

Building protective and healthy environments in LAAM



SOS CHILDREN'S
VILLAGES
INTERNATIONAL

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“The child, for the full and harmonious development of his personality, must grow within the family, in an atmosphere of happiness, love and understanding”

(Preamble to the Convention on the Rights of the Child)



“Every child has the right to develop in a safe and secure environment, free from all forms of violence, abuse, exploitation and neglect. However, very often, these limits are violated by the people the children know and trust”

(SOS Children’s Villages International, 2017, p.33)



All children have the right to belong to a **family**, whether biological or not.

Family:

“a range of structures that can address the care and development of young children, including the nuclear family, the extended family, and other traditional and modern community-based modalities, as long as they are consistent with the rights and best interest of the child”

(Committee on the Rights of the Child; General Comment n. 7)



SOS Children's Villages' work



SOS Children's Villages is a non-profit, non-governmental, independent organization that **works for the right of children to family life.**

We are in:

- 135 countries worldwide
- 20 countries in Latin America and the Caribbean



Framework: Guidelines for the Alternative Care of Children

General Assembly of the United Nations, 2009

- They are not legally binding, but are the guide with international endorsement to implement the Convention on the Rights of the Child for children without parental care or at risk of losing it.
- They focus on preventing the separation of children from their families, unless it is demonstrated that it is necessary and in accordance with the best interest of the child.



In accordance with the Guidelines:

- **Alternative care is a measure of special protection** to which children who lose the care of their family are entitled.
- **Alternative care, under any modality, must provide a safe and protective environment**, free of violence, reliable and stable relationships and positive experiences.

Healthy child development

- **Care capacities**
- **Rights approach**
- **Protective, affective and violence-free environments**
- **Guarantor State**

The right to family life is the right to grow up in a healthy, protective, affective and safe environment.



1. We support and **strengthen families** at risk of separation so that they can stay together, preventing children from losing parental care and strengthening community support networks.



Family strengthening programs involve:

- Giving individual support to families, often in their own homes
- Coaching in parenting skills
- Giving support to adults to improve their economic conditions
- Providing day care spaces for children
- Making children aware of their rights, early detection of situations that put them at risk and responses to be taken
- Coordinating work with local networks



2. We provide **alternative care to children who have lost their parental care**, working to reintegrate their families and communities of origin, whenever possible, or to have other possibilities of family life.



“When children lose parental care, child care professionals work directly with them to provide them quality care and protection. By providing individualized child care, caregivers are the most influential and significant people in the lives of children and young people, as well as their families of origin”

(SOS Children’s Villages International, 2017, p. 28)

The primary caregiver is defined by its function and not by a bond of consanguinity (although in our cultures, in general, it is the mother).



The modalities of **alternative care** that we offer/promote are:

- *Alternative care*: usually occurs within the framework of an SOS family, in houses in the community or in a Village. Here children have a stable affective referent.
- *Foster care*: children are placed in a family outside the biological, where they receive care and protection.
- *Kinship care*: children live with a member of their extended family (uncles, grandparents, cousins).



3. We promote children's rights to strengthen and improve children protection systems. We **advocate to promote public policies and practices that ensure that children, adolescents and young people can fully exercise their rights, especially to family life.**



Multi-scale strategy for ending violence against children



Global level: Global Partnership to end Violence against Children.

Regional level: Global Movement for Children of Latin America and the Caribbean, working group on physical and humiliating punishment, call to action. Agreement with IIN-OEA: online course on violence against children.

National level: National associations of SOS Children's Villages work to promote protective and healthy environments, both within the framework of direct care programs and in advocacy, by joining forces with other civil society organizations and governments.



Advocacy experience in Dominican Republic



Promotion and participation in the process of **drafting a law on positive parenting** that seeks to:

- Explicitly prohibit physical and humiliating punishment
- Emphasize on the roles, responsibilities and forms of enforceability of the three guarantors: family, State and society
- Promotion of positive parenting in families, institutions/organizations where children are placed, and deinstitutionalization programs

*Positive parenting is a way of educating based on mutual respect between parents and children; which promotes non-violent behavior; defines affection as the basis of education; encourages constructive and meaningful relationships; establishes clear rules; and does not involve any form of psychological or physical punishment. It recognizes children as subjects of rights, who and which must be respected.

This case of Dominican Republic is an example of how the work for children's rights family life should be addressed in shared responsibility among the community, civil society organizations and the State.



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Thank you!

