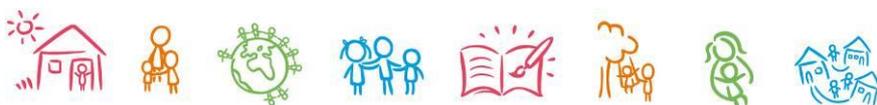


# IN A NUTSHELL: TRACKING FOOTPRINTS

## AN OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY

based on the Tracking Footprints Global Report 2010

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## INTRODUCTION

### Reasons for the Tracking Footprints study

Tracking footprints is SOS Children's Villages' first global research project. It was initiated in 2001 to evaluate the quality and the effectiveness of the alternative care SOS Children's Villages provides to children without parental care and to generate lessons for its work.

*The study's outcomes gave us an indication of how the former SOS children and youth get on as adults, their personal experiences with the SOS children's village as children and their observations and recommendations as SOS experts, which would benefit SOS Children's Villages to develop its services.*

SOS Children's Villages Jordan

It does this through the eyes of adults who spent a part of their childhood with an SOS family and/or in an SOS youth home. Over the course of eight years, 3543 adults (former programme participants) in 61 countries were asked:

- how they entered the care of SOS Children's Villages;
- how they experienced this time;
- what their lives are like now;
- how satisfied they are with their lives.

From the results of the study, recommendations have been drawn that have been used to further develop and improve SOS Children's Villages' provision of alternative care for children, both on the national and global level.

### Who this publication is meant for

This publication is mainly intended for all SOS Children's Village co-workers who have an interest in Tracking Footprints and in particular for those who are in close contact with external partners, such as promoting and supporting associations and fundraising and communications staff of SOS Children's Villages' General Secretariat. It gives an overview of the goals, process and methodology of the study and presents its main results to date, both the findings of the interviews, and the impact the study has had on the development of the SOS Children's Village Programme.

### How to work with Tracking Footprints

In fundraising and communication activities, Tracking Footprints can be used as a tool to demonstrate the results of our pedagogical work and how we use these to further develop it (see 'Lessons for the organisation' below).

### What does the study offer?

Tracking Footprints offers the organisation an opportunity to learn from its clients. It was set up to focus on SOS Children's Villages' alternative care provision. It does not lend itself to comparisons with other care providers; this was not built into the study's design. It uses a self-developed tool that has only been used by SOS Children's Villages.

## HOW THE STUDY WAS CARRIED OUT

*“The goals and desires the young people voiced show enthusiasm and eagerness to improve their lives. They learned that here.”*

SOS Children’s Villages Bangladesh

At the heart of Tracking Footprints is a series of face-to-face interviews. The study’s criteria were that the person:

- had not made use of any of SOS Children’s Villages’ services for the past two years;
- was at least 22 years of age at the time of the interview, and;
- had made use of the services for at least two years.

The interviews were conducted in a standardised manner following a questionnaire that contained both ‘closed’ questions - the results of which could later be quantified - and ‘open’ questions that allowed for differentiated replies. The interviews were conducted in the local languages and by independent external researchers.

The questionnaire was developed on a global level by a team led by the international office, with strong support and involvement of national associations and regional offices. Many national associations adapted the questionnaire to better suit the country’s culture and to meet the national association’s specific interests in conducting the study. This did not significantly affect the results’ suitability for cross-country comparison. Figure 1 below shows the participation by continent.

Three rounds of data gathering and analysis have taken place:

Round	Year(s) of data gathering and analysis	Nr of national associations	Nr of participants
1 (pilot)	2002	7	337
2	2003	13	800
3	2007-2009	41	2401

Table 1

The study covers the time span from 1986 to 2004, as these are the years that participants to the study spent in the care of SOS Children’s Villages. However, the study is not longitudinal; different national associations, and thus different people, participated in each round. As there were no further requirements regarding the age range of the respondents, no conclusions can be drawn regarding the development of SOS Children’s Villages’ care model over time. Results of the latest round, which resulted in the most data, are presented here.

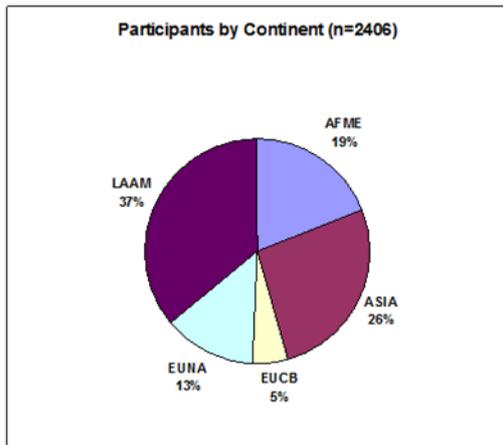


Figure 1

GEOGRAPHICAL DISTRIBUTION OF PARTICIPANTS

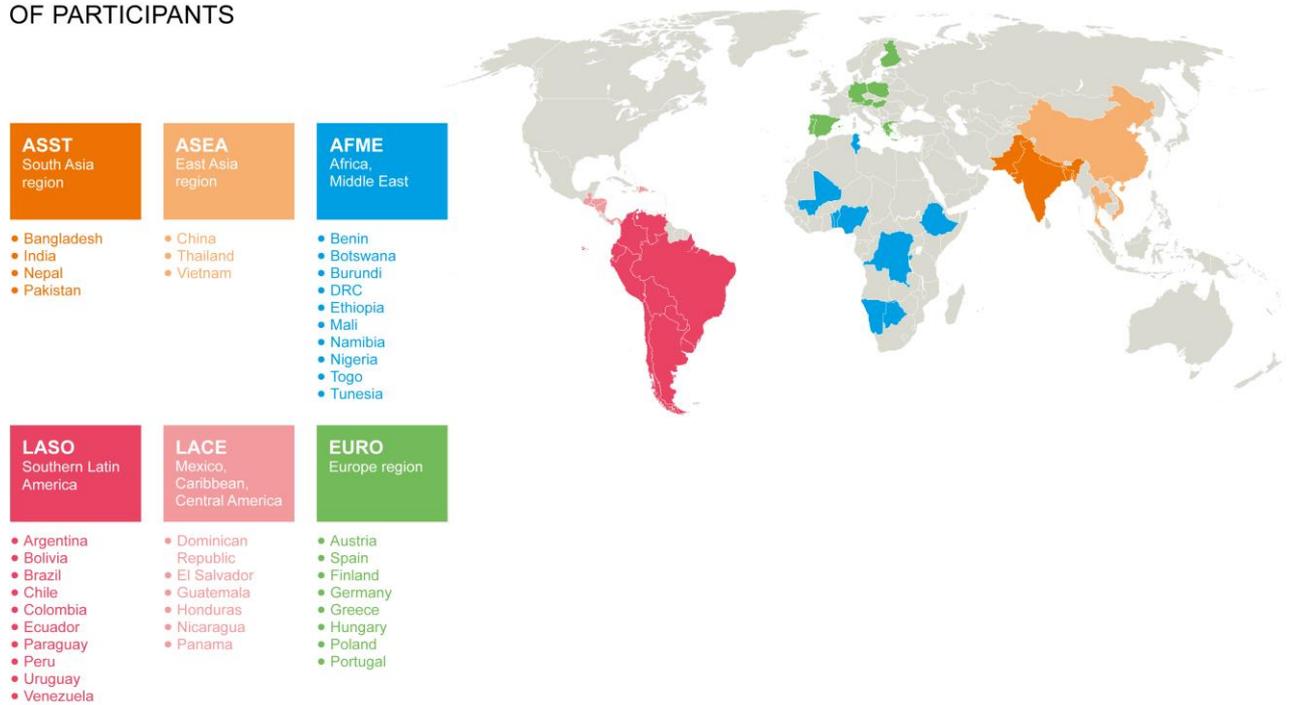


Figure 2

## RESULTS

*„All boys and girls are educated and professionally or vocationally trained.”*

SOS Children’s Villages Bangladesh

### Overall results

**Current lives:** The average young person interviewed:

- was 28 years old at the time of the interview and had left SOS Children’s Villages seven years ago;
- has finished at least secondary school. One in three have been able to successfully complete some form of tertiary or university education. Girls and boys did equally well;
- is quite satisfied with his or her life situation;
- lives contentedly in a small family;
- is satisfied with his or her housing situation.

**Admission and time spent with an SOS family:** The survey participants could give a maximum of three reasons to the question of why they were admitted to an SOS Children’s Village. Before coming to live with an SOS family almost one in two people had lost at least one parent. The next most frequent reason was poverty, followed by abandonment (figure 3).

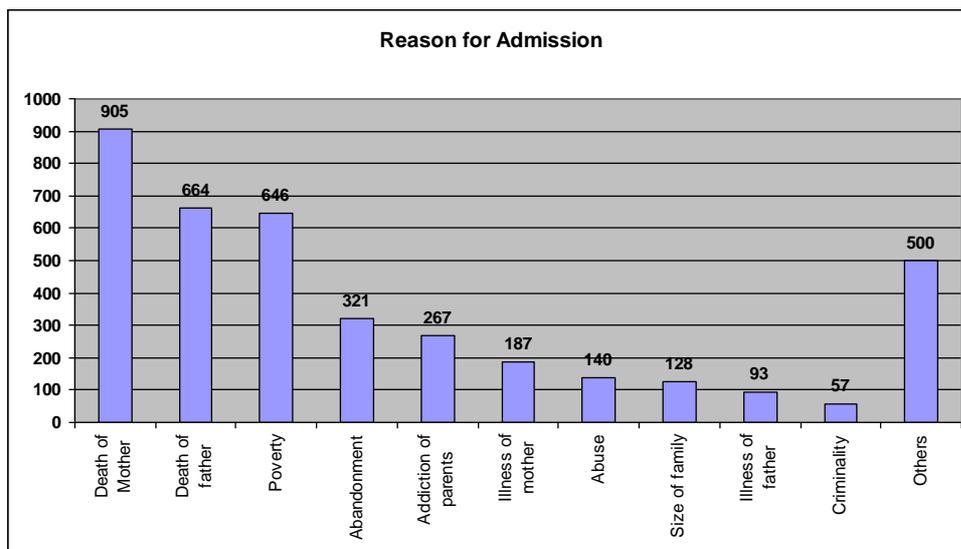


Figure 3

At the time of arrival, the average participant was six years old, after which he or she spent eleven years within an SOS family, alongside seven other children in the SOS family. In two out of three cases biological brothers and sisters found themselves within the same SOS family. Also two in three children went on to an SOS youth programme for another 3.5 years.

Girls stayed with an SOS family for an average of twelve years, followed by three years in a youth programme. Boys spent ten years in an SOS family and four years in a youth programme. Three out of five young people who were part of a youth programme are male.

**Caregivers:** On average, the young people have a very positive view of their SOS mother or mothers. The fewer SOS mothers they had during their time in an SOS family, the better the opinion they hold of them. The length of stay also contributes to the perception of the SOS mother: the longer a person lived with an SOS family, the better he or she perceived the relationship with his/her caregiver. Interestingly, the more accepted children felt outside the village, the more positive their perception of their SOS mother(s).

**Community:** For the largest part, the respondents felt treated as equals by the community outside the SOS Children’s Village. The closer the relationship between the SOS families and the wider community, the more accepted and well-regarded they felt.

**Results by continents**

There are considerable regional differences, strongly influenced by their socio-economic conditions.

**Education:** The young people studied reached a reasonably satisfactory level of education. Those in Europe faced the greatest problems in completing an education beyond secondary school. There were mixed results in AFME: there were significantly more people without any educational degrees than in any other continent. Yet, all qualification types featured more or less equally, which was not the case for the other continents.

**EDUCATIONAL ACHIEVEMENT BY GENDER**

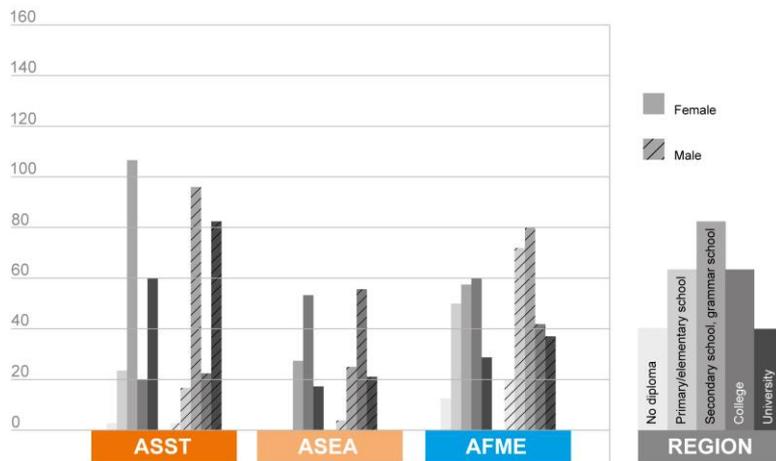
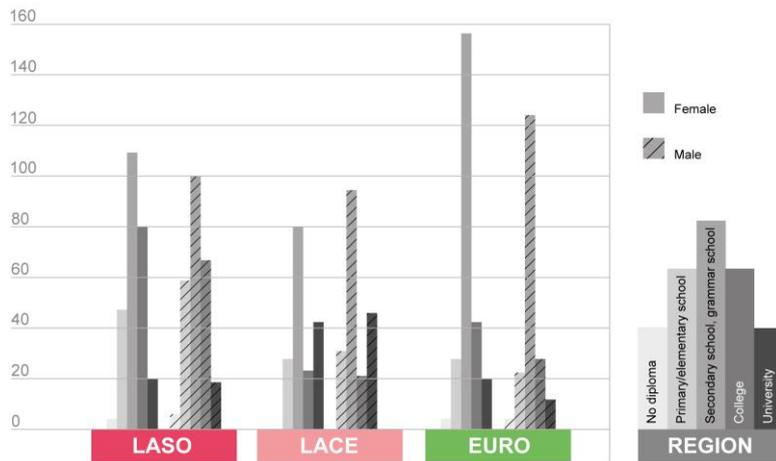


Figure 4

**Age at time of and reason for admission:** Most of the children who entered SOS Children’s Villages’ care before their third birthday lived in Africa and the Middle East. Most children who were older than nine at that time lived in Europe.

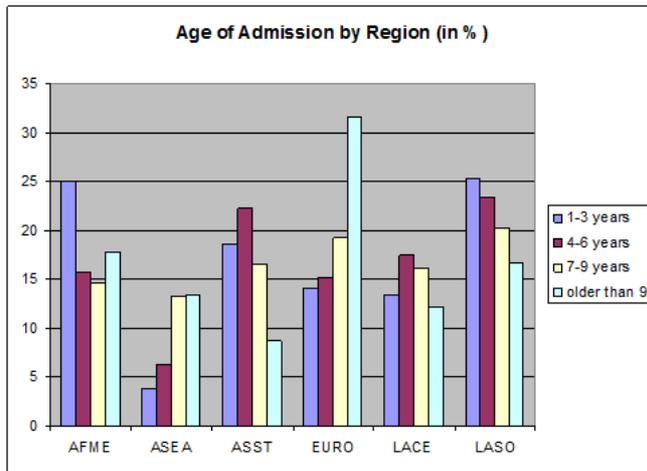


Figure 5

In South America, the child’s mother dying and poverty were the most important reasons for admission. In East Asia, the loss of a parent was by far the most important reason. In South Asia, a father’s death was more often a main reason than a mother’s. In Africa and the Middle East and in East Asia, being part of a family with many children was mentioned more often than in the other regions. In Europe, parental addictions and child abuse were mentioned more than anywhere else.

**Current life satisfaction:** Figure 6 shows by region how satisfied respondents are with different areas of their current lives. When compared to the countries’ under-five mortality rate<sup>1</sup>, a UN Millennium Development Goal indicator that expresses human and economic development, the results reveal that the worse their country scores on the index, the less satisfied the respondents currently are.

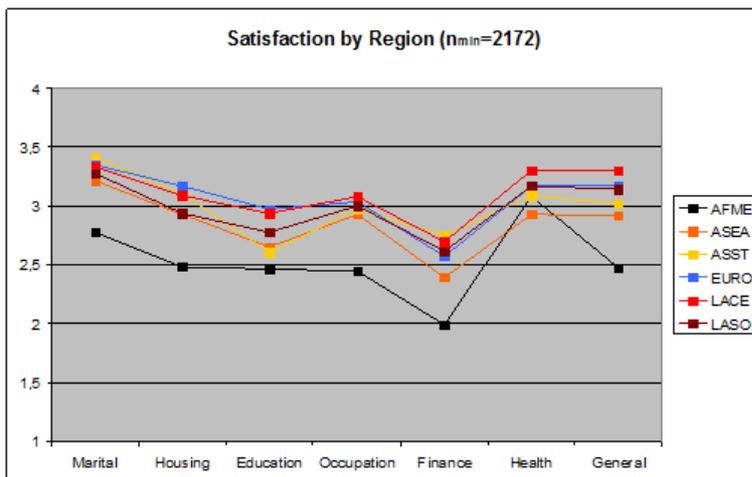


Figure 6

**Caregivers:** The same goes for the interviewees' satisfaction with their time in the SOS Children's Village: the poorer the country, the less positive their memories of their SOS mother(s) are.

**Community:** There are large regional differences with regard to how people felt in relation to the wider community: in AFME more people felt treated as someone special (in a positive sense) whereas in Europe, more people felt that they were perceived as being inferior.

When using the results, one needs to consider that the respondents were those who the national associations were able to contact. Presumably those persons who have a positive opinion of SOS Children's Villages, as they have chosen to stay in contact with the organisation. Also, it is not certain that our programmes were the main contributor to these outcomes.

## LESSONS FOR THE ORGANISATION

**Community integration:** Isolation from the community was identified as a major challenge. Arguably the most important outcome of Tracking Footprints is that although our efforts cannot compensate for the negative influence of adverse socio-economic circumstances completely, their influence on children's development can be reduced by good, close relations between the children and families in SOS Children's Villages' programmes and the surrounding communities. A child fares better in adulthood when he or she has been exposed to people and activities outside the home and is familiar with community life.

A goal for the future, which has been formulated in the SOS Children's Village manual<sup>ii</sup>, is for SOS families to have more contact with local communities and for programmes to be more closely aligned to the community. This includes similar living standards and lifestyles. The SOS Children's Village Programme Policy addresses this issue. As does current work to improve the physical integration of SOS families<sup>iii</sup> and improve how we work with SOS families and to prevent institutional organisational practices that may impact negatively on SOS families.<sup>iv</sup>

**Fluctuation of SOS mothers:** Keeping the fluctuation of SOS mothers<sup>v</sup> low, in other words allowing stable and long lasting relationships between children and their caregiver, will have a positive effect on the development and the satisfaction of people in later life.

**Family strengthening:** The study shows that up to 25 per cent of children were in alternative care due to poverty. This supports the decision to strengthen children's families of origin through family strengthening activities.

## WHERE TO FIND THE SOURCES

Tracking Footprints' sources can be found in the research section of the Global Intranet<sup>vi</sup>, which includes the national and global reports, and instruments and materials - such as the interview questions.

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<sup>i</sup> UNICEF (2007): The state of the world's children 2008. New York: UNICEF

<sup>ii</sup> [http://www.sos-childrensvillages.org/What-we-do/Documents/20060705\\_1354\\_cv\\_manuel\\_en.pdf](http://www.sos-childrensvillages.org/What-we-do/Documents/20060705_1354_cv_manuel_en.pdf)

<sup>iii</sup> <https://intranet.sos-kd.org/Projects/Global/ReInnovation/Pages/default.aspx>

<sup>iv</sup> <https://intranet.sos-kd.org/projects/global/families-first>

<sup>v</sup> <https://intranet.sos-kd.org/areasofwork/hrod/content/Cocacos>

<sup>vi</sup> <https://intranet.sos-kd.org/areasofwork/PD/Content/Monitoring/research/TrackingFootprints>