



First Regular Session 2026 of UNICEF's Executive Board
Item 2: Opening statements by the President of the EB and the Executive Director of UNICEF

Statement delivered by Mr. Spartak Sargsyan, National Director of SOS Children's Villages Armenia, on behalf of SOS Children's Villages

Mr. President, Madame Executive Director, Distinguished Members of the Executive Board, Civil Society colleagues,

SOS Children's Villages International is an organization working in more than 135 countries and territories. We work to:

- 1) strengthen families in their caregiving roles to prevent unnecessary child-family separation
- 2) ensure care and protection when children and young people have lost parental care
- 3) work with governments to improve children's care standards.

We thank Madame Executive Director for her statement.

On the topic of UN80 initiative, we call for children and their rights to be embedded in all UN reforms and to ensure child specific mandates are protected.

On the Strategic Plan, while SOS Children's Villages is working on all 5 of the Impact Results, I would like to focus on 2 of them today:

On impact result 3 **on multidimensional poverty**: We know that one of the main drivers of child family separation is poverty. We push for governments' investments in social protection systems. Also, our family strengthening work aims to increase families' resilience to social, economic and child protection risks through our parenting programmes, providing access to services, etc.

On impact result 4 on **children protected from violence** – Investing in children's care reform provides the overarching framework for transforming child protection and care systems so that fewer children are unnecessarily separated from their families and those who enter care are protected and supported.

To give one example of our country level work, in SOS Armenia, we work closely with the government to phase out the institutionalization of children.

And in partnership with child protection and social protection actors, we have supported the transition towards family- and community-based care models.

Armenia's experience demonstrates that de-institutionalization, when spearheaded by the government and supported by civil society, is a powerful tool reinforcing national ownership, protecting children from violence and breaking cycles of vulnerability.

As civil society is one of the engagement strategy partners of the Strategic Plan, please count on us to support in its implementation. We look forward to continuing our collaboration with UNICEF, Member States and civil society partners to deliver for all children.