. I look after their welfare in terms of making sure that they are free from any harmful practices, I make sure they have a balanced life and help them with their homework and research for school.

Responsibilities and joys of being a (SOS) mother

As an SOS mother it is also my duty to manage my household, control the expenses, eliminate waste and teach the children how to handle things well, as well as teaching them good practices so that they can become confident in doing things by themselves.

Sometimes I face challenges in the job, with the children to be precise. They come from different places with

different backgrounds and have different characters. This is where I have to show my ability as a mother and leader to control the situation. This also gives me the inner feeling that I am empowered and fought a good fight if the situation has gone well.

Sometimes some children are not academically strong, but they have other talents like crafts, drawing, needlework and dancing. Some are more athletic and play football. I always stand by them and help them in whatever situation they find themselves.

It always gives me joy that one day these children will grow up and become successful and responsible adults in society and my work will not be in vain. It is always advisable to encourage the children. There should not be discouragement in any situation. If this happens, I always contact the social worker and the village director for advice so that my work gets easier.

Patience Shine Ama Ohene

SOS mother, SOS Children's Villages Kumasi, Ghana

“As an SOS mother, Shine is particularly conscious of every step she takes to bring up the children entrusted to her. She is aware of how fragile they are, due to their challenging background. She enjoys spending time with them and shows commitment to each child. To her, each of them is unique. She is very proud of her profession as an SOS”

Individual care for individual children

Amongst my eleven SOS children, I have one particular boy. To protect privacy I would like to call him little prince in this story. He is eleven years old, goes to school and always used to come back late. Both the village director and the SOS social worker tried to talk to him and make him refrain from this behaviour. I also did everything to stop him, but without success. So I worked out a different strategy and my compassion helped me through all of this: before school closed I was already there to pick him up and take him home. Sometimes I gave him gifts or told him a story, or I took him out for a nice walk. So after doing this for about a month, he now no longer comes home late. This is my greatest success story.

My ability to give my children guidance and the positive support they need makes me feel good and strong. Little prince himself is now really proud and happy about his own behaviour. After school, the children walk home together in a group, which promotes a sense of unity and support. This unity helps the children read and tell stories together and it helped them form a reading and storytelling club.

My intervention was also of great help to the other children and mothers. It helped the mothers to reduce the stress of having to continually supervise the children's reading in their different homes. Overall, it has brought a marked improvement in the children's reading and writing skills.

I have changed my behaviour, in that I did not understand little prince's behaviour because I thought I was giving enough attention to all the children equally. What was new this time was to see little prince's behaviour as an individual need which required targeted support as explained by our knowledge of individual differences. What I learned is that every child is unique with their own needs and potentials. There is therefore a need to respect each child's uniqueness.

Learning as a village

I was happy that I achieved my goal and it taught me that, as a leader, you have to be in control. It encourages me to do more of this. I also learnt from this that the moral support has helped not only this particular boy but all the other children in the family house. I have also been able to give guidance to the other mothers and share this good practice with them,

mother. Family for her means friendly and stable relationships. She is happy to have been brought up in a noble and respectful family, the same way she brought up her two biological children. She is confident that the love they got makes them responsible community members with values and aspirations. In her leisure time, Shine enjoys reading and listening

so this is a lesson learnt for the whole village.

As I am playing a dual role both as an SOS mother and a mother to my biological children, I give them all equal treatment so that they will see themselves as siblings and love each other.

My Dream By the fire side

My dream is called "by the fireside" because I dream that I can give my children education for and about their lives. I am a mother in the children's lives who is trying to give them a message for life.

I listen to their stories and support them in finding a good way to do that. This enables the children to live a good life, respecting the resources the caregivers have to offer by finding a way to balance life and work.

Another thing which inspires me in my daily work is the recognition that our organisation gives to SOS mothers. This encourages me to do well in my field so that soon I can celebrate my ring ceremony and retirement like my predecessors.



to public debates. She strives to enhance her eloquence and effective language by activating her brain. Shine lives in the SOS Children's Village in Kumasi. She feels blessed by the serene environment, which gives her a peaceful mind to read without distraction. Praying is an important part of her life and it helps her in difficult moments.





Management in SOS Children's Villages

You can! 165



Sireen Kutieleh

national information communication technology coordinator and national review coordinator, administration and ICT, Syria

You can!

Discover what you can do

“Please do me a favour and don’t accept me for the position.” This is what I said when I started my job interview with the recruitment committee of SOS Children’s Villages Syria.

The beginning of a life in SOS Children’s Villages

I used to work for Alitalia Airlines. I have a Diploma in Hotel Management and I loved my job in the field of aviation. However, due to some changes and the working conditions, my father insisted that I change my work in order to have more regular working hours to improve my health in the long run. I refused, as I was very happy, but he insisted and asked me to apply to SOS Children’s Villages for the position of secretary. I tried to avoid doing this but he kept on at me. As it turned out, I was asked for the interview. Once I got there, I told them not to accept me, and when they asked why, I told them the truth. They interviewed me and asked me different questions, and I explained that I have no experience at all in secretar-

ial work and if they recruited me they would need to teach me everything.

Three days after the interview, I received a call from SOS Children’s Villages informing me that I had been selected by the recruitment committee. I again refused the job and asked them not to bother me and to look for someone else. However, they gave me one week to think it over. After one week, they called me again, and after a long discussion with them, I accepted the job.

Challenges of a new SOS life

I tried hard to overcome the difficulties that might crop up and I read far too many articles about secretarial skills. After a few months, the national director called me about a meeting with the regional director for the Middle East to tell me that there would be a regional meeting, which was going to take place in Damascus, Syria. They told me that both regional and continental directors would attend this meeting. Not only this, they also assigned all

“Sireen has worked for SOS Children’s Villages since 2005, after working in the field of aviation. Sireen has had a wide variety of positions during these years. She enjoys sharing information and during her work has learned that there are places where you don’t just work for the boss or for the interest of a company or the owner, but you work for the



the necessary preparation to me. I again told the national director that I had no experience at all, I would never manage and would not succeed. He answered me with one sentence: "I trust you, and will support you when you need it. Go and do your job."

Facing the difficulties

The first thing I did was to have a meeting with the regional director and get all the information needed for the preparation in addition to the list of participants with contact details so I could check their nationalities and whether they needed an entry visa or not. After securing visas for all the participants, I called the hotel and booked the rooms and the meeting room and fixed all the necessary breaks and meals.

After finishing all the preparations, I noticed that they had a lot of free time, which we could use to take the participants on tours of Old Damascus, Sednaya, Maaloula and Tadmour. In addition, I bought them traditional mosaic boxes as a gift to take home. I suggested this idea to the national director and he was very happy with it and approved it.

Hard-earned success

When the meeting started, I was very nervous and worried. What should I do if anything went wrong? I escorted the team throughout the whole meeting, which was remarkably successful. They enjoyed every minute of it, especially the free time and the activities, and were thrilled with the gifts they received at the end of the meeting.

During the last day when they were closing the meeting, the regional director thanked me personally for the very professionally and well organised meeting and all the participants joined him. When I went back to work, I asked my national director about his feedback and whether the participants were happy and satisfied or not. Again, he answered with one sentence: "You amazed me".

Passing on success

At that moment I was completely satisfied, happy and willing to do more. After one week, I started to receive many e-mails. All of them were from the participants expressing their appreciation for all my efforts to make this meeting enjoyable and a success. They considered it as one of the best meetings they had attended.

interest of the most valuable asset in the world "Children". She enjoys the fact that, in SOS, you not only work for your own department but also work closely with others. Sireen grew up with two younger brothers, enjoying both Christian and Muslim festivals with her parents, whom she sees as her teachers in life. She has family all around the world and is

Whenever I meet a new employee of SOS, I tell him or her not to be afraid of asking. Ask anyone in SOS Children's Villages and you will be

answered and, if no one does, I will be there for you anytime needed. Believe in yourself so you can do things you never thought you were capable of.

My Dream

Future

Dreaming is something that did not apply to me anymore. I had forgotten how to dream.

What you see in the picture is a child with love running into the future. I dream of a future for the children in the world and in Syria.

My dream is big, it is not about me and I am not the only one involved. All the community need to work on it. We need to secure the child's future in one way or another. I cannot see how I can walk my dream, and who will be with me.

However, if I take it from the work aspect, everyone is involved. We need to have more places for new children, which means new SOS Children's Villages. We need very well qualified staff who can deal with traumatised children. However, this cannot be achieved unless we can show the

children that the future is going to be better than it is now. And this can only be done after the end of the war.

At present, every time we try to see that the future must be better, news is broadcast to tell us how wrong we are.

That is my dream: children are the dream, children who will be able to build a new future, new life, new smiles and new dreams.



now aunt to a lovely niece. In her spare time, Sireen treats herself and likes to spend time with family and friends. She lives in Syria but was born in Morocco and lived in Saudi Arabia until 1991. Since then she has lived in Damascus, known in Syria as Sham. It is the city of Jasmine, and the oldest continuously inhabited city in the world.



Form ÷ Content

Holistic Topics in SOS Children's Villages

A loving home PLUS! 171



A loving home PLUS!

Voting for an integral approach

I would like to share a few seconds of enlightenment with you, which I had on Monday, the first Harvesting workshop evening. We did a group mapping and Irene, one of the facilitator's, final question was "Who thinks children should have the right to grow up in a loving home?" Everybody agreed and continued as before. Apart from me. I stood alone and felt insecure and amazed at myself. Although I fully agree with the SOS slogan "A loving home for every child", I had the strong feeling that only 50 per cent of this sentence applied to children in alternative care. However, I did not know what was missing.

Next morning I found the other 50 per cent. A loving home is necessary and is a precondition, but love without expertise and specific knowledge about child development, traumatic experiences and behavioural problems fails the requirements for children in alternative care. A loving home without adequate skilled caregivers and without supportive structures, processes and management is not enough to ac-

company and support children in their individual development. This awareness brought me into some ongoing flow waves and the power to rethink SOS Children's Villages, based on Hermann Gmeiner's four principles:

- Today a man and a woman alone or together can be social parents. Family at SOS Children's Villages means family-like care. The "family" is the biological or the adoptive family. The family-like care approach opens the door for working together with the "family" in the best interests of the child.
- Children should be supported in alternative care integrated in a community until they can live alone: from care to aftercare.
- Everybody needs a shelter to feel secure.
- Everyone wants to live in and with a community. Not separated in a village where children cannot learn what is necessary to lead a good life in their community.

Christian Posch

is alternative quality care advisor in the team for alternative care & strategy, which is part of the programme and strategy at the international office in Austria

Christian likes to learn and exchange experiences. For more than 30 years, he has been working for and with SOS Children's Villages Austria and Children's Villages International in very different contexts and positions. He started as a researcher at the Social Pedagogic Institute, which he later directed. Over 30 programmes were started during his time as leader of the programme department in the Austrian association. Christian even

To achieve these four principles with a somewhat more modern interpretation, a child not only needs a loving

home, but also adults with the necessary expertise to support children in today's complex environment.

My Dream

Form – Content

My dream is about the correlation between form and content. Because e.g. a house is a form. What happens in the house is the content. SOS Children's Villages in my opinion should offer different content in different forms. You therefore need life: you have to open the form so that new life can come in.



spent some time as an educator in the Imst/Tirol village and other SOS locations in Austria. In 2008, he took over the role of international director of programme development in CVI. Of the policies developed there, his favourite is the SOS Children's Villages Programme Policy. Christian is currently a consultant for SOS Children's Villages International and is partially retired. Being the father of a daughter and two sons, Christian says, "My children are already great adults." He was born in Vienna and grew up in Upper Austria with two brothers. In his spare time, Christian likes to do sports, read, talk with friends and relax. Being "a citizen of the global village", he lives near Innsbruck where he has a treasure: thousands of books: novels, thrillers, history, philosophy and scientific literature on e.g. alternative care. He spends little time at home because he travels a lot.

Harvesting workshop team



Irene Gleirscher

Head of project
Adult Training
Tel. +43 512 3316-5671

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



Christian Honold

Team member
Managing Director
Tel. +43 512 3316-5682

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



Margret Steixner

External consultant
Process facilitation
& analysis

Intercultural Perspectives
www.intercultural-perspectives.com

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



Julia Winkler

Intern
Adult Training

“For many, appreciation is just saying thank you. But appreciation only begins with saying thanks - appreciation is not only recognizing someone's excellent efforts and contribution, it's also about lending an ear, offering a hand and letting dreams grow. It was such a privilege to be a part of this outstanding workshop and such an enriching experience.



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Harvesting short films

- SOS Children's Villages Knowledge Harvesting 2018 (by Pax Media): www.youtube.com/watch?v=2thB0PiXYfM
- SOS Children's Villages Knowledge Harvesting Workshops leads to sustainable positive change in their participants work lives. Harvesting 2017: <https://youtu.be/169VLOZb7sU>
- Trailers to stories told in Harvesting 2016: <https://goo.gl/pmmdTu> (by Tantegert OEG)
- Trailers to stories told in Harvesting 2016: <https://goo.gl/5sSnrs> (by Tantegert OEG)
- Short film about Harvesting (April 2014): <https://youtu.be/x5E-IZXHV3U> (by Tantegert OEG)
- What is Harvesting? (November 2012): <https://youtu.be/nCRUX42FJTA> (© Joachim Puls)



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