

SOCIAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT: COUNTRY SNAPSHOT



SOS CHILDREN'S
VILLAGES
INTERNATIONAL

CÔTE D'IVOIRE

Location: Abobo-Gare

BACKGROUND

Located in the north of the city of Abidjan
Operating since 1971

Core services

238 children have been cared for in family-like alternative care since start of operation
800 children have been supported through family strengthening services since start of operation

Supporting services

1 kindergarten
1 primary school
1 clinic
2 youth care programmes



Methodology

In October 2015, a social impact assessment was carried out at SOS Children's Village Abobo-Gare. It involved interviewing 60 former participants of the programme, as well as carrying out stakeholder interviews and focus group discussions with programme staff, community-based organisations and local authorities. This assessment was led by an external consultant from the Nordic Consulting Group (NCG) with the assistance of two local researchers.

The assessment aimed to determine the impact of SOS Children's Villages in Abobo-Gare, in terms of the following:

1 Individual level

Eight key dimensions of wellbeing were assessed through interviews with former participants. For each dimension, former participants were given a rating, on a scale of 1 to 4, where 1 is the most positive.

2 Community level

Six dimensions of impact at the community level were assessed, based on desk review and the findings of semi-structured interviews with key programme staff and representatives of relevant stakeholders. For each dimension, researchers assigned a rating, on a scale of 1 to 4, where 1 is the most positive.

3 Social return on investment (SROI)

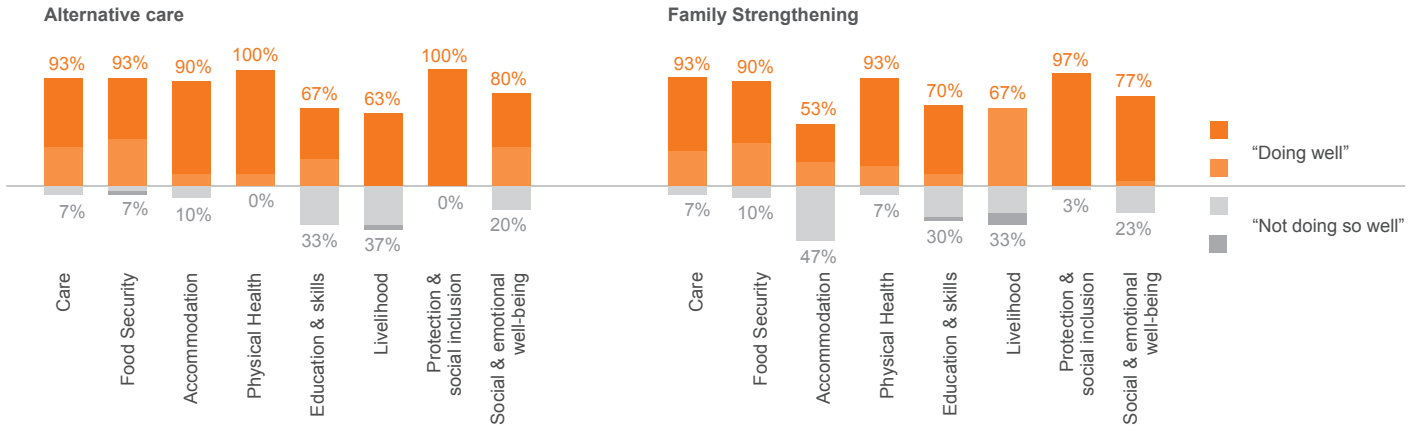
This quantified the social impact of the programme in financial terms. It was calculated by comparing the cost of inputs to the realized financial benefits of the programme for individuals, the community as well as society.¹

1. Please see SOS Children's Villages International (2017): Social Impact Assessment in SOS Children's Villages: Approach and Methodology for a more detailed description of the dimensions.

Results

Overall, the findings provide evidence that SOS Children’s Villages has had a positive impact on the lives of the children who participated in the programme.

1 Individual level



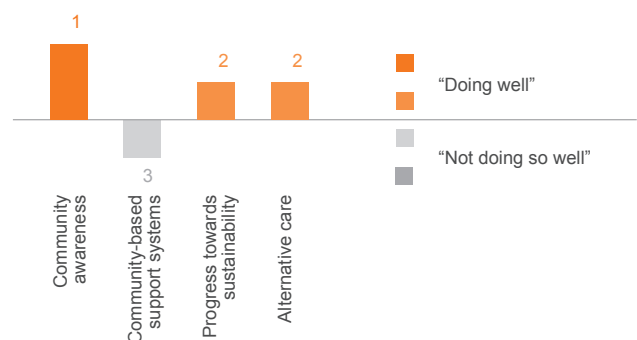
The findings show that former programme participants - of both family strengthening and family-like alternative care - are generally doing well in all eight well-being dimensions. More specifically, 90% of former participants of family-like alternative care are performing well in at least 6-of-the-8 dimensions. They are doing particularly well in terms of protection and social inclusion, food security and physical health. They are doing less well in the dimensions of education and skills (63% doing “well”) and livelihood (67% doing “well”). It is interesting to note that while the average income of former participants is high compared to the lower income quintile in the country and they have done well in terms of educational achievements, it has been difficult for them to find stable employment for the first couple of years after exiting the programme. This is to some extent related to the fact that former participants were somewhat sheltered from the harsher realities of independent life while in the programme and found the transition period more challenging. In addition, it can take some years to find stable employment for recent graduates. Nevertheless, findings have shown that the former participants with a university degree have a lower unemployment rate than university graduates in Abidjan.

In the case of family strengthening, 77% are doing well in at least 6-of-the-8 dimensions. Importantly, all children are still in the care of their families, indicating that the primary goal of strengthening the family to prevent family separation has been achieved. Former participants are also doing “well” in terms of their protection and social inclusion and physical health. While livelihood and education and skills is also a concern for family strengthening participants (53% doing “well”), accommodation was an additional dimension with room for improvement (53% doing “well”). Many families have structural issues with their accommodation, or live in very small spaces with inadequate sanitary and kitchen facilities.

Overall, stable employment is the biggest long-term challenge for former participants of both alternative care and family strengthening. Given the limited resources and assistance for vulnerable children that is available in Côte d’Ivoire, external evaluators noted that it is a positive achievement that more than half of the participants are doing well in both livelihood and education, since the large majority of former participants would likely have ended up, or remained, in the lowest income quintile (i.e. the poorest of the poor) without the programme.

2 Community level

Community awareness is seen to be relatively high. Stakeholders confirmed the existence of awareness of the situation of vulnerable children and their families in the community as well as clear ideas for how their situation



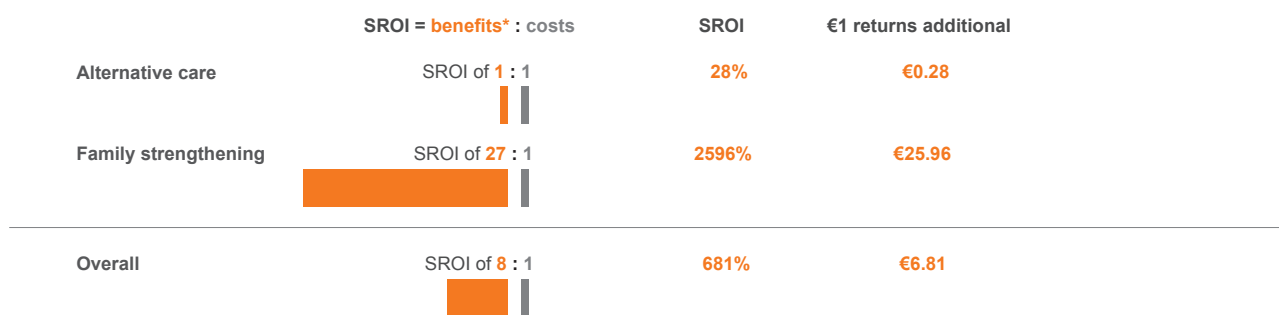
may be improved. The relevant community stakeholders are actively working together to take coordinated action to address the situation of vulnerable children and their families. However there is a lack of resources to address the full situation. Civic engagement to address the situation of vulnerable children and families does not seem to exist as such, neither as collective nor individual action. Rather, the situation is addressed through the widespread and more general practice of sharing food and other resources with others.

SOS Children's Villages is closely working with three community-based organisations (CBOs), and it is ac-

knowledged that more capacity building measures are still needed, in order to be able to sustain activities if SOS Children's Villages withdrew its support.

Interviews with key stakeholders and SOS staff suggest that the number of children placed in alternative care is stable compared to before the SOS programme started in Abobo, however, the number of children in need of alternative care is increasing, which may be due to the fact that the number of places in alternative care is not increasing at the same speed. The remaining two dimensions on giving and volunteering and next generation benefits were included in the SROI calculation below.

3 Social return on investment (SROI)



*The value of benefits was rounded to the closest integer.

In **alternative care**, there is a benefit-cost ratio of 1.28:1 which means that an investment of €1 yields benefits worth €1.28. The programme has an SROI of 28% which means that an investment of €1 returns an additional €0.28 on top of the initial cost. In **family strengthening**, there is a benefit-cost ratio of 26.96:1 which means that an investment of €1 yields benefits worth €26.96. The programme has an SROI of 2596% which means that an investment of €1 returns an additional €25.96 on top of the initial cost.

The **overall** benefit-cost ratio is 7.81:1, which means that an investment of €1 yields benefits to society of €7.81. The programme has an overall SROI of 681%, which means that an investment of €1 returns an additional €6.81 on top of the initial cost.

It should be noted that a meaningful comparison cannot be made between the SROI figures for family strengthening and family-like alternative care. The participants in each

service have different starting points and levels of vulnerability. Children entering family-like alternative care lack appropriate care and are particularly disadvantaged. A higher investment in these children including more intense direct support services over a longer period of time is needed. The average duration of stay of former participants in the programme was 20 years, meaning that the organisation invested a larger amount of resources over more than a decade to support these children in every aspect of their development. Had these children not been supported, there would most likely be a cost to society, negatively impacting on the next generation of children and societal benefits. Thus a higher SROI with family strengthening is to be expected; the children in family strengthening live with their families and the organisation provides supporting services for these families over a shorter period of time. On average, a family received family strengthening services for 4 years.

The way forward

In general, the results in alternative care and family strengthening show that the programme is having a significant impact on children, their families and communities. However, the results also reveal areas for improvement, that need to be further worked on and improved going forward. The main recommendations include:

Family-like alternative care

- SOS staff should continue to emphasize and encourage participants to pursue further education
- Programme participants should be better prepared for the transition towards independence. In this regard, peer support could be considered as well as activities that foster entrepreneurial and employability skills of young people
- Develop initiatives to promote social interactions between SOS families and the community, to improve social inclusion
- Strengthen monitoring and evaluation of the socio-professional insertion initiative to improve its impact and identify strengths and weaknesses

Family strengthening

- Extend the enrolment time of family strengthening participants if in line with their goals towards reaching self-reliance
- Improve data collection on Income Generating Activities (IGAs) with a view to identifying strengths and weaknesses and improving the service
- Consider set-up of Savings and Loans Associations (SLA) as an additional component of caregiver support and empowerment
- Extend the socio-professional insertion initiative to family strengthening participants to further strengthen the impact and sustainability of family strengthening
- Provide additional capacity building to the CBOs

SOS Children's Village Abobo-Gare and SOS Children's Villages Côte d'Ivoire as a whole have incorporated the recommendations, learnings and areas for improvement into their planning for the future in order to improve programme quality and the impact of the programme on the lives of children, families and their communities.



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