

# THE CARE EFFECT

## WHY NO CHILD SHOULD GROW UP ALONE



SOS CHILDREN'S  
VILLAGES  
INTERNATIONAL



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SHOULD  
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ALONE**



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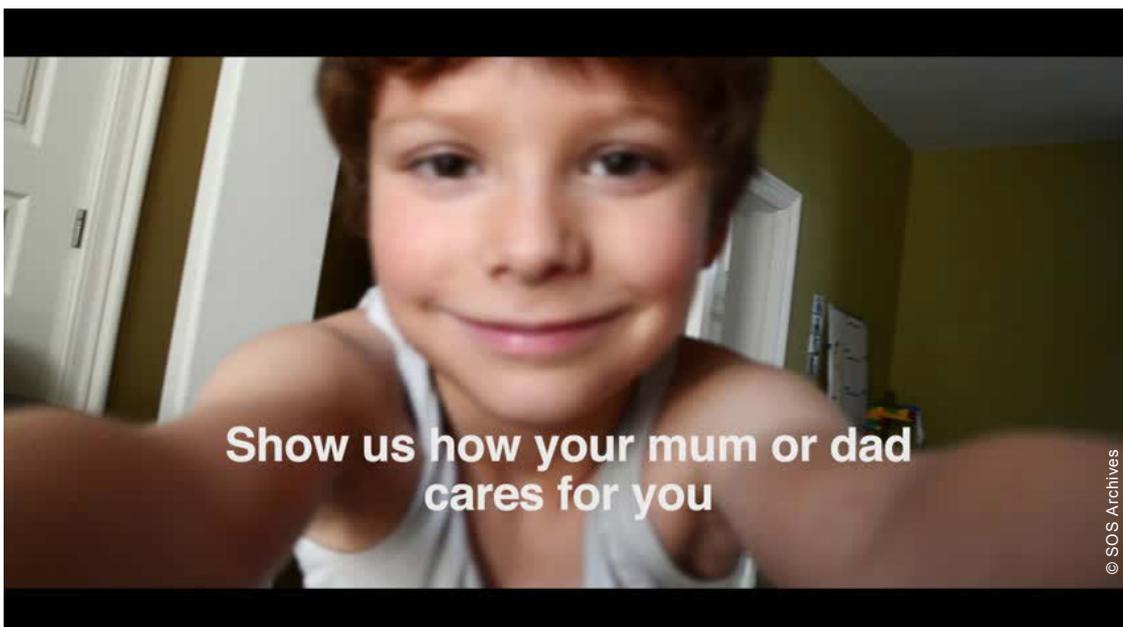
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# SUMMARY

**A** new campaign by SOS Children's Villages, launched on Universal Children's Day, makes the claim that 1 in 10 children grows up alone. Where does that number come from, and what is so bad about growing up "alone"?

This paper runs through the data leading us to that number and argues that ensuring quality parental care for the 220 million children in vulnerable circumstances (about 1 in 10 of the more than two billion children in the world) is one of the best investments the global community can make. Many communities throughout the world are facing downward spirals of poverty, poor health, violence, exploitation, and despair, placing strains on state welfare budgets and global development efforts. Violence against children is shown to have huge economic costs.

But ensuring that children do not grow up alone – that they have someone to take them to school or the health centre, to bond with, and to support them emotionally from cradle to career – can help stop the downward spiral. To meet the ambitious objectives in the Sustainable Development Goals (including the commitment to "leave no one behind"), and to protect rights guaranteed in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, the global community really must focus efforts on ensuring that no child grows up alone.



# INTRODUCTION

Every year, 20 November is celebrated as “Universal Children’s Day”, marking the anniversary of the adoption in 1989 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. The day is often met with an array of proclamations calling for the world’s governments to do a better job of ensuring that they protect the many rights for children that the convention promised.

No other human rights treaty has so many signatures (every UN member except for the USA has ratified it), reflecting the fact that little else seems to unite the world so much as the belief that if we are to call ourselves a civilised planet, innocent and defenceless children must be protected.

The convention places the best interests of the child at its centre, with articles establishing children’s rights to:

- Live with a family that cares for them
- Live in a safe and clean environment
- Have nutrition and healthcare
- Be educated
- Play and rest
- Choose their own friends
- Give their opinion, and for adults to listen and take it seriously

In short, children have a right to have all they need to grow and develop. They have a right to be cared for. However, look around and we see a disconnect between those rights and the reality. We see, for example:

- Children living in unregulated or institutional care settings
  - Children falling through the cracks of welfare systems, being exposed to exploitation such as trafficking, child labour, or prostitution
  - Child abuse neglect and abandonment
  - Families unable to provide care because of disease such as HIV/AIDS
  - Child refugees who are separated from their families and are alone in dangerous environments
-



In particular, children without parental care are most likely to experience rights violations such as poverty and exclusion, poor physical and mental health, lack of access to education and basic services, high youth unemployment, and high levels of violence and neglect.

Ultimately, there is a financial cost for society as well. Breakdown of parental care can result in costs to government and strain on public services – burdens that are perpetuated in subsequent generations.

So it is right that every year on Universal Children's Day we stop and consider why it is, given that governments have made these commitments when they signed the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, children are in such a perilous position.

With this global commitment to child rights as the backdrop, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), adopted in September 2015, set out 17 objectives to achieve by 2030 – ranging from eliminating poverty and hunger, to ensuring health and education, to reducing inequalities and harmful environmental impact. These global goals were accompanied by a pledge

to “leave no one behind”, recognising that the previous development agenda (the Millennium Goals, which ran 2000-2015) failed in some instances to help the worst off.

But in a world where so many children are living in vulnerable circumstances, without adequate parental care and no one to turn to, ensuring that no child is left behind is a huge challenge. In 2016, governments of the world's wealthier countries spent more than \$140 billion in development assistance. This is a phenomenal investment, demonstrating a will to tackle the problems, but we need a strategy to focus efforts. For if we as a global community do not find a way to stop the cycle of self-perpetuating social problems we are encountering, then not only will we fail to meet the SDGs, but we will land future generations with ever increasing burdens. This paper proposes that such a strategy must focus on a simple concept: care.

# ASSESSING THE CHALLENGE: The most vulnerable children

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Few would deny that the global community is facing some pretty stiff challenges. Headlines of natural disasters, military conflict, refugees' flight, discrimination and repression, youth unemployment and radicalisation, severe poverty, disease and malnutrition all earn our attention and sympathies.

SOS Children's Villages has particular expertise and depth of experience in working with children without, or at risk of losing, parental care. These are amongst the world's most vulnerable and marginalised. This effort has, over our nearly 70 years, attracted the support of numerous partners who agree that it is both a moral imperative and a logical course of action that we focus global development efforts on and investment in this particularly vulnerable population – those most likely to be left behind. But just how big is the challenge?

## Estimating the scale

An analysis by SOS Children's Villages has estimated that one in ten children worldwide has lost – or is at risk of losing – parental care. That is just a conservative estimate. There is not a lot of data available that tells us just how many children are growing up without the support of a caring parent.

Numerous factors may contribute to putting children in vulnerable circumstances:

- **Death of a parent** – affecting 140 million children according to UNICEF (2016), with at least 13 million of those having lost both parents
- **Poor health of parents** – for example, HIV/AIDS significantly detracts from parents' capacity to care for children, economically and otherwise
- **Poverty** – according to UNICEF (2016), 385 million children are living in extreme poverty
- **Teenage pregnancy or childbirth out of wedlock** – UNICEF estimates that by 2030 about 750 million women will have been married as children
- **Disabilities** – affecting 93 million children according to UNICEF
- **Lack of birth registration** – 230 million children have never been registered (UNICEF 2013 figures)
- **Refugee status** – with half of the world's 60 million refugees being children according to the UNHCR
- **Living in alternative care** – many of the world's 8 million children living in alternative care are thought to be in unregistered institutions

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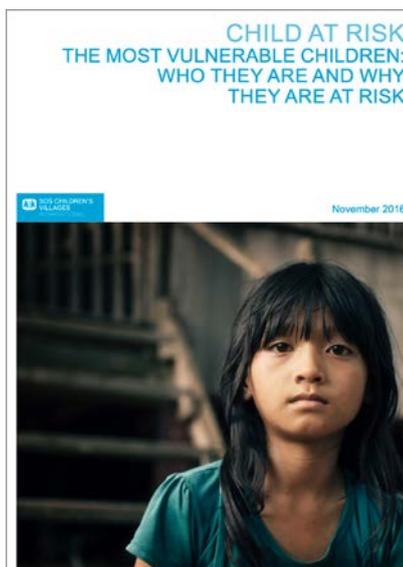


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That doesn't mean that all of those children are "at risk" of losing care. For example, many children of one-parent families and those who live with their extended family can thrive, if that parent or caregiver has the right resources, support and attitude. So it is not possible simply to add up all the numbers and come up with a total. However, taking all of the above factors into consideration in the round, SOS Children's Villages conservatively estimates that about 220 million children could be without parental care, or are at risk of losing it. This represents about one in ten of the total two billion children world-wide.

More can be found in the SOS Children's Villages Child at Risk Report available online.



## CHILD AT RISK

### The Most Vulnerable Children - Who They Are and Why They Are at Risk

This publication gives an overview of the factors that place children in situations of extreme vulnerability and put them at risk of having to live without appropriate parental care.

<https://www.sos-childrensvillages.org/what-we-do/quality-care/child-at-risk>

## Future demographics

At the same time as we're fighting *existing* global problems, new ones will appear on the horizon that will place greater pressures on today's children. Take, for example, global demographics. We know that the world's population as a whole is growing older while in regions like sub-Saharan Africa there is a "youth bulge" – 65% of the populace is age 25 and under.

In sub-Saharan Africa, the challenge of harnessing the talent of youth lies ahead. Young people need both the employment opportunities and the employability skills to join the workforce and have sustainable careers. This not only ensures their success today, but also is a major contribution to ensuring that their own children can grow in a stable family.

Additionally, on a global level, as the UN reported in 2015, the population ageing "is poised to become one of the most significant social transformations of the twenty-first century, with implications for nearly all sectors of society". The UN estimates that by 2030, the number of people in the world aged 60 years or over will grow by 56 per cent, to 1.4 billion, and the number of people aged 80 years or over will triple to about 434 million. Simply put, older persons will outnumber children aged 0-9 years. To tackle this requires a productive and stable workforce.

Governments therefore need to consider how today's children and young people can step up when they are of working age – whether it's to shoulder a bigger burden or to engage in economic productivity. The quality of their lives and that of their children, along with the well-being of their elders, depends on this.

But there are some worrying indications that today's youngest children – tomorrow's adults – are not receiving the opportunities to develop that they need. A 2014 UNICEF publication suggests that more than 200 million children under five years old will not reach their potential because they are growing up with a range of risk

factors. New approaches are needed to shepherd children from cradle to career.

## Meeting global goals

It's important that we get a deeper understanding of the numbers in order to guide global development efforts.

As many as 14 out of the total 17 Sustainable Development Goals directly or indirectly relate to children's needs and rights. These range from ending poverty and violence, to ensuring universal access to services such as education, health, social protection, employability, and birth registration.

These came with a pledge to "leave no one behind". But the world community is also discovering that there is a lack of data available on the portion of the population that is most likely to be left behind – those without or at risk of losing parental care. Many children without adequate parental care simply are not counted by their governments, and so they are essentially "invisible".

From the perspective of developing policy and measuring performance, this is a disaster. Given the lack of data, governments do not have the necessary information to understand the extent of the problems they are responsible for solving. Further information is in the SOS Children's Villages report, [The Care of Children in Data](#):

**THE CARE OF CHILDREN  
IN DATA**  
EVIDENCE, GAPS AND OPPORTUNITIES  
FOR CHANGE IN THE SDGS



Children and young people growing up outside of their family environment remain virtually invisible in official statistics, leaving governments without the necessary information to tackle the challenges they face. The paper describes problems and solutions to

achieve a real data revolution for these children.

<https://www.sos-childrensvillages.org/publications/publications/sustainable-development>

# BREAKING THE CYCLE:

## Care from cradle to career

The global challenges facing children may seem overwhelming. But a key part of the solution involves ensuring that children have the care and support they need from birth until they are fully ready to live independently. Providing decent, quality care for children who are living in vulnerable circumstances is not a “nice to do”; it’s an *imperative* if we are to meet global goals.

This critical role of care for children is backed by scientific learnings and respected economic insight. Moreover, it is just plain logical. Despite numerous initiatives in our global development efforts – for example, in healthcare, education, employability, and maternal support, among many others – such support services could all be in vain if they are not accessible to those who need them the most. Care – which may be provided by a parent, relative, or other caregiver – is critical for linking children with the available support services and for ensuring that the child grows up with the fundamental capabilities to become an independent adult.

### Ensuring quality care options

Given that governments are obliged under the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child to ensure appropriate alternative care for children who need it, it is vital that organisations such as SOS Children’s Villages advocate with governments to focus on these obligations and work in partnership to fulfil them. This includes supporting

efforts to strengthen families to prevent the loss of care, as it is usually in the best interests of children to remain in their family of origin. The principle that children should be placed in alternative care only when necessary is also a central tenet of the UN Guidelines for the Alternative Care of Children, approved by UN members in 2009.

Unfortunately, the reality is that it is not always possible to prevent the loss of parental care. And when the family is not able to provide appropriate care, we must also ensure an alternative response – one which must be suitable to the individual needs and demonstrably in the best of interests of the individual child.

Ensuring suitable care therefore requires a range of quality alternative care options. Family-like care, such as that provided in SOS families, is often particularly appropriate for children who are truly alone – those who face the urgent need for attention and support and who are unlikely to be able to be placed back with their biological families in the near future. Other options such as foster care or small group homes should also be in the mix. Such options must allow for dedicated caregivers to engage and form familial bonds with children as they grow and develop. Large-scale residential facilities that do not provide the necessary personalised care and attention that family-based or family-like environments provide cannot be considered suitable.

So these are the principles guiding governments, with the support of partner organisations, in their response to the large number of children at risk.

But a number of other needs are at play as well. The concept of “care” is not just providing food and shelter but ensuring all the rights of children in care – rights to health, education, participation and development. For young children in particular, suitable alternative care provision must take full account of the need to effectively promote early childhood development.

### Early intervention is valuable

It is never too late to help children, but research shows that the earlier the intervention, the greater the impact.

A 2016 study by the Center on the Developing Child at Harvard University provides a valuable overview of scientific understanding: our brains begin developing even before birth, and their very architecture is formed early. The brain’s neural connections begin developing immediately, progress over time, and form the foundation for how we learn and function – and who we are. And while it’s never too late to learn and adapt, it becomes tougher the older we get. As the Harvard Center notes, “building more advanced cognitive, social and emotional skills on a weak foundation is far more difficult and less effective than getting things right from the beginning”.

### What’s clear also is that children can’t develop *alone*

From a very early age, babies seek interaction with the adults who care for them. They make facial expressions and other gestures; they babble. And if adults do not reciprocate, or respond in an inappropriate way, “the child’s developing brain may be disrupted, and later learning, behaviour, and health may be impaired”.

This long-term impact is because the brain needs to develop progressively, with basic functions being necessary to develop more complex ones subsequently. Essentially, the brain’s architecture needs to be built from the ground up.

It’s not just about intellectual development; a child’s early years also have a long-term impact on emotional resilience, which is essential to coping in a difficult world. And here, parental care plays a role. As the World Health Organisation states: “Warm and responsive caregiving is now known to extend some protection to children in otherwise adverse situations.” In other words, merely providing warmth and interaction has great powers in helping children in vulnerable circumstances.

And as the Harvard Center explains, the benefits of a stable parental relationship include not just providing a “buffer” against adversity but also helping children build practical skills in managing it. Positive support, combined with the building of coping skills, forms the basis for this concept of resilience.



## Young people need care, too

There is growing recognition that continued support for the child throughout adolescence is critical for helping young people make the transition to independence and productive adult life. Making the transition to independence is difficult for any young person, but for those growing up in alternative care or without strong parental care – those who are likely not to have the family networks to support them – the challenge is multiplied.

Access to education, job training and employment opportunities are certainly foundational elements for young people to be able to join the workforce and achieve self-sufficiency. But SOS Children's Villages research has shown that young people in vulnerable circumstances need more than just these foundational elements. They need holistic life skills, from the basics of personal hygiene and appearance, to the social competencies of self-discipline and commitment. This sort of learning through care is critical to helping young people understand how to prepare themselves physically and mentally for the world of work. It also helps them to build social support networks that can give them a helping hand and open doors as they navigate the path to independence.

None of this is simple or so-called common sense. It is what young people learn together with caregivers, siblings, friends and family. It is not something that can be learned alone.

## Why care is a smart investment

The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child establishes that children have an inherent right to the conditions that allow them to grow and develop. This isn't just a right; it also makes economic sense.

The concept that care from cradle to career is a smart investment has been made well by James

Heckman, a Nobel Laureate economist. Heckman argues that in order to tackle broader social problems, society must:

1. Invest in educational and developmental resources for what he calls “disadvantaged families”
2. Nurture early development of cognitive and social skills in children from birth to age five
3. Sustain development with education through to adulthood

The result, he argues, is “a more capable, productive and valuable workforce” which will benefit society for generations to come.

The logic is compelling. Consider the contrast of two scenarios: one in which children grow up without adequate parental care, and one in which they receive the benefits of the investment in early childhood development.

When children grow up without quality care, there is a risk that society may have to bear certain costs, including:

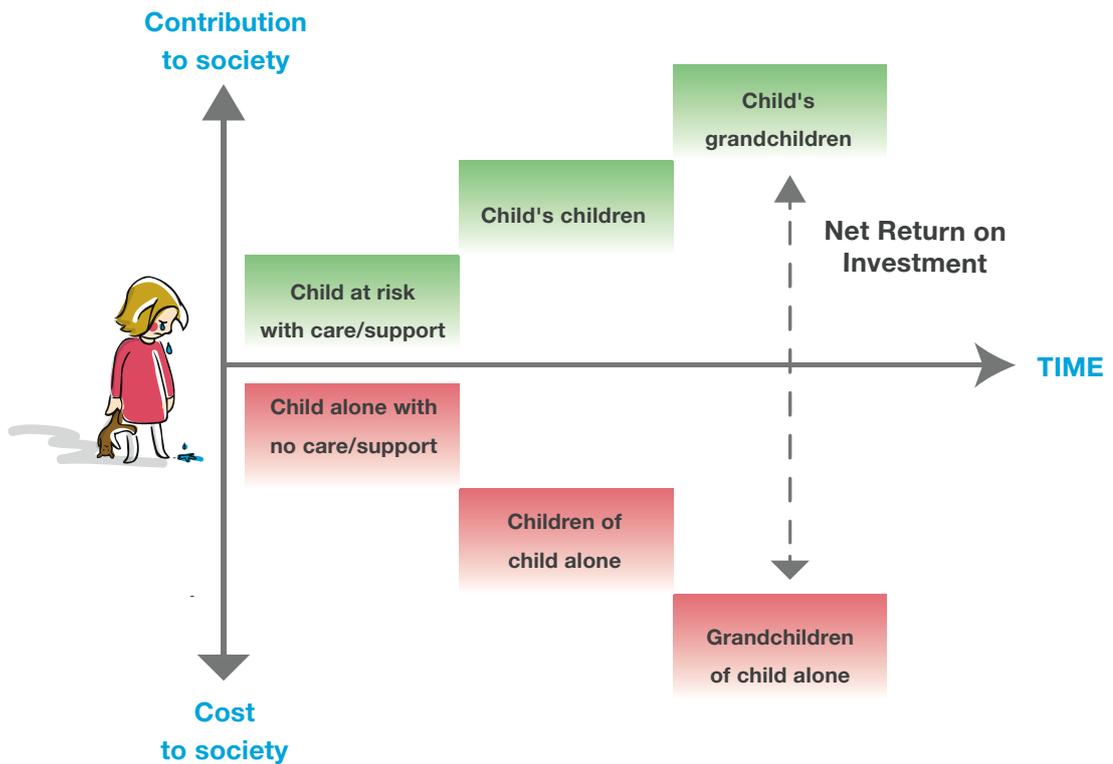
- Loss of economic productivity in their adulthood – including for example a lack of financial input into the tax system
- Welfare grants/ income subsidy
- Healthcare for preventable diseases
- Crime – both in terms of the cost of the crime itself and the demands on the criminal justice system

A 2014 report by the Overseas Development Institute shows that violence against children costs society \$7 trillion annually. And in the USA alone, the annual cost of child abuse, including health care, child welfare, correctional services and lost productivity and income, is \$124 billion.

On the other hand, when children receive care and attention, they can flourish and develop. And in the longer term each of those costs is turned on its head and becomes a benefit to society.

A 2009 Harvard University study estimated that there would be a return of \$4-9 for every \$1 invested in quality early childhood programmes. And James Heckman's research specifically on early education for under-five-year-olds shows a 13% return on investment.

So the net return looks like this:



Compare the two scenarios above, and although the scenarios presented are exaggerated for the purposes of illustration, you see two drastically different trajectories and a clear financial return to society over time.

And consider that at any given point in time, we are at the beginning of those trajectories, before any downward spiral. Of course, there is nothing we can do to go back in time and restore to yesterday's children the care that they did not receive. And we should not say that if children do not receive the care they need in their earliest years it is not worth trying to help them. Of course it is. However, looking forward, if we invest in today's children, we can stop the downward trajectory. We can break the cycle.



# THE CARE EFFECT:

## A strategy for development

As described in previous sections, too many children are growing up without basic parental care. They are not given the care they need to develop.

They are essentially growing up alone.

This use of the word “alone” is often figurative, not literal. It is not always a case of literally being alone. To say that no child should grow up alone, we are really saying that children need a caring family environment.

According to the Harvard Center, “Severe neglect appears to be at least as great a threat to health and development as physical abuse—possibly even greater.” And with all the disadvantages that follow with it, there is little exaggeration in identifying growing up alone as the worst possible scenario for a child.

It’s not just about having people around. It’s about being listened to. It’s about having a supportive community and friends. It’s about feeling connected. It’s about knowing – just knowing – that you’ve got someone who cares for you. Children need these things. And children who don’t have them – children who, for example, cannot answer the question “How do you know your parent cares for you?” – often struggle to succeed as adults, if indeed they grow up at all.

When children grow up “alone” – that is to say, without the love, care, and support of a caregiver – their brains do not develop properly. They may not acquire certain language or problem-solving

skills that are essential building blocks for their future education.

Children and young people who suffer from lack of sufficient care are more prone to depression and substance abuse later on. They do less well at school. They have a higher rate of attempted suicide. They struggle with focusing and developing social skills. They do not develop the resilience to cope with inevitable adversity.

They are more likely to experience health issues, and less likely to access the public support systems that are guaranteed to them under the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

The harmful effects include costs to society. Children who are unable to learn, mature and develop life skills have a harder time finding jobs and becoming participating and contributing members of society. If later in life they become parents, they may not know how to give their own children the stimulation and support they need to develop, so the harmful effects may be passed on to the next generation.

Subsequent generations of individuals who struggle to hold down jobs, who may be prone to substance abuse or crime, or who may experience chronic health issues, may add to the strain on state health and welfare systems.

But we can break that cycle.

A key element is quality care for the child at risk of growing up alone. Here's how it *ought* to work:

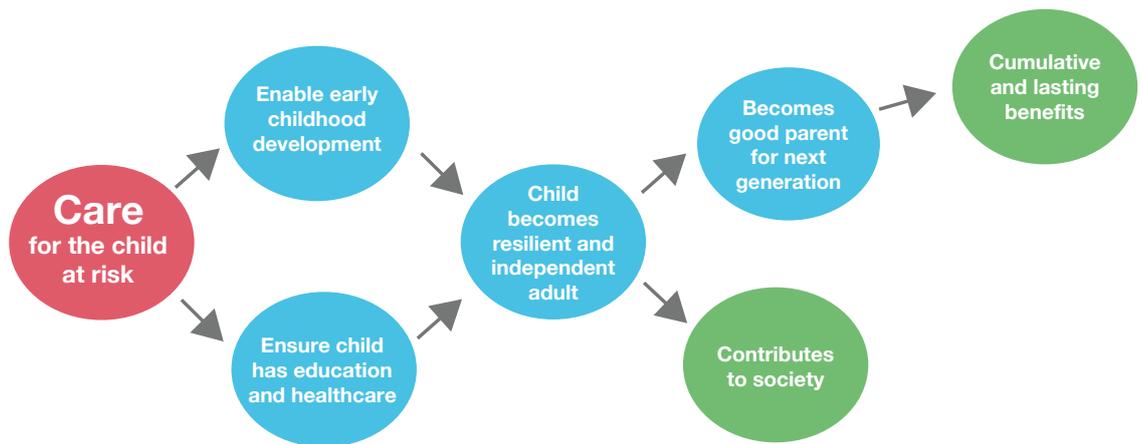
Through early interaction and support from a caregiver, children's brains develop progressively. In their early years, they develop language and basic social skills.

Their caregivers ensure that they go to school. They develop communication, problem-solving and other employable skills. They learn how to focus and concentrate, set personal goals, follow rules, collaborate, and control impulses. They develop determination, resilience and a growth mindset.

Their caregivers also ensure they take advantage of available healthcare services such as vaccinations and benefit from other community support. If support systems are not available, they know how to stand up for their rights

A stable and secure family helps children develop social networks, and when they become adults they find jobs, pay taxes, and contribute in other ways to the community.

They are then in a position to become good parents and create stable homes for their own children. The investment in care has a multiplying effect. And so the cycle progresses upwards: generation after generation of individuals who, from birth, receive enriching care, flourish, and realise their potential.



SOS Children's Villages sees this dynamic every day in the children who become successful adults and members of society, and some examples of this long-term impact are documented in the report, *Impact Insights: Results of social impact assessments in seven programme locations*, which is available online [here](#).

It all starts from the essential attention, stimulation and sense of belonging and connection provided by a caregiver. An investment in care for the child at risk of growing up alone makes the world a better place. That is the *Care Effect*.

# CONCLUSION

SOS Children's Villages says that no child should grow up alone. This is intuitive, perhaps obvious. Somehow we simply *know* that a child has a right to a loving family, and a right just to be a child. There is an inherent value in childhood, which must be protected.

But it is logical and backed by research which shows that investment to ensure that all children have quality care is an integral part of solving the world's larger social problems. Essentially, if we provide care for today's children in vulnerable circumstances, giving

them the foundation they need for learning and developing life skills, we stand a better chance of meeting the global goals and building a better future for the world.

As a global community, we need to unite around this priority. All the money we spend on programmes to provide education, healthcare, justice, and other very worthy causes, may be in vain if children in vulnerable circumstances do not have caregivers to make sure they can actually benefit from those other services.

## How can we make this happen?

- Support efforts to hold governments to account for obligations under the Convention on the Rights of the Child. They can do this by consistently applying the principles and provisions laid out in the UN Guidelines on the Alternative Care of Children.
- Development aid strategies should prioritise care for children, without parental care or at risk of losing it making the investment that will benefit all in future generations.
- Everyone working within child welfare systems (including governmental agencies, companies and charities) can work together to infuse the child care sector with greater professionalism. This includes making sure that standards for recruitment and professional development recognise the huge global benefits of quality care from cradle to career.

SOS Children's Villages responds to the global challenges by focusing on applying its unique expertise in providing family-like care to helping the 1 in 10 children who have lost or are at risk of losing parental care.

Ensuring quality care for children who have lost, or are at risk of losing, parental care is a fundamental right and need – upon which all other efforts to make the world a better place must build. **The core solution is care. That is the care effect.**

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This provides a valuable overview of scientific understanding of how children's brains develop and how support programmes can be tailored accordingly.

"No matter what form of hardship or threats may have been experienced, the single most common research finding is that children who end up doing well have had at least one stable and responsive relationship with a parent, caregiver, or other adult. These relationships provide the support, scaffolding, and protection that both buffer children from developmental disruptions and help build key capabilities – such as the ability to plan, regulate behaviour, and adapt to changing circumstances – that enable them to respond to adversity and thrive. In other words, positive experiences, supportive relationships and adaptive skills build the foundation of what is commonly known as *resilience*."

Harvard Centre on the Developing Child, *Five numbers to remember about early childhood development* (2009)

<https://developingchild.harvard.edu/resources/five-numbers-to-remember-about-early-childhood-development/>

"Providing young children with a healthy environment in which to learn and grow is not only good for their development—economists have also shown that high-quality early childhood programs bring impressive returns on investment to the public. Three of the most rigorous long-term studies found a range of returns between \$4 and \$9 for every dollar invested in early learning programs for low-income children. Program participants followed into adulthood benefited from increased earnings while the public saw returns in the form of reduced special education, welfare, and crime costs, and increased tax revenues from program participants later in life."

James Heckman, website

<https://heckmanequation.org/>

"The highest rate of return in early childhood development comes from investing as early as possible, from birth through age five, in disadvantaged families. Starting at age three or four is too little too late, as it fails to recognize that skills beget skills in a complementary and dynamic way. Efforts should focus on the first years for the greatest efficiency and effectiveness."

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"All children have the right to live and thrive in a safe and caring family environment, free from all forms of violence. However, millions of children throughout the world face abuse, neglect, exploitation and violence every day of their lives, and in different settings such as their homes, schools, communities and work environments."

SOS Children's Villages International, *The Care of Children in Data: Evidence, gaps and opportunities for change in the SDGs* (2017)

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"A lesson learnt from the expired Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) is that implementation efforts are likely to bring no gains for marginalised groups if the specific challenges that they face are not recognised and addressed – the poorest 5% made no progress at all between 1999 and 2008. Therefore, the identification of children in vulnerable situations and understanding of the determinants of their vulnerability through disaggregated data is critical to know who is missing on progress and prevent short fallings towards the SDGs. However, data and statistics available in national and international statistical systems are still limited or poor for over half of the child-related SDG global monitoring indicators, leaving governments without the necessary information to tackle the obstacles of vulnerable and marginalised children."

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Analysis of risk factors and available data.

SOS Children's Villages Norway, *In the Blind Spot* (2016)  
<https://www.sos-barnebyer.no/om-oss/policies/rapport-in-the-blind-spot>

This paper draws on a number of sources in describing the risk factors that often lead to children losing parental care and in demonstrating the costs to society.

UNICEF “Care for Child Development Package”

[https://www.unicef.org/earlychildhood/index\\_68195.html](https://www.unicef.org/earlychildhood/index_68195.html)

“Globally over 200 million children do not reach their developmental potential in the first 5 years of life because they live in poverty, and have poor health services, nutrition and psycho-social care. These disadvantaged children do poorly in school and subsequently have low incomes, high fertility, high criminality, and provide poor care for their own children.”

UNICEF, *Early Childhood Development: a statistical snapshot* (2014)

[http://data.unicef.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/12/ECD\\_Brochure\\_2014\\_197.pdf](http://data.unicef.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/12/ECD_Brochure_2014_197.pdf)

“Over 200 million children under 5 years of age in low- and middle-income countries – and increasing numbers in OECD countries and emerging economies – will face inequalities and fail to reach their full developmental potential because they grow up with a broad range of risk factors. These include, most notably, poverty; poor health, including malnutrition and infection with HIV; high levels of family and environmental stress and exposure to violence, abuse, neglect and exploitation; and inadequate care and learning opportunities.”

United Nations, Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989)

[https://downloads.unicef.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2010/05/UNCRC\\_united\\_nations\\_convention\\_on\\_the\\_rights\\_of\\_the\\_child.pdf?\\_ga=2.47626660.223815038.1505322596-928445614.1505322596](https://downloads.unicef.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2010/05/UNCRC_united_nations_convention_on_the_rights_of_the_child.pdf?_ga=2.47626660.223815038.1505322596-928445614.1505322596)

United Nations, *GENERAL COMMENT No. 7 (2005); Implementing child rights in early childhood*

<http://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/crc/docs/AdvanceVersions/GeneralComment7Rev1.pdf>

This document confirms that the Child Rights Convention should be interpreted to say that the conditions for early childhood development are guaranteed as a right.

“Babies and infants are entirely dependent on others, but they are not passive recipients of care, direction and guidance. They are active social agents, who seek protection, nurturance and understanding from parents or other caregivers, which they require for their survival, growth and well-being....

Under normal circumstances, young children form strong mutual attachments with their parents or primary caregivers. These relationships offer children physical and emotional security, as well as consistent care and attention. Through these relationships children construct a personal identity and acquire culturally valued skills, knowledge and behaviours. In these ways, parents (and other caregivers) are normally the major conduit through which young children are able to realize their rights.”

United Nations, *Toward a World Free from Violence* (2013)

[http://www.un-ilibrary.org/children-and-youth/toward-a-world-free-from-violence\\_2442f8ad-en](http://www.un-ilibrary.org/children-and-youth/toward-a-world-free-from-violence_2442f8ad-en)

A good source of statistics about children at risk.

United Nations, *World Population Ageing 2015*

[http://www.un.org/en/development/desa/population/publications/pdf/ageing/WPA2015\\_Report.pdf](http://www.un.org/en/development/desa/population/publications/pdf/ageing/WPA2015_Report.pdf)

“...virtually every country in the world is experiencing growth in the number and proportion of older persons in their population. Population ageing—the increasing share of older persons in the population—is poised to become one of the most significant social transformations of the twenty-first century, with implications for nearly all sectors of society, including labour and financial markets, the demand for goods and services, such as housing, transportation and social protection, as well as family structures and intergenerational ties.”

World Health Organization, “The importance of caregiver-child interactions for the survival and healthy development of young children” (2004)

[http://www.who.int/maternal\\_child\\_adolescent/documents/924159134X/en/](http://www.who.int/maternal_child_adolescent/documents/924159134X/en/)

“Children whose care is disturbed or distorted in some way, are at risk of not receiving sufficient nutrition, being subjected to stress, not growing well, not being psychologically stimulated and of developing malnutrition. Warm and responsive caregiving is now known to extend some protection to children in otherwise adverse situations.”

Various, “All Children Count but not all Children Are Counted: An open letter to the UN Statistical Commission and Inter-Agency Expert Group on SDG Indicators” (2016)

<http://www.sos-childrensvillages.org/getmedia/0000cc92-a876-4032-81f8-6b590cb64278/All-children-count-but-not-all-children-are-counted-ENGLISH.pdf>

“Indeed, all children count, but not all children are counted. As a result, some of the world’s most vulnerable children – those without parental care or at risk of being so; in institutions or on the street; trafficked; separated from their families as a result of conflict, disaster or disability; or recruited into armed groups – have largely fallen off the UN’s statistical map. There are only limited data about how many children live in such precarious circumstances, except for scattered estimates from some specific countries.”

# THE CARE EFFECT

## WHY NO CHILD SHOULD GROW UP ALONE

