

# WHO WE ARE



**SOS CHILDREN'S  
VILLAGES**

A loving home for every child



# PREFACE

In adult life we reveal how we fared in childhood. The quality of childhood is critical - as a help or hindrance in later life. What set the stage for our future development - loss and hurt, or love and respect? Although we all know that childhood is decisive, children are still ignored, manipulated, abused and abandoned.

At SOS Children's Villages we are committed to the welfare of children - often throughout the whole of their childhood - and to strengthening families and communities as a preventive measure in the fight against abandonment and social neglect.

It is a truly difficult - but also rewarding - task for an organisation to seek to restore the balance in life for abandoned, destitute, and spiritually and physically traumatised children, to pick them up when crisis brings them down, to give them individual support, to take them by the hand on the road from childhood to adulthood.

The influence of childhood on adults applies equally to us as an organisation with its own special history. The beginnings of SOS Children's Villages are decisive for our further development, but as we "grow up" the present is the yardstick for our endeavour and the future the challenge. It is this synthesis of the traditional and the modern, of professionalism and compassion, that guides SOS Children's Villages in meeting the responsibilities it has assumed for thousands of children and young adults.

The mission statement of SOS Children's Villages defines the general framework, our motivation and commitment to genuine social change that will benefit children worldwide. That is our vision, which we are working to achieve step by step, to help children enjoy their right to a childhood and to healthy development, through a family, through security, through love and respect.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Helmut Kutin', is positioned above the printed name.

HELMUT KUTIN,  
PRESIDENT





# OUR ROOTS

## WHAT WE ARE

The first SOS Children's Village was founded by Hermann Gmeiner in 1949 in Imst, Austria. He was committed to helping children in need – children who had lost their homes, their security and their families as a result of the Second World War. With the support of many donors and co-workers, our organisation has grown to help children all over the world.

We take action for children as an independent non-governmental social development organisation. We respect varying religions and cultures, and we work in countries and communities where our mission can contribute to development. We work in the spirit of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and we promote these rights around the world.



With the SOS Children's Village concept, our organisation pioneered a family approach to the long-term care of orphaned and abandoned children.



## The Mother

Each child has a caring parent

The SOS mother builds a close relationship with every child entrusted to her, and provides the security, love and stability that each child needs. As a child-care professional, she lives together with her children, guides their development, and runs her household independently. She recognises and respects each child's family background, cultural roots and religion.



## Brothers and Sisters

Family ties grow naturally

Girls and boys of different ages live together as brothers and sisters, with natural brothers and sisters always staying within the same SOS family. These children and their SOS mother build emotional ties that last a lifetime.



This concept is based on

# four principles



## The House

Each family creates its own home

The house is the family's home, with its own unique feeling, rhythm and routine. Under its roof, children enjoy a real sense of security and belonging. Children grow and learn together, sharing responsibilities and all the joys and sorrows of daily life.



## The Village

The SOS family is a part of the community

SOS families live together, forming a supportive village environment where children enjoy a happy childhood. The families share experiences and offer one another a helping hand. They also live as integrated and contributing members of the local community. Through his or her family, village and community, each child learns to participate actively in society.

# OUR VISION WHAT WE WANT FOR THE WORLD'S CHILDREN



Every child  
belongs to a family and grows  
with love, respect and security.





## Every child belongs to a family

Family is the heart of society. Within a family each child is protected and enjoys a sense of belonging. Here, children learn values, share responsibilities and form life-long relationships. A family environment gives them a solid foundation on which to build their lives.

## Every child grows with love

Through love and acceptance, emotional wounds are healed and confidence is built. Children learn to trust and believe in themselves and others. With this self-assurance each child can recognise and fulfil his or her potential.



## Every child grows with respect

Each child's voice is heard and taken seriously. Children participate in making decisions that affect their lives and are guided to take a leading role in their own development. The child grows with respect and dignity as a cherished member of his or her family and society.

## Every child grows with security

Children are protected from abuse, neglect and exploitation and are kept safe during natural disaster and war. Children have shelter, food, health care and education. These are the basic requirements for the sound development of all children.

# OUR MISSION

## WHAT WE DO



We build families for children in need, we help them shape their own futures and we share in the development of their communities.





© Patrick Wittmann

## We build families for children in need

We work for children who are orphaned, abandoned or whose families are unable to care for them. We give these children the opportunity to build lasting relationships with-in a family.

Our family approach in the SOS Children's Village is based on four principles: Each child needs a mother, and grows up most naturally with brothers and sisters, in their own house, within a supportive village environment.





© Patrick Wittmann

## We help them shape their own futures

We enable children to live according to their own culture and religion, and to be active members of the community.

We help children to recognise and express their individual abilities, interests and talents.

We ensure that children receive the education and skills training they need to be successful and contributing members of society.



© Katerina Ilievska

## We share in the development of their communities

We share in community life and respond to the social development needs of society's most vulnerable children and young people.

We establish facilities and programmes that aim to strengthen families and prevent the abandonment of children.

We join hands with community members to provide education and health care, and respond to emergencies.

*“ Yet we need to concentrate our efforts on what we can change! That’s the lesson we learned from the past decades. ”*

*Helmut Kutin*



# OUR VALUES WHAT KEEPS US STRONG

These are the core beliefs and attitudes on which our organisation has been built, and they are the cornerstones of our success. These enduring values guide our actions, decisions and relationships as we work towards fulfilling our mission.



*“ Ultimately all our work on behalf of the seen as a contribution to peace. ”*

## Courage

### We take action

We have challenged traditional methods of orphan care and continue to pioneer innovative child-care approaches. We help children who have no one else to turn to. With a sensitive yet confident approach we are determined to question, learn and take action for children around the world.

## Commitment

### We keep our promises

We are dedicated to helping generations of children have a better life. We do this by nurturing lasting relationships with our donors, our co-workers and the communities in which we are rooted. We believe that by making a long-term commitment we have a meaningful and sustainable impact.

*abandoned child must be*

*Hermann Gmeiner*

## Trust

### **We believe in each other**

We believe in each other's abilities and potential. We support and respect one another, and build an environment where we can approach our responsibilities with confidence. In an atmosphere of trust we are inspired to share our experiences and learn from each other.

## Accountability

### **We are reliable partners**

Since 1949 we have built a foundation of trust with donors, governments, and other partners who support us in our mission. Our greatest responsibility is guaranteeing the well-being of children by ensuring high standards of care. In doing this we are committed to using all funds and resources wisely, with respect and accountability.

SOS Children's Villages International  
Hermann-Gmeiner-Str. 51  
A-6020 Innsbruck - Austria

[www.sos-childrensvillages.org](http://www.sos-childrensvillages.org)

Cover photos: © Iván Hidalgo, SOS Archives, Christian Martinelli, Nusrin Somchat