



## High-Level Political Forum

SDGs in focus: SDG 4 and Interlinkages with other SDGs - Quality Education

Wednesday, July 6, 2022

### SOS Children's Villages Statement

*Delivered by Nilay Tuncok, Advocacy Advisor, SOS Children's Villages International*

Thank you Madame Moderator for allowing me the floor. I am speaking on behalf of Together 2030 and my own organization SOS Children's Villages. Children who are vulnerable or marginalized, such as children without or at risk of losing parental care that SOS Children's Villages supports, have been disproportionately impacted by COVID-19 with disruptions to their learning.

Access to a quality and inclusive education does not only affect children's future, but also has long-lasting benefits for families, communities and society as a whole. With such high stakes, it is critical to bear in mind the following when governments and other stakeholders look towards recovering from the pandemic, while accelerating progress in education:

Firstly, policies and measures should be in place to ensure education is inclusive and child-centered. Cultural, social and financial barriers to accessing education should be tackled, including by removing discriminatory practices, providing family support to reduce poverty and fostering positive relationships in the home. In SOS Children's Villages, for instance in 2021, we reached more than 200,000 children, young people and adults through various education-related programmes.

Secondly, remembering the crosscutting nature of SDGs, we need to focus on digitalization and expand partnerships to help reduce disruptions in learning and increase vocational training opportunities. For instance, children without adequate parental care and care leavers are disproportionately disadvantaged as they do not have the continuing source of emotional, social and financial support as their peers transitioning into early adulthood and have to become economically independent at an earlier age. By working with private sector partners in our YouthCan! programme, we have supported more than 14,000 young people in 2021 with developing life skills and employability training and mentorships. During the pandemic, the digitalization of the program has helped expand reach and allow more young people to still have access to an online network, training opportunities and mentors.

Lastly, it is crucial for children to be included in all decision-making processes impacting their lives, and this includes having the opportunity to be meaningfully engaged in national consultations of the upcoming Transforming Education Summit. Through their first-hand experiences, children have the unique knowledge on what actions need to be taken to accelerate progress on SDG 4, so it is not only the right thing but smart thing to involve them in all these processes.

Thus, a whole of society approach is necessary to provide inclusive education for all children to develop their full potential and achieve Agenda 2030 overall. Thank you.