



# SOS Children's Villages International Humanitarian Mandate

This statement articulates SOS Children's Villages commitment to the humanitarian imperative in line with its statutes, principles, vision, mission and shared values. According to the SOS Children's Villages International Statutes, the organization provides support to vulnerable families in the case of disasters or armed conflicts, based on the spirit of solidarity within a federation of autonomous, interdependent member associations that support each other. This confirms that the organization's humanitarian mandate is firmly anchored in the federation's binding documents and foundation.

## **ETHICAL AND MORAL IMPERATIVE**

Every year, millions of children and their families are in need of humanitarian assistance and protection. With the current SOS Children's Villages global footprint in 137 countries, disasters will likely strike children, young people, families under our care, communities where we are present, or those beyond our regular areas of work. We have a moral obligation as per our mission to protect children and prevent family separation, including to prepare and respond when conflicts or disasters arise. Humanitarian action ought to consider the unique and diverse needs of affected populations, alleviate suffering, and prevent harm.

## **ACCOUNTABILITY PRINCIPLES**

Children and their protection are at the core of SOS Children's Villages humanitarian mandate. The organization is a signatory of, and holds itself accountable to, accepted international humanitarian principles of humanity, neutrality, independence and impartiality. This includes the commitment to comply with the Code of Conduct for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) in Disaster Relief, SPHERE, the Core Humanitarian Standards (CHS), and the Minimum Standards for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action (CPMS), which reflect the guiding principles from the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC).

In support of accountability and compliance, SOS Children's Villages commits to adopt or put in place all necessary support systems, policies, and guidelines that contribute to fulfilling its humanitarian mandate.

## **OVERARCHING GOAL AND APPROACH**

Responding to humanitarian crises is an essential part of SOS Children's Villages work, with the overarching goal to ensure children's and youth's survival, their protection and to prevent family separation. Interventions must support physical and emotional health, and well-being of children, families and communities, through the following response mechanisms:

- Preventing and responding to abuse, neglect, exploitation and violence against children, young people and particularly also against women and girls, in emergency settings.
- Strengthening family resilience and caregiving environments to prevent family separation during all phases of disaster cycle management: preparedness, emergency relief and post-disaster recovery.
- Ensuring separated or unaccompanied children in emergencies receive interim care, can stay with relatives or other caregivers, and that their basic needs are adequately met.



The quality and scale of response will include child protection and safeguarding measures in the provision of multi-sectorial holistic humanitarian assistance, psychosocial support and mental health services or interim alternative care. For effective delivery of humanitarian response action and resource optimization, SOS Children's Villages will prioritize geographic areas where it has existing programmes and/ or physical presence, including minimum necessary humanitarian expertise.

## **PROGRAMME PARTICIPANTS**

Humanitarian action targets children who lost parental care or are at risk of losing it due to disasters. It also includes foster families affected by a disaster, conflict and/or displacement. (e.g. children without parents or caregivers; unaccompanied or separated children; those who live in child-headed households, female-headed households or households led by older persons or other members of vulnerable groups; children living in institutions or in other alternative care arrangements; children who are asylum seekers, refugees, internally displaced or migrants).

## **LONG-TERM PERSPECTIVE AND PREPAREDNESS**

SOS Children's Villages brings a longer-term perspective to its humanitarian work. Our programmes apply the humanitarian-development-peace nexus approach, linking emergency relief with recovery and long-term development. This also includes measures on climate change adaptation, disaster risk reduction and preparedness (e.g. anticipatory actions), building on the organization's existing expertise around addressing root causes, and reducing vulnerabilities in communities where we operate family strengthening, advocacy or long-term alternative care programmes.

Looking ahead, SOS Children's Villages will consider maximizing the environmental sustainability and will advocate to ensure the centrality of children and their protection within the climate and environment agenda.

## **LOCALLY LED RESPONSE**

SOS Children's Villages commits to respond to humanitarian crises in an appropriate, timely and effective way by prioritizing capacity building of local Member Associations or local partners. The General Secretariat leads these efforts and, together with Promoting and Supporting Associations (PSAs), provides additional resources to enhance the capacity of local organizations that stepped up to provide humanitarian assistance. In addition, it develops evidence-based technical standards, guidance and advocacy strategies, to enable effective work on the ground and increase readiness to handle future emergencies.

## **STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS AND COORDINATION**

SOS Children's Villages develops both local and international partnerships, including with community based organizations or local governments, for effective coordination, knowledge sharing and to leverage impact, or to add value through collaborative approaches. SOS Children's Villages may form consortiums and apply for funding together with other NGOs/ CBOs or can sub-grant projects from relevant UN agencies (e.g. UNICEF, UNOCHA and UNHCR).

Within the international Humanitarian Cluster System, SOS Children's Villages is actively coordinating with the Protection Cluster and the Child Protection Sub-Cluster at local, national, regional and global levels. To mainstream child protection also in other sectors, SOS Children's Villages may further collaborate with other clusters or working groups (e.g. Education, Food Security, Health, Shelter, WASH, etc.), and link the humanitarian work with the Care Promise.



## **HUMANITARIAN ADVOCACY**

By recognizing that protection is lifesaving, SOS Children's Villages actively works with UN agencies, Governments, donors and alliances such as Joining Forces for All Children and the Alliance for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action to end violations of children's rights and uphold their protection, under international laws. In addition, the organization may join international coalitions to request improved access for humanitarian assistance and respect of International Humanitarian Law (IHL).

## **RISK MITIGATION AND SAFEGUARDING**

SOS Children's Villages considers engaging only where safety and security systems can be established to ensure a safe operational environment for its staff and programme participants. In addition, contingency plans to mitigate operational risks, including strong child- and asset safeguarding policies and procedures need to be put in place.

## **ORGANIZATION**

The Chief Program Officer (CPO) will lead the implementation of the humanitarian mandate and will ensure that the long-term programmes are coordinated well with humanitarian response projects. The Executive Board (EB) decides on humanitarian strategy, regulations, guidelines, and procedures. The Management Council (MCO) and other stakeholders are consulted to agree on planning, resource allocations and programme appraisals.

Member Associations (MAs) are leading the implementation on the ground, with technical assistance provided by a specialized General Secretariat (GSC) humanitarian function placed at international and regional levels. In case of a member association being temporarily unable to lead the response due to the impact of a disaster, the GSC can take up the lead for a limited period, until the capacity of the affected member association is restored.