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from	President Siddhartha Kaul, Honorary and Past President Helmut Kutin	
date	22 June 2018	
subject	Statement on child safeguarding	

Statement on child safeguarding
22 June 2018

Every child has the right to a loving home and family – this core message guides our work. Since our inception in 1949, SOS Children's Villages has been committed to the child who has no one. At the heart of everything we do is our firm conviction that no child should grow up alone – that every child deserves a caring, supportive and safe home in which to grow.

Because of our dedication to children growing up alone and those at risk of losing parental care, over the last 70 years 135 countries have welcomed SOS Children's Villages into their societies and local communities.

An integral part of our work is to create a safe environment for all children, young people and families in our programmes and to advocate for safety and protection in their communities and broader society.

This also means a commitment to safety and protection within SOS Children's Villages programmes. We have a strong Code of Conduct for all staff and volunteers, as well as clear reporting and responding procedures. We take strong action if staff members fail to adhere to our policies and expectations for child safeguarding.

Unfortunately, in every society and country around the world, there are individuals who exploit the vulnerability of children and young people. In many cases, these individuals hold positions of trust and authority, including in care programmes, schools and religious institutions.

SOS Children's Villages has also experienced cases of abuse in our programmes. When cases of abuse are reported, the affected member association proactively takes action, following local laws and procedures as well as our own organisational values. We are committed to working with and supporting local law enforcement agencies during an investigation and the process of bringing justice to the victims.

In confirmed cases of abuse, we follow twin priorities: firstly to support the victims of abuse through their trauma and healing process; and secondly to pursue justice so that the perpetrators are dealt with to the fullest extent in accordance with local laws as well as our own organisational values and policies.

In 2008, to further strengthen our efforts in this area, we improved upon our Child Protection Policy, including fortifying and clarifying our protocols and focusing on four action areas: awareness, prevention, reporting and responding. Since then, we have continued to strengthen these four action areas, such as through introducing new channels for reporting suspected cases of abuse.

As reporting systems have improved, and as a consequence historical safeguarding failures have come to light, we have embraced our duty to recognise, examine and learn from these in a transparent manner. Member associations have proactively examined and addressed the failures that led to historical cases of abuse. One example of this is SOS Children's Villages Austria, which in 2014

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published an account of historical cases of abuse in the book, “Bound to Silence”. As a federation, we are further engaged in an independent, historical child safeguarding review to highlight additional areas where we can learn and improve.

Every case remains one case too many. We cannot rest until we have taken every possible measure to eliminate abuse. Every member of the SOS Children’s Villages family – be it SOS parent, SOS co-worker or board member – is required to report and respond to abuse as per our Code of Conduct.

For historical safeguarding failures, on behalf of the global SOS Children’s Villages family, we express our deepest regret and accept our moral responsibility. We want to assure children, young people, families, partners and donors that our commitment to child safeguarding remains steadfast – now and for the future.

Siddhartha Kaul
President
since June 2012

Helmut Kutin
Past President
1985 – 2012