

SOS CHILDREN'S VILLAGES LITHUANIA

ANNUAL REPORT FOR 2015

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Learning how to cook



Learning how to cycle



Training for a summer job

Table of Contents

1 Section: Annual Report	2
1.1 Summary of SOS Children’s Villages Lithuania work in 2015	2
1.2 Time schedule for Major Events in 2016.....	5
2 Section: Statistics	6
2.1 List of Board Members:	6
3 Section: Facility Reports	7
3.1 SOS Children’s Village Vilnius Programme:	7
3.1.1 SOS Vilnius Village:.....	7
3.1.2 Vilnius Family Strengthening:.....	9
3.1.3 Vilnius Youth Facility/ Youth programme:.....	10
3.2 SOS CV South Lithuania Programme:	12
3.2.1 Varena Family Strengthening:.....	12
3.2.2 Alytus Family Strengthening:	12
3.3 SOS Children’s Villages Camp in Karkle	13

1 Section: Annual Report

1.1 Summary of SOS Children's Villages Lithuania work in 2015

2015 has been a year of changes and development. The country of Lithuania was in social turmoil due to public scandals of poor care in children care institutions, several were closed down or reorganised due to charges of child neglect, physical or emotional abuse. Though founded on good intentions, the D-I process has slowed under the lack of political legislation, pushed forward only by NGO's with SOS advocacy fighting for children's rights in Ministries, Parliament Committees and providing best practices for the President's Office.

The President of Lithuania has taken the lead for legislation and initiated a number of ground-breaking reforms for the Civil Code, limiting temporary care to 12 months and as importantly establishing a 3 months limit at the orphanage for the children until 3 years of age.

It has already taken a year for the Lithuanian parliament to discuss the changes for the Law on Fundamentals of Protection of the Rights of the Child and the law of Social Services, and both laws are still pending. Among many changes proposed, professional foster care is listed as an alternative to institutional care, one of the areas that SOS Lithuania advocacy has been fighting hard to keep in the law; we have also provided a framework of professional foster care to all governmental institutions, including the President's office as there is very little understanding of how professional foster care works and how it could be regulated. We are also fighting for the law to finally ban physical, emotional and psychological abuse against children, which even though Lithuania had approved the UN Convention for the Rights of the Child a decade ago was not implemented.

2015 ended with a tragedy, when an unstable father killed two of his children by throwing them into a freezing well. The tragedy revealed how inefficient are the prevention services for families at risk and how helpless are the children living in them. At the request of the President's office our organisation will be working with legislators to revise the family strengthening system in Lithuania, in order to protect children by offering timely and appropriate services to their families.

Unfortunately, the problem of children in families at risk is very grave, as Lithuania already has 1,7% children deprived of parental care, whilst the European average is 1%. In Lithuania, children constitute 19,4% from the estimated population of 2.9 mln and while the population is on a negative decline by 7% annually, the number of children deprived of parental care and families at social risk does not decline.

Children at social risk:

Social risk families & children	End of 2013	End of 2014	End of 2015
Number of families at social risk	10.228	9.909	9.768
Children in families at social risk	20.561	19.665	19.066

Children deprived of parental care:

Children deprived of parental care	End of 2013	End of 2014	End of 2015
Children without parental care	10.225	9.684	9.221
Children in institutional care	3.821	3.562	3.276
Children under 3 without parental care	796	606	729
Children under 3 in institutional care	N/A	404	359

Economically, the situation in Lithuania is stable and here is a comparative overview of the economy in numbers¹:

Measure	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Annual change in real GDP	11,1	2,8	-14,9	1,6	6,1	3,7	3,7	3,0	1,7
Annual change in inflation, %	8,1	8,5	1,3	3,8	3,4	2,8	0,4	-0,3	-0,1
Average monthly salary, EUR	594,3	671,7	613,5	614,4	629,9	646,4	677,8	714,5	735,1 (III Q)
Average unemployment rate, %	4,2	5,8	13,7	17,8	15,4	13,4	11,8	10,7	8,3 (III Q)

SOS Children's Villages Lithuania has developed several pilot projects in 2015 to answer the needs in municipalities and to be the flag bearer of new services and quality standards.

We have begun recruitment and training of foster parents under the agreement with Vilnius municipality to have integrated foster families as an alternative to institutional care. We hope this pilot project to be adopted by other municipalities as it ensures that integrated families under an umbrella organisation provide quality care for children very similar to SOS families.

SOS Vilnius village celebrated 20th anniversary and also expanded services by adding additional short term placement home as this services brings back 85% of children back to their families of origin, which makes SOS very unique. SOS families remain the positive constant, which we would be happy to expand, but are faced with difficulties in recruitment and long engagement of SOS mothers. Satisfaction and retention of SOS mothers is a priority as well as providing the best care for each child.

2015 witnessed the dedication of our Youth facility to motivate youth towards a career and of our youth from 16 were able to work during the summer thanks to a committed network of corporate partners. Throughout

¹ Source Department of Statistics of the Republic of Lithuania

the year all of our youth are studying or working towards their independent futures and Youth facility celebrated 15th year of anniversary.

At the end of 2015 we were privileged to be raising 85 children and youth.

Family strengthening services, where SOS takes full responsibility for families and becomes a social service provider to a municipality was another pilot, which we expanded on in 2015. Vilnius first, and then municipality of Varena region in the South of Lithuania chose SOS family strengthening to bring about positive changes in lives of families at risk. By the end of 2015 we see that our family strengthening teams have succeeded in positively changing lives for 50% of the families we are responsible for. Our work consists of family assessment, creation and implementation of the family strengthening plan, providing the necessary services and referring to community services.

Part of family strengthening is often a day centre, where children can be informally educated in life skills, social skills and learning skills. As part of an EEA grant SOS Lithuania opened a third day centre and now run one in Vilnius and two in South of Lithuania. We strongly believe that children attending day centres provide a mirror reflection of their life in families and enable us to offer the most appropriate service for individual families.

Overall, our family strengthening teams are now working with more than 150 families and more than 280 of their children.

The expansion of services has allowed SOS Lithuania create a second location, we are now present in Vilnius and South Lithuania and aim to expand to North West Lithuania. To ensure that we can be self-sustainable by 2020, SOS Lithuania revised its sustainable path strategy in 2015 and the overall goal is to offer services in municipalities which will be reforming orphanages for children under 3 to adhere to the changes in the Civil Code and thus expand our programs to 3 locations. An essential factor is the development of competences of our resources. At the end of 2015 we were a proud team of 82 employees, with 56 that are dedicated care co-workers. Ensuring engagement and retention of our team will be what leads to the successful fulfilment of our 2020 strategy.

Our overall income for 2015 was around 2.2 mln EUR. Our expenses for 2015 were covered by:

- 62%² was funded for services by municipal and governmental funds for programs,
- 23% raised by Fundraising including public funding,
- 15% came from SOS CV International.

The number of our corporate partners doubled and we are very grateful for their trust and support. We also saw a considerable growth in the number of people that chose to donate to SOS through via a 2% tax campaign and a variety of donation possibilities from donation boxes to donations via sms for special projects. It is very important that the number of committed givers, who donate monthly to SOS also doubled this year and we have over 600 people in our Friends club.

We extend a huge thank you to all our supporters, who make it possible for us to care for children daily.

Looking ahead main challenges are to implement integrated professional foster families and the legal framework in Lithuania. It is also important to ensure quality and unified standards for family strengthening and to have the necessary resources to provide the needed services for families. To ensure sustainable fundraising, finding successful ways to increase the base of committed givers is also one of the top priorities.

² 62% does not include public funding, because it was already included into SM F- AI (Fundraising gross income).

1.2 Time schedule for Major Events in 2016:

January	February	March
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NMT meeting • End of Performance evaluation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Board meeting • Child Safeguarding training • 4th review of 2014 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Brand Training for new employees • SOS Team Assembly
April	May	June
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1st review of 2016 • NMT meeting • SOS Baltic Finance meeting 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Financial audit • SOS Fundraising conference • AUDIT training • CEE/CIS HROD Conference 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Board meeting • CEE/CIS Conference National Directors • CEE/CIS Board Chairs & ND • Annual SOS CV Celebration
July	August	September
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2nd review of 2016 • NMT meeting 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CV youth transition to Youth facility 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Budget formation • Board meeting • Opening of Beehive
October	November	December
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strategic planning workshop 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3rd review of 2016 • NMT meeting 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Board meeting • Christmas Celebration in SOS CV

2 Statistics:

2.1 List of Board Members:

BOARD MEMBERS OF THE NATIONAL ASSOCIATION			
NAME OF NATIONAL ASSOCIATION		SOS CHILDREN'S VILLAGES ASSOCIATION OF LITHUANIA	Date 06.02.2015 Prepared
No.	Name of Board Member	Position	
1	Mrs. Eugenija Sutkiene	Chairwoman	
2	Mrs. Katrin Raie	member	
3	Mrs. Daiva Lialytė	member	
4	Mr. Gintautas Savarauskas	member	
Board member/contact person		Mrs. Eugenija Sutkiene	
Address:		Didžioji g. 23 Vilnius, Lithuania	
Tel.:		+ 370 5 251 44 45	

3 Facility Reports:

3.1 SOS Children's Village Vilnius Programme:

2015 has been a year of re-evaluation and commemoration for SOS Lithuania Children Village Vilnius Programme how to provide the best care for children. Our family based care was publicly acknowledged by the President of Lithuania as the best alternative for children who have lost parental care and we celebrated 20 years at SOS Village in Vilnius.

The family strengthening programme finally proved that NGO's can be successful partners for municipalities. This caught the momentum of municipal elections in Vilnius after which the liberal party decided to open a bid and invite NGO's to become service providers to more than 80% of families at social risk for 2016.

Our youth programme has had one of the most successful years in terms of work opportunities, where 100% of youth had jobs during summer holidays. We also saw the enthusiasm of youth entering first or final year of college education and the joy of a wedding of for one who had grown up in the SOS family world.

Very importantly, all our Vilnius programs were supported by timely payments from municipalities and government grants. With the help of our chairwoman, we have succeeded in legal proceedings where a municipality covered the outstanding costs, of almost 10 years, for the care of the children from their origin.

This is how we look in numbers at the end of 2015:

SOS CV Vilnius Programme	End of 2015
Children in SOS Vilnius Village and Youth facility	85
During 2015 Children in Short Term Placement ³	18
Families in Family Strengthening	88
Children from families in Family Strengthening	147

3.1.1 SOS Children's Village Vilnius:

SOS Vilnius Village aims to be recognised as community family based care which is a new concept under D-I. At present, we are still titled as institutional care facility, which under D-I does not have any quality standards, but must oblige to have only 60 children in one geographical location. Seemingly bureaucratic measure, has forced the President to intervene and during her visit on 1 June state that SOS Children's Village is an example and should not be limited to a number. As some care homes were closed down in Lithuania, it is becoming even more important to maintain the highest quality of care for our children with a truly loving and safe family life.

The types of services offered by Vilnius SOS Village have expanded in 2015. We decided to offer additional short term placement services for Vilnius municipality for which there is great demand, while we struggle to find SOS mothers. This became a particularly successful endeavour as we have safely returned 85% of children back to their families of origin. Vilnius municipality has also approved the financing of services for children with emotional and behavioural issues from Sept 2016 and we are now searching for a long time partner who would share the knowledge and train our team to run this service.

We are also on the doorstep of Foster care and will have the first families ready and trained to welcome children into their homes early 2016. SOS mothers are, of course, the living testimonies for future foster parents and we have been trying to determine how to best support SOS mothers and SOS aunts who keep the village running. The last three years have seen a significant exit of SOS mothers and SOS aunts which brought us to question the quality of our support.

³ Children in short term placement are not part of Strategic measures, however this service is becoming more important in Lithuania, and the return % of children to families of origin is what makes SOS CV Lithuania a unique services provider.

We brought in a new HR manager and hope to find a solution to this long term issue by attuning our support to individual needs of our SOS mothers, creating desirable conditions to motivate SOS aunts to SOS motherhood and encouraging foster care as a new model for family based care.

At the end of 2015, we had 60 child in Vilnius Children's Village. Throughout 2015 we had 18 children in two of our short term placement homes.

To best support our children we provide specialists whose help is needed for 70% of the children. We retain services of 7 different psychologists and psychotherapists to help heal the devastating childhood traumas, and emotional difficulties. Speech therapists and special pedagogues try to improve our children's' experience in nurseries and schools. All of the specialists' hours are generously paid by donations from corporate letter campaigns. One of the most successful therapies of the year is again canine therapy, which is financially supported by Mars and provided by trained psychologists.

As our children go to a variety of schools we are often faced with the educational system that has not changed in decades and is not ready to adapt school work to the needs of children. We are continuing our happy partnership with a volunteering organisation and in 2015 we had 26 volunteers with the specific task of assisting in school work, and we notice that often these young people are really motivating as they lead by example.

The main celebration of the year was the 20th anniversary, for which even the village homes prepared by undergoing renovations, insulating the foundations and replacement of terraces. Village homes also received a wonderful Christmas donation in shape of new boilers from BOSH.

2015 was the year to revisit the retirement of SOS mothers and we realised the financial challenges when faced with one of 6 mothers who are bound to retire from SOS after more than 20 years of dutiful service. We are honouring all of the retirement obligations according to the SOS standard; however a long term viable financial solution is yet to be found if pensions remain at the low level they are in Lithuania.

Family story / SOS families

To show what it means to grow up with an SOS mother, we have to share a story of Irena, who has been with SOS for a large part of her adult life, more than 20 years. When help is needed in the village her grown up boys come to volunteer, one of the men became a big brother to another SOS child who was going through a tough time as his parents had finally given up; most of her grown up children come back for family celebrations, and last summer one brought a fiancé for introductions. To help their SOS mother who is studying again, the grown up children help around the house and encouraged their SOS mom with a new computer as a gift. This SOS family is always in need of extra mattresses for Christmas and Easter as most of the grown up children come back to celebrate and reunite a family of 14 children.

3.1.2 Vilnius Family Strengthening Programme:

In times of hardship people do turn to families, and when families are at risk the times are hardest. It is possible that 2015 has been the hardest year for family strengthening in Vilnius and thankfully the dedication of the team stood the test of time.

It was the first full year where in the history of Lithuanian social work, an NGO became solely responsible for a designated number of families at social risk. In the case of capital city Vilnius, SOS Lithuania was assigned a territory, where it was determined that 68 families at social risk lived. Under the contract with municipality our team was charged to change lives for the better in 25% of those families. The funding from municipality covered about 60% of the costs.

Psychologists, addiction therapists and lawyers became the trinity essential to provide our families with appropriate services, and we will seek financing for them through our donors in 2016. Parents of our children happily joined group sessions for positive parenting and parenting skills training, our case managers provided more than 10.468 consultations and acted as intermediaries for our families. Our team has also collected more than 3000 food items in cooperation with Food bank and also received donations in kind from corporate partners. Our team and our families have a close cooperation, and we see that when families are proactive in coming to case managers for consultations and are willing to update without being asked.

Families in Family Strengthening	88
Children from families in Family Strengthening	147

Our aim and challenge for 2016 is to provide services for different groups of children, who are often stigmatised in schools because of their situation and often have no or very little choice of what to do with their life. Children's day centre is the mirror of family life and we are keeping it running with support from fundraising, so we can teach children personal hygiene, shower them when necessary, motivate them to study with a help of volunteers, show that life is full of adventure through camps and fun activities and provide material support with food packages, outside clothing and school materials. With support from EEA funding we renovated the Day Centre completely and trained day centre staff how to work with families.

Our report for the end of 2015 showed, that least 50% from all families are experiencing positive changes, which is double of what we promised to Vilnius municipality. For 2016 we are invited to participate in public tender to be responsible for 4 designated territories and 150 Vilnius families in total which is a huge challenge, but which our family strengthening team is looking forward to take.

Family Strengthening story

A story which best illustrates our commitment to families can be Vilma, whom we first saw in 2012 when she was allocated social housing and slept on the floor with her two children. Vilma's own childhood was full of devastation, as she remembers her mother drinking and father beating her up. Vilma's mother lost custody, leaving her in care of an aunt, however Vilma had to return to her father in high school, where she experienced repeated abuse and finally ran away.

As often in such stories, the girl meets a boy, Vilma became pregnant at 17, got married and had a daughter. Unfortunately, Vilma soon found herself in hospitals suffering from broken chest and numerous fractures, later psychiatric institutions due to addiction to painkillers and psychotropic drugs. Somewhere in between Vilma fell in love again and gave birth to a son, however family life was not meant to be and she

was out of a home again.

SOS case manager in social work met Vilma in this state and firstly helped with necessities like beds, linen, clothes, table and chairs. For two years SOS and Vilma battled with addiction and trying to keep the children safe. Several hospital stays later Vilma finally admitted herself to an addiction centre with the help of SOS team, unfortunately she had lost her children along the way.

It took 8 months to include Vilma into the register for families at social risk after which Vilma was entitled to support. Our long term dedication to Vilma encouraged her to take part in parental skills training at SOS, she then passed a training course to become a housekeeper at a hotel where she presently works. The state agreed to return her daughter and son to their mother, who has been working diligently, keeping sober and still working with SOS.

This story is one of many from our 88 families at social risk in Vilnius. Our aim is to start supporting families when the need arises, to prevent them going downhill and ending up at social risk. Our case management approach where the goal is to enable the client by finding resources, acting as intermediary and maintaining a respectful and encouraging relationship is a novelty in Lithuania.

3.1.3 Vilnius Youth Facility/ Youth programme:

The ever vibrant Youth programme went through a complete change in 2015. Children will only be encouraged to leave SOS Family at 16 if it is in their absolute best interest. On the whole children aged 18 will be accepted to Youth home. This means that services dedicated to training for independence need to be offered by youth team on continuous basis for teenagers who live in SOS families to help them make conscious decisions for their future.

SOS CV Vilnius Youth Programme	25 Youth
Studying in High schools	11
Studying in Professional schools	7
Studying in Universities/Colleges	5
Working	2

Youth staff have shifted gears to become more of a mentor/coach for our youth, rather than educational supervisor. The aim is to help our youth choose the future they want and have the skills to get there. Our corporate partner Statoil supported with jobs and motivational seminars throughout the year, while DHL decided to involve their own people to become mentors for our youth. One of our young girls had the opportunity to present the importance of corporate partnership of DHL in Brussels. We encouraged our youth to work during summer holidays, which they all did with the help of corporate partners.

2015 marked a 15 year anniversary for our Youth program which youth organised and celebrated by creating a unique logo for Youth facility and presenting the milestones of 15 years to partners and friends. There has been a lot of growing up in our Youth facility, youth are more focused toward their future, create and follow rules and usually call their own group meetings. Some are dedicating a lot of their effort in making a cosy home, others renovated the basement and turned it into gym.

Egle's story / Youth programme

Everybody in the Youth program including our team and most importantly SOS mother are most excited about Egle (name is changed) this year, who is going to graduate with a degree in psychology from an International university and also get married.

Egle grew up in SOS Village from a tiny age of 7 months; she calls her SOS mother the most important person in her life and is writing her bachelor thesis about the importance of growing up in a family atmosphere under the guidance of one main person.

After high school Egle joined semi-independent living program and became a student. Statoil partnership helped fund her tuition, and also provided a place of work for Egle, which enabled her to cover her costs of living. In 2015 Egle participated in student exchange summer working program in the USA and is now planning to be truly independent after graduation. Egle is diligent in pursuing her dreams and is continuously supported by our youth team, who have already started to look for job opportunities once Egle is ready for full time work.

3.2 SOS CV South Lithuania Programme:

South Lithuania saw the biggest development in services in 2015. Our services there are presently dedicated to Family Strengthening⁴ :

SOS CV South Lithuania Programme	2015
Children in Family strengthening	140
Families in Family strengthening	64

3.2.1 Varena Family Strengthening:

First of all, SOS Lithuania held a nationwide conference to end the 2 year Care4ME campaign in combination with EEA project the aim of which was to show how to transition to community services and offer a complete range of services to ensure safeguarding of children. One of the highlights in the conference was an introduction of Family conference method, which has captivated many social work specialists from different municipalities.

After the project Varena municipality decided to have a public tender for family strengthening services and SOS Lithuania became the first NGO to take full responsibility of 34 families and 90 children there. Varena is unique in Lithuania as it is the largest region geographically with the least amount of people living there and a lot of the area covered by woods.

Reaching the vulnerable families was the first challenge and once our team determined the poor conditions families lived in, we realised the situation will differ from our work in the capital of Vilnius. Families here lack basic necessities as hot water, inside bathrooms, there are lot more untreated health problems, illiteracy and in most cases unemployment. Trying to combat these challenges our team organised donations of essential things, beds, tables for children and essentials for babies. Three of our families braved to tell their story publicly and the TV show allowed us to renovate parts of their homes and collect donations for other families. Our team has successfully ensured that 40% of the families witnessed positive changes, some by treatment for addiction, finding work and taking charge of their health with support of our mediation.

3.2.2 Alytus Family Strengthening:

The new day centre in a village of Pivasiunai was also opened with EEA grant and support of Alytus area municipality. We are working with 15 families and their 29 children daily, who for the first time have a place where they can have fun, learn how to cook, study and travel outside of their village. The families there are also in the same desperate need of basic things and as importantly transportation to the day centre as some live more than 5 km away. Some of the families there have been affected by migration which left grandmothers and great-grandmothers taking care of children. It has become very important to have mobile services available to prepare these children for the first grade and to offer career counselling to youngsters.

⁴ South Lithuania program was approved in the middle of 2015 and beneficiaries were not included into the official statistics. For 2016 all beneficiaries will be counted as part of official statistics.

Our oldest service in South Lithuania is the day centre in Alytus. In 2015 we began to offer family strengthening services there and are now supporting 15 families and 25 children.

Lina's story / Alytus Family Strengthening

Working with the bureaucratic process in helping families is often a challenge and we were happy to assist in changing a life for a mother, let's call her Lina.

Lina and her first child were part of the social risk for a decade, during that time Lina got her life together, stopped drinking, met her present partner and gave birth to a second child.

Financially she was fully supported by her partner and was happily raising two children; however social services kept her as a family at risk providing a lot of emotional upset and shame for Lina. It took our family strengthening team 4 months to evaluate and confirm that a family was perfectly capable of taking care of themselves and we were able to take Lina off the social risk register. As part of our monitoring, Lina is now sending two of her children to the day centre and is happy to meet with our team to evaluate her situation in 6 months.

3.3 SOS Children's Villages Camp in Karkle

The camp has been a place where children from care home, special needs children and children from families at risk can come to enjoy a summer holiday and in most occasions see the sea for the first time in their lives.

856 Children spent time in Karkle during the season of 2015 from over 20 organisations.

Karkle team have also invested in renovating the camp and all of the work was done by the team themselves. Several camp houses were renovated, insulated and painted over. There is a new gazebo for children and warm blankets in all tents and houses. During the summer 3 children from SOS CV Vilnius worked at the camp and assisted with housekeeping.

The camp has strengthened friendship with the nearby Regional park authorities and a private zoo, that allow our guests to visit for free.

Our aim is to keep the camp as it provides a unique opportunity of a sea holiday for the children. At the same time we want to strengthen the SOS brand and are aiming to open a Youth facility with a social cafe, which will enable youth by providing the necessary work experience. This enterprise will also help us to break social barriers about children who grew up in care homes and will allow us to create a more open society.