

SOS Children's Villages

Report 2020

Akelius Foundation

*Support for refugee and
migrant children and
families*



SOS
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Overview

In addition to the support for our long-term development and care-programs such as family-based care and youth programs, the Akelius Foundation has been a crucial partner for SOS Children's Villages in the effort to support children and families affected by natural disasters and conflicts and the following refugee crisis in several European and Middle Eastern countries during recent years. The latest support within this field came from the "Double-up Christmas campaign" in 2019 which resulted in totally 39 799 000 SEK that is being used to attend various refugee and migration crisis in different parts of the world and especially targeting refugee children and families living in vulnerable situations caused by migration. Part of the funds was also used to strengthen SOS Children's Villages' capacity to provide holistic support to these children and families, including mental health and psychosocial support, as well as adapting and adjusting programs and interventions for children and families affected by the global Covid-19 crisis.

This report covers the year 2020 and includes an overview of implementation, main achievements as well as possible challenges in a complex and constantly changing context that most projects are implemented in. Below is a short summary of the interventions included in the "Support for refugee and migrant children and families":

Partner organisation and short description of the interventions	Total costs (SEK)	Transferred 2020	Budget 2021-22
SOS Greece (July 2020-July 2022) Emergency response for children, youths, and families in migration in Lesvos, Athens, Thessaloniki, Crete, Kalamata, Komotini, Ioannina and Patra, including protection, integration, and education.	21 053 000	9 536 565	11 516 435
SOS Colombia (July 2020-September 2021) Humanitarian crisis response focusing on protection and Education in Emergency for Venezuelan migrant-, refugee- and host community children and adolescents with no access to formal education living in informal settlements in La Guajira.	10 526 000	5 046 879	5 479 121
SOS Ukraine (2020-2021) Family Strengthening support for migrant children and families in the Lugansk, Brovary and Kiev regions	4 211 000	2 463 794	1 815 770
SOS Italy - Mental Health and Psycho-social Support Global Hub (2020) Piloting a virtual support network - SOS CVI Mental Health and Psycho-Social Support (MHPSS) Global Hub, with the aim to build organizational capacity, mainstream and strengthen mental health and psychosocial support activities for children in emergency and care programs. The pilot project is in ESAF (East and Southern Africa region).	799 000	730 436	0
Covid-19 support (2020-2021) Co-ordination and adaptation of above-mentioned programmes and programmes for children and families affected by the global Covid-19 crisis.	1 220 000	453 800	766 200
Administration SOS SE (5%)	1 990 789	1 990 789	0
Total	39 799 789	20 222 263	19 577 526

Humanitarian crisis response for refugees in Greece

Overall

During the year 2020, a total of 15.700¹ new arrivals have been recorded in Greece. As per the end of December 119.700 refugees and migrants are officially registered to live in the country, the majority of these on the mainland (100.600) and the rest on the islands-entry points to Europe (19.100).

New arrivals presented a drastic dropdown in comparison to the figures presented in 2019. Up to 78% fewer entrances have been recorded in relation to the major influx that was documented one year ago, which summed up to 74.600². During the past year, 71.200 individuals have been living on the mainland and 41.100 have been initially accommodated on the islands. The multiple transfers of people when the pandemic allowed changed drastically the number of people residing in the islands while Lesbos still host the biggest camp in Greece.

The main arrival points have changed in relation to the previous years. New arrivals have been recorded mainly to Lesbos, followed by Chios, Samos, and Crete. Slight differentiations have been recorded during the months of July-September and especially after the Moria fire, where no arrivals have been reported in Lesbos.

Covid-19

Since March 2020, Greece has entered a prolonged and restricted lockdown, which affected the socio-economic aspects of society. Measures included the postponement of operations in both the public and private sector, the closure of schools and social services, shutting down of retail, hotels, and all food-related services, the closure of borders, cancelation of flights, controlled documentation, and authorization for transportation.

This alteration of normality had an immediate effect on mental health, especially to vulnerable and already burdened individuals. Anxiety, depression, constant fear, and uncertainty for the future, have been the main disorders detected throughout the lockdown. Family cohesion remained at stake for many, as their socioeconomic vitality has been hit tremendously.

The situation has been especially challenging for refugee and migrant individuals who are accommodated in camps across the country. With the enforcement of the lockdown, all residents were confined within the premises of the camp, as all exits, and entrances were restricted. Leaves are only authorized for one family member and strictly concerning emergency reasons (i.e., doctor's appointments, asylum process, provision of basic needs), whereas all other reasons were denied.

Due to the constraints of mobility, residents of the camp had to be restricted within the facilities, without any access to outside services, inability to maintain a sense of autonomy (i.e. going grocery shopping, making decisions for their family), or to socialize with the local community. Moreover, children are deprived of attending public schools, as they are living within camps where distance learning, in most cases, is not an option due to lack of required technical means.

This had a major toll on the mental health condition of refugees and migrants. Additionally, quarantine zones in camps are in the same area as the accommodation zones, due to lack of spaces. This is a threatening point for contamination dissemination, especially until the vaccination policy for refugees and migrants is set by the government.

Tensions at local level

By late February 2020, the tension in the northern border of Greece with Turkey, near the Evros river, resulted in the gathering of more than 13.000 refugee and migrant individuals, who aimed to reach Europe. This incident was caused after the threats of Turkey to release refugee and migrant individuals who live in the country and try to cross-pass.

Succeeding several days of tension on the borders, refugees and migrants had been moved back into Turkish mainland, as Greece was reinforced with Frontex force and maintained additional measurements across the borders.

Moreover, alongside the international tensions, Lesbos Island had to confront also local riots caused by the local community during the beginning of 2020. The main reason for demonstrations was the continuation of the operating camps (i.e., Moria and KaraTepe) and the still high numbers of refugee and migrant population on the island, by contrast, to the governmental announcements for the closure of the Reception Centers and the transfer of population in the mainland.

As a result of the multiple riots, two facilities operating by international organizations, have been burned to the ground, asylum seekers and NGO staff have been attacked and injured, whereas locals have blocked the streets and examined the cross-passing cars. This tension has led to the evacuation of camps by NGO's teams and the postponement of their operation for a period of time. This had an immediate impact both on refugee and migrant individuals who lacked support but was also an additional burden – apart from the physical danger and fear– to the already overloaded everyday reality of NGO staff including the SOS team, who had to address and fill these gaps of services.

Moria fire and new camp

On the night of the 8th of September 2020, Moria camp was set on fire, destroying most of the facility. The next night a second fire broke out at the informal settlement in a nearby olive grove, bringing what was left of the camp to ashes. As a result, and based on governmental statements **12.000** migrants and refugees were left without shelter or access to basic services on Lesbos's island. Within hours, the island was declared in an emergency state for the following six months, as it was handled as a matter of public health and national security.

No injuries or victims have been reported, whereas 400 unaccompanied children have been identified living in Moria and have been immediately transferred to the mainland. For more than ten days, streets, fields, and cemeteries on the island have hosted refugees and migrants until an accommodation solution was found. People lacked any access to basic facilities (i.e. running water, and sanitary amenities) or supportive services to cope with this distress for several days. The Greek army facilitated the distribution of food³.

In addition to the already fraught ambiance with the local community, tension arose once again, with locals reacting to the creation of a new camp on the island and protesting against the free moving of refugees in the island especially due to Covid-19. As that, large law enforcement had to be transferred to the island to secure stability, whereas as a precautionary measure, the government forbade refugees and migrants to travel and applied restrictions of approaching the city centre of the island.

Despite the oppositions, two weeks after the demolition of Moria, a new temporary camp had been set-up, at a close distance from the municipality camp of KaraTepe, approximate to the seashore, lacking any necessary prior adaptation in terms of sanitary facilities, electricity, winterization, security fencing and provision of adequate social distancing spaces. In collaboration with UNHCR, the army had set tents for more than 9.000 individuals who have entered the camp, despite their initial refusal and request to be transferred to the mainland or other European countries, and after testing negative to Covid-19.

Until the end of December, almost **7.500** people found themselves living in the new camp, in the middle of the mud, exposed to any weather condition, and lacking a decent and humane environment, whereas children and parents had been excluded from any type of support (i.e., psychosocial, legal, education, stress-relief). NGOs offering their services and support were not given the authorization to provide services on the

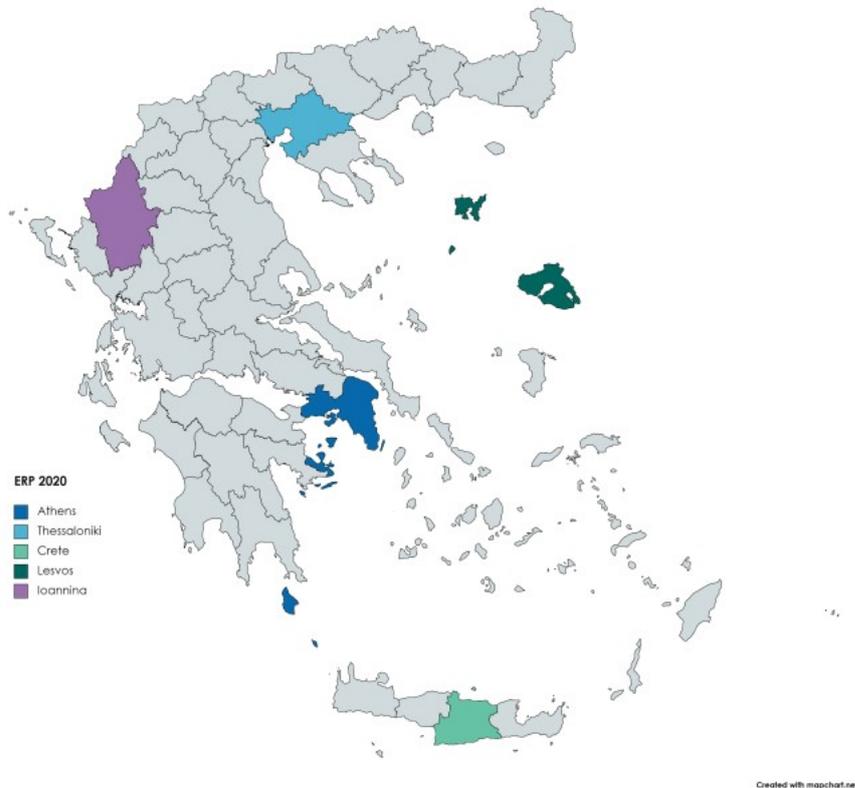
field, and refugee children were not entitled to attend school due to the absence of reception classes remaining exposed to several risks.

The emergency response programme activities continue to operate on a national level since late 2015, providing support to vulnerable refugee and migrant children and families on a psychosocial, educational, mental health and recreational level. Through the expansion of services to more areas through the Family Strengthening Programs (FSPs), more beneficiaries can be adequately assisted in their self-empowerment and development as well as integration processes.

The year in numbers:

- Total number of beneficiaries **3664**
- Total number of children supported **3045**
- Number of children beneficiaries in KaraTepe camp **2258**
- Children supported by Family Strengthening programmes **609**
- Unaccompanied children receiving distance learning **160**
- Total number of families supported **222**

Main results & activities



Locations

ERP activities have been operating in the camp of KaraTepe on Lesvos Island and in four different FS location across the country, in Athens, Thessaloniki, Crete and Ioannina. SOS is continuously assessing the needs of refugee and migrant population and is ready to adapt its services according to the existing demands.



Lesvos – KaraTepe camp

In 2020, KaraTepe camp continued its operation undisturbedly, despite the significant challenges that occurred during the year. SOS team in the field supported up to 200 unique beneficiaries monthly. Specifically, the SOS team, despite the restrictions due to Covid-19, managed to assess and adapt its services, following all official protocols. As that, SOS activities included the provision of:

- Kindergarten/Day-care Centre (ages 4-6)
- Educational support in Greek, English, Math and Science to children and young learners who are out of the schooling context (ages 7-12)
- Remedial and school support children attending public schools (ages 11-17)
- Youth and Women support (ages 18-25)
- Special Education for children in the range of autism (different ages)
- Educational support for children with learning difficulties (different ages)
- Involvement of caregivers in their children's education and parental counselling

Following the official postponement of all face-to-face services offered by NGOs from March in all camps across the country due to Covid-19, the SOS team managed to adapt and create a distance learning plan for children, securing their educational development. This plan included:

- The creation of online educational content for children meeting their learning needs and their age.
- Design and launch of a Google Digital Classroom platform with open access to educational material on different topics (i.e., Greek, English, Math, Science)
- Weekly distribution of educational material and worksheets on different subjects (i.e., Greek, English, Math, Science) so that children remain entertained, as well as recreational kits that included colouring books, markers, play-dolls and balloons.
- Online empowerment classes for women that lack any other type of support due to their age group. Lessons included Greek and English, self-awareness, and development of social and communicational skills.
- Community engagement in educational activities. SOS team engaged volunteers (residents of the camp) that also attend classes to facilitate the distribution of the educational and recreational material on a weekly basis. Volunteers acted as focal points between the beneficiaries and the educators.

Despite the challenges faced, SOS team managed to secure the educational participation during online operations up to 95% of the beneficiaries, securing the inclusion of children in learning activities. Moreover, the local team, continues its collaboration with the local RECs (Refugee Education Coordinators by the Ministry of Education) for facilitating children's enrolment in school for the upcoming academic year.

After the temporary reversion in normality, SOS activities have been adequately adapted into the new Covid-19 regulations, following all necessary measures to secure the safety of both beneficiaries and staff. Hence, since September until the end of the year, SOS operations have been provided face-to-face, although with



the required alterations. Classes had to be minimized in time, whereas participants in each group, had also to be divided in order to maintain distance. Moreover, during summer, classes have been offered in open shaded spaces as well.

Purifications of classrooms and material have been made in each class break and hygiene classes have been organized regularly for all beneficiaries and their families.

As a result of the impact of the Moria fire and the change of the refugee scene on a local level, the SOS team immediately collaborated with the Site Management of KaraTepe in all necessary actions, in order to provide support at all levels. Specifically, SOS facilitated and supported the 150 individuals, transferred to Karatepe from the new camp, by providing services and distributing blankets, hygiene kits, and 155 mattresses covering their immediate needs. These individuals were selected based on their vulnerability as Karatepe is receiving especially vulnerable families and individuals. As that, adaptation of all activities offered by SOS has been made, including children and parents to the daily activities offered.

Moreover, the SOS team distributed Covid-19 regulations and health instructions to the newly arrived families, whereas, through partnerships with other NGOs and local stakeholders, drills have been organized in Hygiene training for all enrolled students. In addition, and under continuous assessment, SOS distributed NFIs to families and children both affected by the Moria fires, whilst still living on the streets and pending for their transportation to the new camp, but also to families and children in KaraTepe, including educational material and school supplies for the new academic year.

Good practices

- Operation of second Kindergarten/Day-care centre, as requests have increased. While public schools remained closed, provision of services continued in KaraTepe.
- Creation of synchronous and asynchronous educational material for maintaining the educational development of children.
- Facilitation in setting up technical equipment for children to be able to attend online classes.
- Preparation of students also in distant learning modus for the new academic year.
- Support and continuous preparation of one student who, during quarantine, continued his preparation for applying and succeeding for one of the most challenging school units in Greece, a so-called Model Experimental Schools that are considered far more advanced than public schools and accept children with higher grades than average.
- SOS facilitated with the WiFi upgrade at the old KaraTepe camp in collaboration with the Vodafone Foundation in order for children to continue with their education in case access to the camp is challenging.

Challenges

- Constant mobility of population and need for re-arrangement of classes.
- Prolonged lockdown for residents of the camp that cannot exit the premises of the site.
- Following Covid-19 regulations, especially in the Kindergarten.
- Emotional distress both from parents and children after the Moria fires.
- Uncertainty and concern derived from the announcements from the Ministry of Migration and Asylum to close KaraTepe camp by the end of the year.
- Weather conditions that make the attendance of children difficult.
- Power shortages that were caused due to the overload of power lines.

Family Strengthening Programmes

During the year of 2020, Family Strengthening Programs continued to provide support to refugee and migrant children and parents through specialized intervention plans that aim at keeping families connected and empowered. Services varied from educational, recreational, and movement-based activities, to psychosocial, parental skill training, facilitation with bureaucratic and job-oriented actions, community-based events, and provision of food and NFIs.

Despite the outbreak of Covid-19 and the postponement of face-to-face services, SOS altered its operations to online provision of services and in emergency cases facilitation in vivo. More specifically, adapted remote support including:

- Educational classes in Greek, English, German, Math, Science, Digital Skill training.
- Recreational and movement-based activities in order to maintain creatively active.
- Remedial and school support for children attending distance learning schools.
- One to one psychosocial support and parental skill development.
- Counselling and effective ways of coping with prolonged stressful situations that trigger anxiety and despair.

Focusing on keeping children both educated and safe during summer, the SOS team managed to create quality educational material as a form of play. Through creating an online Escape Room, children not only interacted with their peers and developed their learning skills but were able to come close to the community, engage in shared activities and collaborate effectively in dealing with puzzles and riddles. Moreover, during summer workshops, children become actively involved, spend quality time online, and developed their social skills.

In response to an increase of requests for enrollment of both refugee and local children especially after the distance learning support provided during lockdown, SOS decided to expand its emergency educational programs and include both face-to-face classes and exclusive distance learning classes addressed to already registered students. SOS professionals have therefore adjusted classes for the school year of 2020-2021.

Moreover, in order for SOS professionals to be better supported in their role and deal with challenges during



the pandemic, SOS has launched a series of ongoing supervision and mentorship trainings on child-friendly approaches, development of professionals' skills, and communication techniques.

In addition to the work-related empowerment of SOS professionals, requests for collaboration coming from different District Departments of Municipalities and school units for capacity building in teachers, especially on distance learning education and enrolment of children in remote education have been recorded. SOS staff assessed the different needs and designed capacity-

building trainings, which aimed at the better support of specialists into their role.

Despite the short re-opening of both Educational and Social Centre from September until beginning of November, SOS professionals have designed an online support plan in case of a second lockdown.

As that, since November 7th, all educational and psychosocial activities have been held either through especially designed digital platforms or through the phone. Moreover, SOS Greece continued the provision of food and non-food items to extremely vulnerable individuals either directly supported by SOS, or through cooperation with local actors.

Good practices

- Creation of synchronous and asynchronous educational material for different levels and needs
- Creation of YouTube tutorial videos for the usage of distance learning platforms used (i.e. Google Classroom)
- Creation of digital Escape Rooms as part of Greek, Math and Science classes
- Creation of Robotic classes as part of STEM project in Crete
- Organization of digital Literacy Workshop with children from the local community, focusing on learning and developing digital skills using new technologies.
- Game-based activities for interactive classes (i.e. digital poster, Video editing and document creation, creation of their own dictionary and language games etc)

- Provision of technical means to families that were unable to facilitate the online attendance of their children.
- Launch of workshops addressed to both children and parents as a self-empowerment and networking tool among people with refugee status and member of the local community.
- Collaboration with the National Public Health Organization in conducting free Covid-19 test to children and their families that are supported by SOS programs.
- Engagement of parents in educational process of their children as part of parental skill training.
- Organization of events in collaboration with UNHCR as part of networking and dissemination of SOS activities in the community, which led to increased requests for enrolment in Crete.
- Online community-based Christmas event with the launch of a holiday-edition Escape Room.
- Maintaining high attendance despite remote education, that reached up to 80%
- Specific reference made by UNHCR in one of her issued Newsletter, in relation to the collaboration with the local FS program in Crete mentioning the provision of services to refugee and migrant population, and particularly the incorporation of refugee children in the educational classes.

Challenges

- Mobility of population leaving open spots during the academic year.
- Lack of technological means and/or technical difficulties in attending properly.
- All day distance learning attendance creates difficulties in concentration and participation.
- Necessary adaptation of classes duration due to fatigue of children
- Mandatory Covid-29 regulations required time, and created feelings of frustrations to the participants (when services were offered face-to-face)
- Reluctance by some refugee women to have a male interpreter when receiving psychosocial support.
- Postponement of some services such as Community-based events, movement-based activities, and job-oriented actions due to closure of public and private services and Covid-19 regulations.

Expansion of support to families

The emergency response programmes continued to operate during 2020 in full capacity in Lesvos, Athens, Thessaloniki, and Crete. According to the official figures, the Attica/Athens region records a total of 16.302 (55%), Central Macedonia (Thessaloniki) 3.585 (20%), following by Epirus (Ioannina) 1.590 (5%) and finally Crete 873 (5%). These figures reflect the latest reports from the ESTIA program officially reported by UNHCR.



Following the recent mobility of the population from the islands to the mainland, SOS Greece assessed the need to expand further its activities to the region of Ioannina. Since October 2020, refugee and migrant families have been offered educational and psychosocial support focusing on their mental health development, educational progress, and social integration into the Greek community.

Even before the national lockdown where Greece entered on November 7th, where all educational and social services have postponed their operations, SOS staff managed to establish a local network of stakeholders and inform potential beneficiaries for enrolling into the program. Specifically, since summer 2020, SOS has conducted numerous meetings with social entities who support asylum seekers and refugee families who reside either under the governmental ESTIA or HELIOS program – mostly in urban areas but also in camps in the surrounding area and where public transportation is available- and are in dire need of psychosocial and educational support, to set up their lives in Greece.

Despite the remote provision of services, SOS professionals in Ioannina have supported children and families in:

- Kindergarten/Day care centre
- Greek, English, Math and Physics lessons
- Music and Arts
- Recreational and movement-based activities
- PTA meetings and parental skill training

Women Empowerment Workshops

A new skill development workshop for women has been launched since October 2020 in one of the Family Strengthening programmes in Athens.

Beneficiaries are refugee and migrant women from Syria, Afghanistan, Congo, and Cameroun parts of the local community, who are settled in Greece with their families, either pending their asylum, or who are officially recognized.

Until the postponement of operations in November 2020, **20 mothers and 12 children** had been enrolled and supported in different workshops including sewing and handcraft making, assisted by professional sewers and handcraft artists.

The main aim of the project is the promotion of women becoming self-empowered, develop their social skills, engage them in activities that could be related to the financial sustainability of their family, and also a way to enter the labor market. Women have found themselves participating in one of a few women-focused activities, where their children were welcomed and creatively entertained meanwhile, they participated in the workshops.



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The workshops will continue their operations when the restriction measures are withdrawn.

Provision of food and NFIs

Since October 2020, SOS Greece has expanded the provision of support to vulnerable populations through the collaboration with local actors and the Site Management of KaraTepe camp, through the distribution of food and Non-Food Items (NFIs). Until the end of December, SOS has proceeded with partnering with Solidarity Now and Praksis in providing food and NFIs, according to the current needs. Support included the distribution of:

- Personal hygiene materials and kits
- Baby dippers and formula
- Cloths and shoes
- Blankets

- Food products
- School and recreational material

Moreover, the cooperation with the Site Management of KaraTepe continues, as SOS proceeded with the distribution of mattresses, blankets, school supplies and NFIs to residents of the camp. SOS continues to assess open needs on a local level and is prompt to support any further actions.

Alternative care for unaccompanied and separated children

Included in SOS Greece's response for vulnerable children in migration is providing a home and ensuring care and protection for unaccompanied children and/or children who have been separated from their families. **18 unaccompanied and separated children** have been supported throughout the year, being accommodated in the national programs of the organization. Despite the seven boys being under SOS care since 2017, eleven new intakes have been made during 2020 as a direct request by the Special Secretariat for UASC.

Children aged from 2 to 8 years, have entered SOS programs in SOS Children's Villages programs in Athens, Thessaloniki and Crete. Children have immediately been socially and psychologically assessed, whereas they have been offered a series of psychosocial, educational, and self-empowerment activities. Additionally, two siblings after being supported by SOS Village in Plagiari for a period, have been eventually reunified with their family in the Netherlands.

Today, children are fully familiarized with their new home, attend already educational, recreational, and stress-relief activities lessons, and develop their social skills. While refugee children are struggling to be enrolled in public schools, all children in SOS care attend educational activities either face-to-face or remotely.

Ensuring education and support through Partnership and Digitalization

Covid-19 out-break forced several changes to the ordinary functioning in all aspects. SOS CV Greece had to react immediately to continue supporting those in need.

As part of an immediate and constant provision of support, SOS' aim to continue providing high standard educational support to children, led to a six-month collaboration with INCO Education Accelerator and technical support of Google. The focus of this partnership was not only to secure the uninterrupted educational development of beneficiaries, but also support the capacity building of professional educators. Through the provision of guided and tailor-made coaching and mentoring sessions with leading professionals in education, graphic designs and content creators, SOS team got familiarized and engaged in actions such as:

- Creation of game-based activities that promote learning modules.
- Creation of recreational activities and leisure games.
- Proper usage of digital educational platforms and attendance record keeping.
- Awareness raising on distance learning education.
- Capacity building of other professionals in the usage of online educational tools.

By the end of the project, children, families, and educators have been benefited by a series of innovative activities. More specifically beneficiaries:

- remained actively engaged in educational process.
- was supported and received adequately assistance for the upcoming schooling year.
- remained safe and actively engaged during the pandemic.
- maintained peer to peer interaction and developed their social skills.
- got familiarized with new apps, online tools, and new technologies.

- were better supported in delivering remote education to children.

Collaboration with Special Secretariat for Unaccompanied Children

With the beginning of the new academic year (2020-2021), the Greek public educational system lacked readiness to meet and follow all necessary adaptations for embedding distance learning as a formal form of teaching, leaving many children out of the schooling process.

Thus, the Special Secretary for the Protection of the Unaccompanied Minors of the Greek Ministry of Migration and Asylum requested SOS Children's Villages collaboration in a joint effort to secure equal access for all children to the right to education, through the creation of a special child support program. Unaccompanied children accommodated in Shelters on a national level, have been enrolled and supported since November 2020, to a series of non-formal and remedial educational lessons that are provided on distance learning modus. Courses are specifically designed based on the needs and the assessment of each child and the creation of a tailor-made support plan, including:

- Greek, English, German lessons
- Math and Physics
- Digital Skills training
- Recreational and movement-based activities
- Remedial support

Until the end of December, the family strengthening programmes received up to **280 enrolment requests** from more than 15 different NGOs and up to **160 individuals** attend actively their daily schedule. Differentiation of numbers relied on internal challenges from NGO's to engage children's attendance, mobility of the population due to relocation and family reunification etc.

Capacity building of professionals

As part of the acknowledged presence and role of SOS Greece in the Emergency Response field, we have been conducting capacity building trainings to professionals working directly with refugee and migrant population. Since November 2020, two capacity building trainings have been launched one addressed to Solidarity Now professionals (Social workers, Psychologists, Lawyers, Educators, Caretakers, Cultural Mediators) and the other to professional educators supporting unaccompanied children from different NGOs, after the request of the Ministry of Migration. Both trainings focus on the provision and support on main thematic including:

- MHPSS and Child Protection policies
- Children's development methodologies
- Professional empowerment
- Professional skill development
- Cultural differentiation and support
- Resilience building of professionals
- Positive communication and problem resolutions
- Safeguarding policies and professional ethics
- Follow-up support and supervision

Until the end of December, **172 professionals** have participated in the first round of trainings, whereas expansion of support will be evaluated according to requests and follow-up assessment. SOS is also evaluating further requests by local actors for the provision of capacity building trainings.

Humanitarian crisis response for Venezuelan migrants in Colombia



The exodus of Venezuelan refugees and migrants persists, due to the political, economic and social crisis in their country, and 5.577.077 Venezuelan migrants and refugees have already left their country (R4V, 2021). Colombia continues to be the first destination country with more than 1.7M (22% children and adolescents) (Colombian Migration Office, 2021). The lack of regular migrant status (56% of total migrants) remains as one of the main protection risks as well as an obstacle for socio-economic integration. In addition, the complex Colombian internal situation in relation to the armed conflict and drug trafficking, and the deterioration of the economy due to the COVID-19 pandemic also contribute to increase the vulnerabilities of the migrant and the local population. Sexual exploitation, human

trafficking, violence or forced recruitment and obstacles in access basic services such as health, education and the labor market as well as xenophobia are among the most critical protection risks.

In Colombia there are approximately 420.000 Venezuelan migrant children and adolescents, of which only 24.000 were nationalized, as they were at risk of alienation. Despite the efforts of the Colombian Government and the strategies implemented such as the creation of the Humanitarian Corridor, which benefits 4,000 children and adolescents; this has not been enough to mitigate risks and meet the needs of this population. In departments such as La Guajira, approximately 85% of children do not have easy access to formal education, in addition, the constant measures to mitigate COVID-19 continue to hinder access to face-to-face classes and the education system is congested by the number of applications for school seats. Furthermore, it continues to be necessary to strengthen the integration and inclusion strategies of the migrant population, since bullying and xenophobia are increasing every time in host communities.

Colombia is struggling with a third wave of the COVID19 pandemic, which already registers +2.66M of infections and +68K deceases, with +16.000 new daily cases during the last days (Colombia Reports, 21st April 2021). Hospitals of several cities are collapsed and weekend lockdowns have been decreed in major cities. Only 4% of country population has been vaccinated so far.

Despite of land borders remaining partially closed, entries of Venezuelan migrants keep growing, often through irregular border crossings. Between December 2020 and January 2021, 13K irregular entries were registered (Colombian Migration Office, 2021) and it is expected that in 2021 more than 1.5 million Venezuelans will enter the country (DW, 2021).

The international community and the Colombian Government continue to join forces to mitigate the risks and vulnerabilities of Venezuelan migrants and refugees. To this purpose, at the beginning of 2021 the Government approved the Temporary Statute of Protection for the Venezuelan migrant and refugee population with the aim of temporarily granting the regularization of this population for up to 10 years. Regular migrant status will also let them access work permits, health care, social benefits etc., will contribute to reaching equal opportunities, the guarantee of a dignified life and socio-economic integration (Colombian Migration Office, 2021). This Temporary Statute will come into force from June 2021, and it will be supported by the United Nations and the civil society among others (GIFMM, 2021). SOS Colombia is already involved in the process as part of the Response for Venezuelans (R4V) platform led by UNHCR and IOM and some of our local teams are already being trained in order to be able to provide all necessary information and

support to refugees and migrant families in the application process.

The year in numbers:

- Children part of the non-formal education program **1270** (53% girls, 47% boys)
- Children transited, and supported for the inclusion, into the formal education system **393**
- Community agents trained and actively supporting the education programme **64**
- Parents and caregivers in the programme **551** (89% women, 11% men)
- Share of project participants being from migrant and refugee-population **85%**

Main results & activities

**Non-formal education, focusing on social, physical, cognitive and academic development.
Transition from informal to formal education**

During the project, the pedagogical process of SOS Children's Villages Colombia has been strengthened and consolidated, becoming a benchmark of innovation in emergency education in the territory, based on methodologies with an appreciative and experiential approach. The pedagogical team (38 teachers and psycho-pedagogical professionals) has been trained in the appreciative and experiential approach, in universal learning design, experimental learning, as well as in child protection, gender approach and inclusion. Learning peer to peer laboratories and sessions with an



investigative approach have been implemented in order to continuously strengthen local team's skills and enhance children's learning. Based on the mentioned approach, contents and pedagogical plans have been designed and adjusted according to the COVID19 situation and the preventive measures decreed by the Government that has been in force during the project's implementation (complete lockdown, alternation, face to face activities).

16 community learning spaces were created and adapted in the target locations, and new pedagogical and recreational material is ready to be delivered in the spaces during April. Each space has been organized with learning corners (spaces): Communication and Language, Development of Mathematical Logical Thought, Emotions and Protection. 1270 children between 6 and 17 years old, have participated in the non-formal education program, in which COVID 19 prevention measures have been implemented, both in remote activities and in face to face activities (small groups of children and adolescents, use of PPE, rigorous cleaning procedures). Since schools have been closed by government due to the pandemic, children in the settlements where the project is taking place have no access to internet and electronic devices, and schools in the territory does not have tailored pedagogical strategies for the situation, EiE spaces become the only option for children education, protection and socialization. Through the program, children have achieved the following results:

- 46% progressed in communication and language skills.
- 56% progressed in mathematical logical thinking ability.
- 41% progressed in emotional capacities.
- 50% advanced in protection capabilities.
- 87% of parents and caregivers perceived that care in education in emergency spaces is safe and accessible. They emphasized that pedagogical activities carried out are adapted to context and are relevant for the development of childhood and adolescence. Although the risks of lack of protection in the communities are evident, SOS Children Villages Colombia provides security for children, adolescents and their families. They feel safe and protected by community agents and SOS CV team.



By the end of March, 110 children and adolescents showed the need to be supported by the psycho-pedagogical team. 100% of them are being accompanied and have an individual plan (monthly monitored) to strengthen and develop the required emotional, psychological and cognitive skills to improve their educational process. Among the main psycho-pedagogical difficulties found are: children in extra age with reading and writing difficulties, dysgraphia, dyscalculia, 3 cases of autism in the process of diagnosis. Families have been involved in the

process.

SOSCV CO become the leader NGO of the local EiE cluster, what increase the possibility to articulate with other entities, advocate for children and families´ needs and interests, share and collect important information regarding the education needs of migrant and host communities´ children and adolescents and available services for them. An advocacy and coordination process with local authorities and public schools, and a joint work with families and caregivers, have been done by the pedagogical team, in order to promote the access to the formal education system to all children and youth who are/were not accessing. 393 children (40% out of the total) have been enrolled in the formal education schools, and 86% of them continue being supported to improve their inclusion and transition process.



Social mobilization for social inclusion and child protection

Based on the strategy of pedagogical agents that is developed in the learning spaces, 64 community agents (Adolescents and young people) have been involved and have developed and strengthened their learning and leadership skills, exponentially reducing their risks of involvement in criminal acts and groups. 30 exchange and training meetings have been held with them, in order to reinforce their skills and knowledge about child and youth rights, leadership, teamwork, citizenship skills, communication, self-management. This building capacity process with community members (both migrant and host community) contributes to reduce xenophobia, violent situations and strengthen protection community-based mechanisms, which will allow long lasting impact. From April onwards, toy library management will be defined with community agents: templates, pedagogical materials for loan, agreements will be structured. A team of pedagogical volunteers is being consolidated in Maicao to support the children´s education process.

Parents and caregivers have been encouraged to be part of children´s development and learning process. The children´s right to access to education and the mechanisms to enforce it, as well as their right to be protected have been disseminated and addressed with family members. Their participation in the learning process, in the emotional development activities and their advocacy with local entities to achieve a spot in formal education for their child, has been one of most important results of the project.

Along the implementation of the project, several activities have been carried out to promote child protection, prevention measures and social inclusion (reduce xenophobia):

- 16 group activities on specific prevention measures have been carried out in the target communities. They have included: recognition and care of the body, self-concept (Why I am worth it?), knowledge of Rights, Women who inspire, SPA prevention.

- 48 community mobilization actions, with migrants and host communities, have been organized with community agents, leaders, children, adolescents and families to enhance social inclusion, reduce xenophobia and to recognize diversity as an important and positive issue in the community. Activities such as celebration of traditional Venezuelans festivals, writing letters, sharing through dinner, have been carried out.

Lessons learnt

- Peer work and family workshops based on the universal learning design has enabled that parents and teachers give a meaningful sense to the educational process of girls, boys and adolescents from a comprehensive and inclusive approach.
- The strategy developed with community agents (migrant and host community adolescents and young people), as well as the involvement of parents and caregivers, has increased local capacities to advocate for their rights, as well as community commitment with child education and protection, aspects that enhances sustainability of the actions.
- The review of the planning processes, the analysis of the context and the organized report of the activities in the information systems, facilitate the learning and systematization of the processes.
- Xenophobia limits educational access, retention and continuity. Social situations that reflect exclusion, discrimination and lack of empathy in the learning process of migrant students, increase the risk of school dropouts. To work with the formal education system and the community to adapt new learning methodologies and reduce xenophobia, is necessary to achieve effective children access to formal education.
- Building partnership and alliances with different stakeholders (UN agencies, NGOs and public entities) has proven to be successful in terms of coordinating actions as well as collaborating around specific thematic areas such as inclusion and children with disability, sexual and reproductive health and rights, and environment and waste management.

Challenges

- The insecurity in the surroundings has generated partial closures in some of the spaces or reprogramming for the protection of participants. Although the communities have been organized to care for children and adolescents and there is some support from the authorities, the communities demand greater efforts to minimize the problems of insecurity in some of the territories.
- Assistance to formal schools in Uribia: There is a challenge, children are not interested in attend formal school, the team started a process with the school teachers to define strategies to fostering and increase the assistance of children to the schools.

Risks and contingency management

- The insecurity in Riohacha and Maicao and the threats to social leaders in Uribia, have generated closures and irregularities in the care of some communities or spaces. Contingency: The protection route with the families has been activated to accompany the participants to the spaces and the accompaniment of the authorities to the spaces has been requested. Also, meetings have been held with families and community leaders to socialize security protocols.
- The educational alternation: As mentioned, the situation of the educational system in La Guajira continues to have shortcomings in the integration of the community to it and there is no timely or efficient response to the training processes, especially in the current context due to the COVID-19 and the alternation system. Contingency: from the organization we continue to provide care to participants in educational spaces and meeting spaces have been managed with teachers to socialize what has been worked on and what education in emergencies consists of to generate joint work and respond to the educational demands and community needs.

Family Strengthening support for migrant children and families in Ukraine

Ukraine has had an unstable domestic political situation for several years and in addition to that, more than 100,000 children live in institutions, separated from their families. During 2020, in addition to the political, economical and social challenges caused by the conflict, the Covid-19 pandemic has added another dimension of challenges with regards to health that also exacerbates the already difficult economic situation many families live under.

The pandemic has been a major challenge for SOS Children's Villages – as for most others. For many parents the pandemic, in addition to the risk of getting infected, has meant lost jobs and poorer economy, and for the children, that they have not been allowed to attend school. When families have been forced to stay home and indoors during uncertain conditions domestic violence, both against adults and children, has become a bigger problem. During the current situation SOS Children's Villages' work in Ukraine has been more important than maybe ever before.

Despite the situation with the pandemic SOS Children's Villages Ukraine managed to maintain the quality of their services, strengthen coordination in the programmes, adjust to working more digitally and create new collaborations with authorities. SOS is one of very few organizations that is actively working in areas of eastern Ukraine which have been affected by the conflict.

During 2020, the situation for the deinstitutionalization reform has worsened. The legislation is conforming to the institutions instead of the children, and the moratorium for placement of children under three years of age into children's homes is postponed. Thereto, by the end of this year the Children's Services, that handles child protection measures, will be eliminated. That means that several child related measures will lose their executive body, including adoptions, removal of children from unsafe environments and placement of children into foster families and alternative care. Basic child protection issues will suffer from legal ambiguity.

The year in numbers:

- Families in the family strengthening programmes **607**
- Children in the family strengthening programmes **1342**
- Share of families who left the programme that became self-reliant **66%**
- Children assisted by speech therapist monthly **40**

Main results & activities

Luhansk Family Strengthening Programme and Emergency response

During 2020, SOS Children's Villages Ukraine has been carrying out operations in the conflict-affected area in Ukraine despite the many difficulties and challenges in regard to mobility, state support and staff safety. It is one of few organizations that have chosen to remain in the area to support families and children in vulnerable situations. The support consists of family-based care for children separated from their parents, as well as preventive social interventions in the form of Family Strengthening Programs and Emergency Responses. As the conflict has been going on for many years, we have increasingly integrated the emergency response into the long-term actions, and the focus has largely been on meeting basic material needs as well as psychosocial support for families economically and mentally affected by the conflict to ensure that families can stay intact.

SOS Ukraine supports tens of thousands of people on both sides of the front-line separating areas controlled by the Ukrainian government and disputed areas in the Lugansk region. SOS Ukraine in Lugansk has been forced to relocate their operations to government-controlled areas and is now based in the cities of Starobelsk and Sevierodonetsk, providing support to families around this area, some of which have relocated from Lugansk. However SOS is still to some extent present in the city of Lugansk, which is now non-government-controlled area, providing support to those families that have chosen to stay. SOS Ukraine also runs an emergency programme in Stanitsa Luganskaya along the border crossing points between the two sides. When emergencies are no longer acute, families with ongoing support needs are transferred to our long-term family strengthening program.

The pandemic aggravated the already protracted armed conflict in eastern Ukraine. Access to adequate healthcare services, including emergency medical care, in the Luhansk region remains challenging.

A side-effect of the pandemic was that many boarding schools and institutions closed due to Covid-19 restrictions and children were returned to their homes. In the Luhansk region 1,497 children were returned to their families in the spring of 2020. Of these children, at least 30 % had not seen their parents in more than a year. SOS Ukraine therefore launched a reintegration project in the Luhansk region. In one of them 108 children from 60 families were monitored to ensure that children received adequate care. All the families were instructed concerning the dangers of institutional care for children, and all family visits were carried out together with state partners. The 14 most motivated families, including 36 children, were taken under reintegration support. The families received necessary support so that they could take care of their children and were provided with beds for children, tables, chairs, lamps, shoes and other supplies according to individual needs, and a psychologist and social pedagogue provided the families with counselling. As of January 1st, 2021, 27 children had not returned to boarding schools or institutions but are instead attending regular schools and living with their caregivers. Awareness-raising work has been organized with their schools for non-discrimination of children.

Six children from supported families were placed in alternative care during 2020 but no children were placed in institutional care. SOS Luhansk also urgently sought funding to buy a house for a single mother with children and succeeded in stabilizing her living arrangements so that her children avoided being placed in alternative care.

Speech therapy

War, and a life under constant stress, has many different effects on children. The contact line of the conflicting sides runs through the Luhansk region in eastern Ukraine and the people living here have been through very difficult times of war or constant instability since the conflict started in 2014.

Children born during the conflict time, who haven't had the chance to leave the contact line territory, more often have speech disorders at different levels of complexity and need specialised assistance. The reasons are different from child to child. It can be because of a pregnancy and labour that took place at the time of

relocations when the family was looking for a safe place during shelling. It can also be emotional tension, stress and traumatic life episodes in the families' lives under fire on a territory of armed conflict. Less frequently, the reasons lie with congenital neurological disorders in the development of a child.

In the SOS Children's Villages programme in Stanitsa Luhanska, the speech therapist monthly assists up to 40 programme participants and children from the community who regularly attend individual corrective and development classes. The speech therapist also provides consultations for pedagogues and educators from local kindergartens.

The role of specialists is to actively engage the parents in the process and regularly consult them on the individual characteristics of their child's speech development and proper corrective routines, in order to fulfil the recommendations at home. It is the comprehensive approach as an interaction in the corrective process between the speech therapist, psychologist, medical professional and the parent, that is the most important. This approach is being successfully implemented in the programme of SOS Children's Villages in Stanitsa Luhanska.

The Family Strengthening Programmes in Kiev and Brovary

Many families in the Brovary area have moved here to escape the insecurity of the conflict in the Eastern areas of the country. Even if relieved from the most acute danger, the situation is difficult as schools, healthcare and other social institutions are over-burdened and many people live in socio-economically difficult conditions. The family strengthening programme provide support to families to help them stay together and avoid family separation.

Due to the extreme situation many families have been struggling with during the year, the programme provided emergency support to families that had lost income opportunities and suffered economical, as well as psychosocial hardships during the pandemic, including food packages, hygiene kits, used laptops and medicines. Based on the specific situation and needs of each family, supported families have also been provided with:

- psychological support
- socio-pedagogical support and parental training,
- educational support
- healthcare support
- economic empowerment support including vocational training,
- recreational support for children and families
- material support to families
- educational support with a special focus on computer literacy courses for children and adults
- healthcare support: provision of medicines and vitamins
- support in improving housing/living conditions

During the year, no children in supported families were placed in institutional care, meaning that the support succeeded in keeping the families together and strengthening families to care for their children.

To meet new challenges in relation to child safeguarding, the programme extended support temporarily to 30 families whose children were sent home from boarding schools during quarantine so that families could provide adequate care for their children. In addition under the project EU4Youth youth and adult caregivers were trained in entrepreneurship, received grants to launch businesses, and received vocational training, and eight persons were officially employed as a result of the support

Mental Health and Psycho-Social Support Global Hub

Exposure to loss, trauma and other adversity experiences, including the loss of parental care, neglect, extreme poverty, conflict and abuse, is unfortunately a common experience for many of the children SOS Children's Villages works with and for. This may have long-term impacts on children's brains, learning outcomes and physical health as well as attachment and social skills. The risk of exposure is increasing during emergencies and crises such as the emerging conflicts and the Covid-19 pandemic that children are experiencing globally today.

Recognizing the importance of addressing the psychosocial needs SOS CVI has set-up a virtual support network, the SOS CVI Mental Health and Psycho-Social Support Global Hub (GH-MHPSS), that could help the organization to mainstream and strengthen its mental health and psychosocial support (hereafter MHPSS) activities.

With the long-term objective that *Children, youth, and families have improved psychosocial and mental health well-being and opportunities for growing and thriving*, the MHPSS-GH aims to develop to offer global support and to cover both immediate-emergency related, post-emergency and longer-term needs, including day to day work within the SOS villages and programmes.

During the pilot year of the SOS CVI Global Hub for MHPSS (hereafter GH MHPSS) have tested and implement evidence-based methodologies in East and Southern Africa region (ESAF) to ensure the provision and scale up of quality interventions to support children and families, within the area of mental health and psycho-social wellbeing. Thereto the GH MHPSS has been networking with internal and external actors to strengthen internal MHPSS-capacity within the federation as well as strengthening SOS CVI position as MHPSS-actor on the international arena.

The year in numbers:

- Staff with improved capacity in MHPSS to support beneficiaries **36**
- Regional hubs for MHPSS established **1**
- New key partnerships and networks **2**
- Countries (locations) with trained capacited staff **6 (12)**

Main results & activities

Supervision and training

The two main interventions which have been implemented are Team Up and Problem Management Plus, PM+. During the year, 36 people have been trained in either Team Up or PM+ and are now better equipped to provide mental health and psychosocial support to beneficiaries in our programmes.

TEAM UP – Movement based community support in ESAF

Team Up is a movement-based psychosocial support intervention that was initially developed for refugee children affected by conflict and war to improve their physical, social, and emotional wellbeing and strengthen their resilience. The ultimate goal of Team Up is to reduce or prevent the occurrence of future serious psychological problems, while allowing staff to detect problematic behaviour that might require further support and benefit from interventions acting at higher levels of the pyramid.

Remote Training of Facilitators (ToF)

The Team Up training of facilitators (ToF) was carried out between September and December 2020. It consisted of a start-up training of 25 hours distributed along 4 weeks to be followed by additional follow up sessions of the same duration. 12 Team Up facilitators were trained across the 6 participating countries: Burundi, Ethiopia, Nigeria, Rwanda, Somalia, and Somaliland.

The beneficiaries

After the completion of the start-up training, facilitation, and implementation of Team Up with children by facilitators began, involving the children and the adolescents from 12 SOS Children's Villages and Educational Centres in Burundi, Ethiopia, Nigeria, Rwanda, Somalia, and Somaliland.

Below follows a quote from a participant using acquired skills;

"Team up! Team up! Team up!"

Inside the Caldonazzo summer camp, curious children approach the group of facilitators who scream and sing, clapping their hands, snapping their fingers and inviting them to join a colorful and joyfully noisy train. Team Up workshops begin, organized by SOS Children's Villages Italy during the first week of this strange summer and everyone is free to participate. Among the applause at fireworks, a crab football match and a mirror game, themes such as collaboration and friendship were discussed, sharing shifts and ideas, encouraging and supporting each other.

Thanks to Team Up, children can express themselves and become aware of their body through movement. It's a way to make them feel at home. - argues an educator.

Young people strengthen the bonds within the group, in an environment where there is no right or wrong, but one can express oneself freely in respect for the other. Sitting in a circle on the grass, faces caressed by the sun covered by masks, facilitators and children exchanged ideas and reflections to play all together, in presence, keeping the right distances and taking the necessary precautions.

The need to inhabit spaces and relationships in a new way is strong and the full immersion of 4 meetings in a single week becomes a precious opportunity to feel close, despite the spatial distancing and the rules to be respected.

The future is still to be built, brick by brick, but it is less heavy sharing a healthy and fresh snack offered by the staff of the summer camp.

And, as a child writes on a colored billboard, between "Goku's hair" and "petal flowers": Happier together: thank you! - Operator of SOS Children's Villages Italy, participant in Team Up training

Problem management plus – Psychosocial specialized support in ESAF

Problem Management Plus (PM+) belongs to a set of programs which are low-intensity, brief, cost-effective and trans-diagnostic (i.e., not condition-specific) to reduce common mental health symptoms (including depression, anxiety, and stress) and improve psychosocial functioning. This intervention is based on the WHO treatment guidelines for conditions related to stress. It is a 5-session intervention that can be delivered by trained, non-specialized workers, and is available in individual and group delivery formats for both children and adults. PM+ includes evidence-based techniques such as: problem solving, stress

management, behavioural activation, and accessing social support. It has proven to be effective in a number of randomized controlled trials.

Remote Training of Helpers (ToH)

A Training of Helpers (ToH) was delivered between June and July 2020 to 24 trainees from North America, Europe and the Eastern and Southern parts of Africa, including the United States, Greece, Sweden, Italy, Nigeria, Belgium, Ethiopia, Uganda, Rwanda, South Africa, Burundi, Somalia, and Somaliland.

The beneficiaries

A total of 12 beneficiaries from the ESAF region and Italy has so far received the full PM+ intervention. Most of the clients were females (75%) with a mean age of 31.5 years. One third had previously received mental health treatment. At the time evaluation, half of the Helpers had completed all PM+ sessions and the post-assessment with their clients.

Remote Training of Trainers (ToT)

Following the roll-out of PM+ in the targeted countries, the GH MHPSS set up a Training of Trainers for PM+, with the goal of training frontline workers and professionals working with vulnerable populations to then deliver the PM+ training to future helpers. This ToT was delivered in April 2021 to 12 SOS staff in ESAF, Europe and South America.

Below are two quotes from participants in the trainings:

"This training has changed my life: I have become more aware of many problems around me and empathetic, especially with respect to people, emotions and what they might go through. I am becoming increasingly interested in how to protect mental health and psychosocial support. An important aspect of my training was understanding that, as an operator, I also need someone to talk to in some moments. Sometimes, in order to cope with stressful situations, I just need someone to talk to and say: "Ok, it's natural what you feel ... If you want, I am here ...". I don't expect a person to give me advice, I need him to listen to me. This is another awareness gained following my training experience. The person I follow has once again got his old job, lost during the pandemic, and is successfully coping with family hardships stemming from economic restrictions." -Operator of SOS Children's Villages ESAF, participant in Problem Management Plus training

"In this context, people usually don't talk to anyone about their problems, but I think the population is starting to be interested in this kind of support now. More and more awareness of those who are looking for help is developing, especially for psychosocial support. We hear more and more frequently: "Get help if you need it!".

People are starting to develop more and more awareness, but it is important to adapt an intervention to the context. If, for example, a person wishes to confront a man or a woman, we must try to adapt to his/her need. I think it is necessary to take care of intercultural needs, which could be a key to the success of the intervention." - Operator of SOS Children's Villages ESAF, participant in Problem Management Plus training

Networking

Throughout our first year of operations, we continuously worked to strengthen SOS CVI's position as a credible contributor in the MHPSS field. Among the achievements we find:

- A regional hub for MHPSS has been formulated in Eastern and Southern Africa, ESAF, with which GH MHPSS has established a partnership.
- On November 3rd, 2020, SOS CVI became part of the IASC MHPSS Reference Group, by the efforts of GH MHPSS.
- SOS CVI and War Child Holland have entered into an MoU to facilitate partnership around MHPSS.

Child safeguarding

All our work is about creating as safe and protective environment as possible for children and youths in our programmes, and to constantly develop and improve that work.

In the wake of the pandemic, when society is extra fragile and battered, the risks of children's rights being violated increase. Us having a high level of knowledge and clear routines for internal handling of incidents has therefore been central. SOS Children's Villages' work with child safeguarding is based on the UN Guidelines on the Alternative Care of Children and the Convention on the Rights of the Child, together with our own policy for child safeguarding; Child Protection Policy. It focuses on four areas: awareness, prevention, reporting and follow-up.

All SOS staff are given basic knowledge on child protection and have a duty to report. When there is reason to suspect that a child is being maltreated, we act immediately.

During 2020, some activities were restructured so that both methodological materials and conversational support could be conveyed online. Capacity building regarding trauma management for SOS staff was carried out, considering the pandemic.

A self-initiated independent evaluation of our own work with child safeguarding showed that in some cases we have failed in our handling of protecting children. We have now taken further measures to live up to our vision of zero tolerance for all forms of abuse and violations against children and young people.

- The children and youths who have been subject to violations will get direct individual support from a support fund, for example psychological support and legal counselling.
- An ombudsman system is being established to ensure that the child or youth who reports an incident will get support from an independent person without a conflict of interest during the whole process.
- A whistleblower system has already been set up and been reinforced to catch any shortcomings earlier.

We minimise risks

We prevent and analyse potential risks through initiatives that increase knowledge and awareness of what they entail.

We handle incidents

We act swiftly and professionally and protect children in the cases where incidents occur.

We evaluate and follow up.

Reported incidents

Internationally, a total of 618 confirmed incidents have been reported, including cases where the perpetrator is a biological family member, other person in the community, teacher, or another child or youth, in 328 of these cases the perpetrator was a SOS-employee.

No incidents have been reported within the Swedish operations.

SOS Children Villages 2020

- Number of children and youths in alternative care **65 600**
- Number of persons in family strengthening programmes **347 000**
- Number of persons in education programmes and initiatives **198 600**
- Number of persons in other activities, including health prevention programmes **327 000**
- Number of countries where SOS Children's Villages operate **137**
- Total number of employees **39 740**
- Total number of individual interventions in 2020 **1 650 632**



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Photo and text: SOS Archive and SOS Children Villages Sweden 2021.