

Who we are?

SOS Children's Villages France was founded in 1956 in the North of France, from an idea that was originally developed in Austria in 1949: enables siblings without parental care to live in a family-like environment with the security of a stable emotional and educational bond with an SOS mother.

Apolitical, non-denominational and recognized as a public utility since 1969, SOS Children's Villages France is committed to Child protection in France and in some 20 countries around the world.

SOS Children's Villages France is a member of the International Federation of SOS Children's Villages, the first private organization in the world to act in favour of children in vulnerable situations. This federation is operating in 138 countries and territories and has a consultative voice at UNESCO and at the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations.

Child protection: needs are evolving

The family is the place where each child develops emotionally and psychologically, where he/she can fully live his/her childhood and gradually build his/her autonomy. Some families need help to better exercise their educational responsibilities. In that concern, parenting support programs have been developed. However, despite preventive measures, in some situations the family is no longer able to assume its role. In such cases, the child, alone or as part of a sibling group, is separated from his or her parents and placed in a foster care system. In France, this is called "Aide Sociale à l'Enfance".

Each child has a singular trajectory and expresses specific needs. These needs, which must be answered by child protection workers, apply on several levels: protection, of course, but also educational and health needs and the necessity of emotional security. As the children grow, support for schooling and professional training must be provided, as well as support for their preparation for autonomy, so that when the time comes, they will be able to integrate and realize their full potential in the community.

The social and societal changes reinforce today the challenges of accompanying these children and young people. Today, even more than yesterday, support should:

- Be determined over a long period of time, in order to secure the development of each child and the social and economic integration of each young person, usually beyond their majority.
- Protect children against all forms of violence and violation of their rights;
- Help them to overcome their traumas through an adapted psycho-educational support developed with their participation.
- Guarantee that each child is listened to and that he/she actively participates in his/her support project.
- Respond to the multiple needs of both the child and his/her family and work closely with families by strengthening their own capacities.
- Be alert to the issues that youth are facing nowadays: bullying, social networking culture, internet, addictions, etc.
- Pay attention to the gender and inequalities between girls and boys, and the social representation on which they are based.
- Promote sustainable development and make children and youth more sensitive to the ecological transition.

SOS Children's Villages' experience in supporting many children and young people has led to emphasize the importance of providing care and support that is adapted to the specific needs of each child and is guided by his or her best interests, and by the respect of his or her rights and wishes. Taking into account the specificities and participation of each child in care is a concrete challenge for SOS Children's Villages, but also for all those involved in child protection, given the large number of children entrusted to the child welfare system in France and in the rest of the world.

The child at the heart of the SOS Children's Villages project

The mission of SOS Children's Villages is to allow each child to grow up with his or her brothers and sisters, under the care of professionals committed to the long term, in the respect of the child's rights, so that he/she can feel secure and receives the educational support he or she deserves, until his or her full and complete inclusion in society.

Defending, promoting and implementing children's rights

The commitment of SOS Children's Villages is deeply anchored in the International Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), which states that children must be enabled to grow up in a protective family environment, be able to exercise their rights and fully participate in the decisions that concern them.

Understanding siblings as a resource for the child

The siblings are a key factor in the child's ability to feel a sense of family and security, to find his place in the group and to build up his own identity. When a protective decision is required, the right of the siblings to be fostered together must be guaranteed, except when it goes against their will or their interests.

A confident and positive view of children's capacities

A child has every chance of building or rebuilding himself if he feels he is respected, if he can develop trusting relationships, if he feels loved and if he allows himself to love in return. If the child is offered an affective and caring environment and if the adult who accompanies him helps him to gain confidence in his abilities, this will strengthen his resilience.

A commitment to meet the needs of each child

Taking care for children and young people who have suffered from particularly serious abuse and who have been placed in child welfare institutions requires a sustained and constant commitment from the professionals who work with them. The educative teams of SOS Children's Villages are dedicated to this mission on a daily basis through their attentiveness, their capacity to listen and their accessibility to each child.

Working in international solidarity

SOS Children's Villages France operates beyond its national borders, in collaboration with local partner associations. This principle of international solidarity translates into the desire to respect the strategy of these partners and to allow them to work independently while supporting them, in particular, in the application of the principles of the CRC.

The 8 principles of action of SOS Children's Villages

The child rights approach as a compass

SOS Children's Villages is committed to the indivisibility of children's rights and makes the four guiding principles of the CRC the cornerstone for its actions. SOS Children's Villages not only considers the child as a person to be protected, but also and above all as a subject of law that the care givers have the mission to accompany.

An individualized project for the child

The educational teams of SOS Children's Villages pay central attention to the child's personality, to the respect of his identity and his history. They strive to accompany the child's development by preserving his or her identity, helping the child to make sense of his or her history and maintaining ties with his or her family when this is not contrary to his or her wishes or interests.

The importance of developing fraternal relationships

We believe that siblings are an important resource for the child and for the adult he or she will become. Our educational teams strive to cultivate the sibling bond in the best interest of each child. We wish that the child benefits from the support and the family identity that brings the siblings, while we help him to shape his own personality.

The family-type foster care model and emotional security

Foster the siblings together in a family-like environment is a supportive and reassuring form of caregiving that SOS Children's Villages considers essential for the development of each child. When a child is deprived of parental care, his siblings and caregivers in the SOS Children's Village enable him to bond with others in a lasting way that will help him repair the psychological wounds of his childhood and acquire skills favorable to his empowerment and socialization.

Attachment figures and relational dynamics for the child

SOS Children's Villages offers the child individual care, based on stable attachment figures and resilience " supporters " embodied by SOS fathers and SOS mothers and other childcare workers, with the support of a multidisciplinary team. The caregivers use their expertise and human qualities and become valued resources for the child, as well as the siblings, to help him reach his full potential.

Long-term support to ensure inclusion in society

Preparing children for their autonomy is one of the constant concerns of SOS Children's Villages. Progressive access to autonomy is implemented as soon as the child is admitted to the village in order to support his/her development and future social and professional integration. The SOS educational team brings a long-term support to the children, building up a stable relationships and affective bonds that constitute a reliable resource on which the children can back up to become self-reliant.

The participation of children and young people as an effective means

SOS Children's Villages strives to guarantee the right for youth expression and participation by ensuring that they take an active part in their own lives, by being informed of the matters affecting them, by being able to share their views and issues, and by being involved in the decision-making

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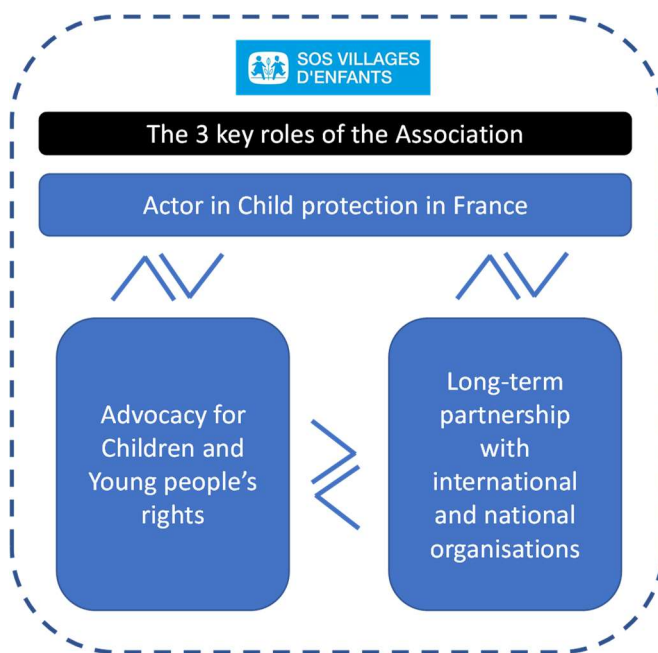
process whether they or the institution's practices are concerned. In this purpose, participatory committees have been created, as well as regular consultation processes, in which children and young people can effectively exercise this right.

Support for families and prevention

Adding to its primary mission of ensuring quality foster care, SOS Children's Villages closely works with parents to help them build their capacity to protect and care for their children, always placing the best interests of the child as central to its approach.

The missions and different tailored supports provided by SOS

SOS Children's Villages operates in France with children and young people entrusted to the Child Welfare Care Service (Aide Sociale à l'Enfance). In some countries, these children are often either orphans or have been abandoned, or are endangered because of vulnerable family, social or economic difficulties. Having this diversity of situations in mind, the association is committed to innovate and grow alternative care responses, by developing strengthening family programmes, whether in France or abroad, and provides educational and parenting assistance within the open family environment.



Actor of the Child protection in France

SOS Children's Villages provides protection and support for children and young people when it is not possible nor reliable for them to remain in their family environment. The SOS Children's Village is the core alternative care model we offer. Each village is integrated within the community and is made up of one head office house and of about ten family houses. Each house welcomes 4 to 5 children in siblings under a family educator ("SOS mother or father") responsibility, and a family assistant who helps in the home tasks. Each child is followed by a whole team of professionals.

More than an operational childcare model, the children's village is a philosophy of caregiving embedded in all our engagements. It is about giving children a place of their own, a "home" that both is an anchor and keep them opened to the outside. This environment constitutes a solid foundation for the child's socialization: the bedrock of several spheres of belonging: the house,

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the village, the community, in the sense given by the Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). Children are offered the possibility to live a family-like life, "putting down roots" in their house and own bedroom, but also being able to grow affective bonds.

SOS Children's Villages is committed to providing support to children with indefinite period of time, which is beneficial to keeping the ties with adults and other children in the long term. Psycho-educational follow-up and management of trauma are undertaken by the team and, if necessary, by other external resources. The care model proposed by SOS Children's Villages aims to guide children and young people in all areas of their lives, with a particular attention to children with specific needs.

Complementary programmes and services are implemented to optimise the response to each child's individual needs. The association aims to continually manage adaptative responses to the children's needs, with respect to the different contexts and life histories.

The family strengthening programme aims to help children to stay in their family by empowering parents with the resources they need to overcome their difficulties and fully exercise their responsibilities in the best interests of their children. Social workers take action at the children's home.

Advocacy for the rights of children and young people

SOS Children's Villages is building advocacy on the strength of its daily experience with children under its care in the SOS villages. The association involves children and young people in its advocacy work in order to address their needs and concerns as effectively as possible. The purpose of SOS Children's Villages' advocacy is to push for changes in public policies dealing with the protection of children's rights and thus to improve the quality of the support given to children and young people in care.

SOS Children's Villages experts are involved in France and abroad with decision-makers, participate in working groups and carry out communication and public awareness campaigns. At the international level, SOS Children's Villages France participates in the advocacy efforts of the Federation SOS Children's Villages International, at the United Nations and at the European Union, but also undertakes its own initiatives and supports its partner associations in promoting the rights of the child in their country.

Partner of associations worldwide and in France

SOS Children's Villages France brings technical and financial support to its partner associations around the world, also members of the Federation SOS Children's Villages International, through a long-term collaboration so that they could improve the quality and impact of their programmes carried out in favor of children, young people and their families.

In France, SOS Children's Villages also works with other organisations set in the scope of child protection, childhood and youth, and shares its expertise and know-how as regards the key principles of its associative project, i.e., children's rights, siblings, children's and youth participation, etc. SOS Children's Villages also operates as a training organisation, shares its practices and experiences and contributes to the public debate at both national and regional levels.

A constant effort to improve the quality of support

SOS Children's Villages strives every day to improve its work and internal processes because the quality of its support to the children depends on the effectiveness of its organisation as well as on the commitment of its educational teams. This includes:

- The Child safeguarding policy of the association, which extends further than the legal and regulatory requirements, and which is based on four pillars: raising awareness on children's rights and protection, prevention against any form of violence, process of incidents reporting-management-follow-up, and last, implementation, assessment and improvement of this Child safeguarding policy.
- The process to improve the quality of current and future international programmes, involving partners, children, young adults and their families - and the commitment of experts, notably as regards all initiatives to improve the quality of childcare.
- Bodies and spaces for youth and child participation, from the children's villages, initiated at local and national levels, and animated by appointed SOS staff.
- Strengthening the care profession in terms of working conditions, training and development programs, from the new recruited, to support the capacity building of our care co-workers.
- Involving co-workers in the elaboration of the associative and strategic orientations.
- Ensuring an ethical code of conduct and practices, including data protection, privacy and confidentiality related to children, as well as a rigorous use and control of public and private funds.
- Working on research, evaluation and data collection on our programmes and processes.
- Taking part in professional and institutional networks in order to keep on improving the quality of our alternative care programs and adapting to new challenges.

A strong legislative and institutional framework

The actions of SOS Children's Villages rely on a legislative and institutional framework that structures its work and guides its professional practices.

The French regulation framework:

- Articles 375 et seq. of the Civil Code which organize the judicial protection of children
- The Code of Social Action and Families
- The law of December 30, 1996 concerning the maintenance of ties between brothers and sisters, "unless it is not possible or if the child's interest requires another solution"
- The law of March 7, 2007 reforming Child protection, which notably opens the way to the diversification of the modes of intervention with children and their families
- The law of March 14, 2016 on Child protection, which emphasises the importance of addressing the best interests of children, responding to their basic needs and ensuring that their rights are respected
- The law of August 4, 2021 about inclusive development and fighting global inequalities
- The law of February 7, 2022 ("Taquet" law) which imposes an obligation to support children up to the age of 21 and prohibits the sibling separation unless it is contrary to the child's interests

As a rule, SOS Children's Villages complies with all current and future national and European regulatory policies relating to Child protection and the defence of children's rights.

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The association is also committed to respecting the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) concerning confidentiality, rights and freedoms regarding personal data. This is a particularly significant issue given the data that we process.

A set of international and French recommendations and guidelines:

- The International Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), with its four principles, and its additional protocols (1989)
- The United Nations Guidelines on Alternative Care (2009) and its Resolution on the Protection of the Rights of the Child (2019)
- The European Union's Global Strategy on the Rights of the Child (2021)
- The European Guarantee for Children (2021)