

NEWS BRIEFING

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**SOS CHILDREN'S
VILLAGES**

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Table of content

CARE AND PROGRAMMS

Appointment of the National Director
Bakoteh Program Review Meeting
International Women's Day 2022
Presentation of the National Association Gender Audit findings
Graduation Ceremony

Children and Youths Space

Adama's Story
Kids Got Talent
Youth-Led Community Awareness

Raising on Drug and substance abuse, Sexual Reproductive Health & Rights, and Guidance and Counselling.

Advocacy & Partnership 4 Quality Care

SOS Children's Villages meets Child Fund The Gambia
Validation of Situational Analysis Study Report for Vulnerable Children
Stakeholders Dialogue Forum on Waste Management
French Ambassador Visit to SOS Children's Villages

Introduction

Dear Reader,

The first quarter of 2022 has shown the resilience and strength of the National Association in this time of crisis around the world. The covid-19 pandemic continues to cause havoc and increased pressure on our health care systems around the world and in The Gambia. The war in Ukraine has continued to cause a devastating effect on the lives of children. This has caused children to be separated from their families and loved ones. We hope this crisis come to an end soon to create a safe space for children to reunite with their parents. Due to this, food shortages around the world are surging and mostly affect poor countries which eventually increases the rate of poverty, where children will be the most affected.

According to Unicef Gambia, child poverty is at 20% where children are deprived of their rights to be free from poverty and an adequate standard of living (MICS 2018). As of 2020, 93% of children in the rural Gambia are deprived of access to safe water. Whilst 71% of urban and 76% of rural children do not have access to safely managed sanitation.

According to the MICS (2018), 16.9% of children aged 0-17 years do not live either with their mother or father. This trend is confirmed by the DHS (2019-2020), where the proportion of children not living with a biological parent is prevalent in all age groups; including children from mid-childhood age (5-9 years) at 16.4%, children in early adolescence (10-14 years) at 24.9% and children in adolescence (15-17) at 33.9%. (*Situation Analysis of Vulnerable Children in The Gambia Report*) We continue to advocate for the introduction of care options for children in need of care and for them to be placed in the right care setting according to necessity and appropriateness.

The National Association continues to embark on a series of programs and activities geared towards improving the situation of our target group, improving our care models, and strengthening the capacity of our care professionals, Child Safeguarding continues to be strengthened and improved especially on procedures, processes, and practices. Child and youth participation has become embedded in our day-to-day engagements at all levels of the National Association. The approval of our National Gatekeeping Guidelines and processes has shown our commitment as a National Association towards providing better and quality care for children in need of care, reintegration, and reunification.

We continue to build partnerships with like-minded organizations to advocate for the rights of children and to create more impact on the lives of children in The Gambia. During the past months, we have signed agreements with key institutions and organizations to improve the situation of vulnerable young people in the Central, Lower, and Upper River Regions and at the Kanifing Municipality respectively.

We take this opportunity to thank our sponsors and donors who have chosen to give some part of their time, wealth, and cash to SOS Children's Villages in The Gambia to support more children and to ensure No Child Grows Up Alone. Thank you

THE APPOINTMENT OF A NEW NATIONAL DIRECTOR



Earlier this year, SOS Children's Villages International appointed Jean – Pierre Kouamin as the New National Director. As the National Director, Mr. Kouamin will be overseeing the overall operations of the National Association in The Gambia. He will be leading the strategic direction of SOS Children's Villages in The Gambia.

As a seasoned program development expert, one of his main responsibility will be to lead the implementation of the National Strategic Plan of the National Association and to position SOS Children Villages in The Gambia as a leading child care organization, in The Gambia and around the world.

Mr. Kouamin has served in several positions in other international organizations such as Save The Children International, Care International, Plan International, and at the SOS Children's Villages Regional Office for West, Central, and North Africa before taking over the position of National Director of SOS Children's Villages in The Gambia.

In his first three months, he has met with the key National Management Team, met with the program staff in both locations, and visited the donor projects in all the regions of The Gambia. As part of strengthening partnership, he has paid courtesy calls to key Government ministries and partners such as Unicef, Child Fund The Gambia, the French Ambassador and his delegation, the Mayor of KMC, and many more.

He looks forward to contributing to the improvement of the lives of children without adequate parental care and vulnerable children and young people in The Gambia.





Alternative Care & Programs

Bakoteh Location Program Review Meeting.

Globally, the organization is consolidating and transforming its drive towards its 2030 Strategy with emphasis on the Five Priorities Areas, which further frame the Strategic Federation Projects (SFP). In the second phase of the 2030 Strategy (Phase 2: 2021-2024), the National Association is further inspired by the drive to develop its program quality and aim at increasing its local relevance and impact.

Furthermore, there are more commitments to quality program management and safeguarding. For the latter (child safeguarding), the NA is convinced that it can be sustained by investing heavily in program quality to prevent/dampen the manifestations of the triggers of child rights violations. And in the same vein and at all times emphasizing the Zero-Tolerance mood.

As the NA works towards developing its Three-Year Strategic Plan, it is of great significance that periodic program reviews take place in program locations. This will provide opportunities to evaluate (not comprehensively though) the effectiveness, relevance, and efficiency of program services provided to our target group.

The introduction of new working documents such as Gatekeeping Guidelines, Programme Service Descriptions, and SOS Care Promise Priorities (2021-2024) in the past year, also requires more discussions and orientation for the programs. These policy documents fall within the period of the 2030 Strategy Phase 2, resulting in the need for the provision of space for sharing with staff and repositioning the NA in its role to provide services to our target group.

In the last one and half years, the NA like others encountered challenges caused by Covid-19, thus resulting in constraints in accomplishing planned actions. In addition to the delays, the NA, operating in a country undergoing political transition and economic reversals, has its programs struggling with budget consumption challenges, increased cost of goods and services

Therefore it was important to have a Location Programme Review meeting to give more orientation and strengthen the capacity of program staff in pertinent strategic and policy documents, procedures, and ways of working for improved program quality.



Ebou Faye Njie – National Program Development Manager

International Women's Day 2022

International Women's Day is celebrated on 8th March every year. This year's theme was "Gender equality today for a sustainable tomorrow".

The year 2022 was important for achieving gender equality in the context of climate change and environmental and disaster risk reduction, which are some of the greatest global challenges of the twenty-first century. Without gender equality, today, a sustainable future, and an equal future remain beyond our reach.

This year's IWD observance is in recognition and celebration of the women and girls who are leading the change on climate change adaptation and response, and to honor their leadership and contribution toward a sustainable future

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1FcILDaGmDDqGGGrK8z4r5jeDBujASyWz/view?usp=sharing> (Message on International Women's Day 2022)

At SOS Children's Villages in The Gambia, the day was celebrated in two folds.

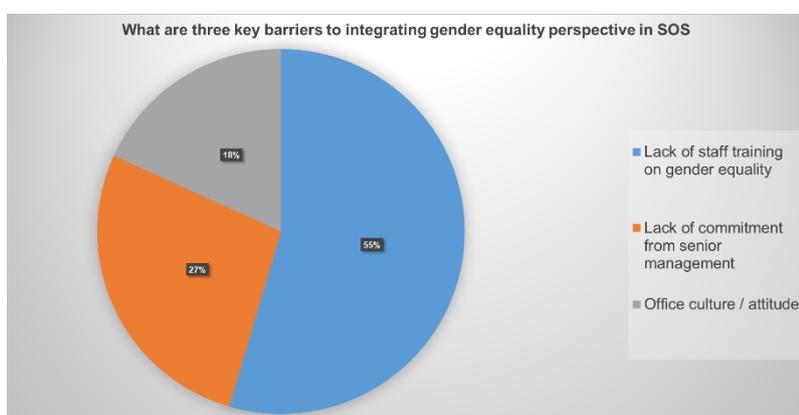
Presentation of the National Association Gender Audit findings

In 2021, the National Association commissioned a Gender Audit to measure the extent of gender inclusion in the National Association. As part of the celebration, the National Association took the opportunity to share the findings of the audit. The findings were presented by the project coordinator SOS Children's Villages Regional Mother and Adult Training Center in Bakoteh.



Key outcomes from FGDs with SOS parents and family assistants

- Overall SOS parents and family assistants had a good understanding of the different thematic areas of the SOS Gender Equality Policy;
- Confirmation of equal access to education for both females and males and the support given to girls to pursue technical fields such as science, technology, engineering, and mathematics.
- Access to healthcare is confirmed as equitable for all and is generally accepted



- All forms of gender-based violence are condemned and there was a heavy emphasis on human rights especially the rights of children
- They further identified the different symbols, heroes, rituals, and values that underpin the practice of gender equality at SOS Children's Villages in The Gambia.

Lunch and Interaction with the SOS Parents and their children

Women are important to us and also form the foundation of a family. The empowerment of women cannot be overemphasized. 90% of our work is done by women in the National Association taking care of children and young people under our care. We continue to strengthen our care professionals to provide quality care for our children and young people.

The National and Senior Management Team, Project, and Program Staff later that day had lunch and interaction with the SOS Parents, children, and young people at the two program locations Bakoteh and Basse. The aim was to celebrate the great women who are making sure that our children are kept safe and taken care of. Gifts and certificates were handed to all the SOS Parents and their assistants to show appreciation for the hard work and support to children in The Gambia.

In her video message, the Human Resources Manager Mrs. Mariam Jaye Sowe, highlighted the significant contribution women have made in the world and to the National Association. She took the opportunity to thank them and challenged them to do more to fight gender inequality and continue advocating for the rights of women and girls.



SOS Regional Mother and Adult Training Center Graduates 60 Students

SOS Children's Villages Regional Mother and Adult Training Center in March graduated 60 students in various areas of disciplines (Social Work, Catering, Functional Literacy, and Sewing and Crafting). The theme for this year's graduation was **Empowerment, Shaping the Future through Skills and Livelihood Development**

The ceremony was graced by the High Commissioner of Sierra Leone to The Gambia, The National Director of SOS Children's Villages Jean Pierre Kouamin, Board Chairman of Academic Committee, parents, and project staff.

In his statement, the National Director urged the graduating students to keep the standard high in their professional lives showing the amount of time they have spent was worth it. He also took the opportunity to thank the parents for providing both moral and financial support for their children to reach this height.

'We work to ensure that children live in families that can provide and ensure the rights of children by strengthening the capacities of those families to be able to care for their children towards preventing family separation'.

National Director SOS Children's Villages in The Gambia
Jean Pierre Kouamin

Mr. Omar Baldeh, chairman of the Academic Advisory Committee gave a brief rundown of the center and its purpose. He took the opportunity to thank the staff and parents for making the dreams of their students come to reality.

He urged the graduating students to continue to work hard and that there are better days to come. He also called on all to complement SOS Children's Village's work in promoting the rights of children. In the area of women and youth empowerment, he called on all donors to support the work of SOS Children's Villages in women and youth empowerment in The

Gambia.



'I recognise the values that SOS Children's Villages play in the lives of vulnerable children, women families and communities to improve their situations.'

Omar Baldeh

chairman of the Academic Advisory Committee



Mr. Charles Agbebaku, a former staff and the pioneer of the Social Work program was the chief guest of honor. In his statement, Mr. Agbebaku highlighted that he expected graduates will grow professionally indicating that what they have gone through was a professional program further encouraged the students to dare to step out because there is no limit to what you can accomplish if you dere.

[60 graduates in Social work, Literacy, Catering , Craft and Sewing – SOS The Gambia \(sosgambia.org\)](https://sosgambia.org)



Ebrima O.S Jallow
SOS Youth Participant
Bakoteh

www.sosgambia.org

Kids got talent

CONGRATULATIONS!

Meet Aja, Julian, and Kumba who were part of the finalists who took part in the National Kids Got Talent Competition.

The competition took place at the Alliance Franco-Gambian on Saturday 26 February 2022.

Aja, Julian and Kumba were able to display their talent in Poetry, Singing and Dancing, and Public Speaking. Aja became a second runner. SOS Children's Villages is proud of them.

Congratulation to Musa, Babucarr, and Oumie who graduated from a 6months training on Electricity, T-shirt printing, and catering from the TVET program (Work for Peace Project) implemented by The Gambia YMCA.

We wish them well in their future engagements.



Youth Power

The National Youth Network of SOS Children's Villages on Saturday embarked on a day of community sensitization on Sexual Reproductive Health and Rights, Youth Participation, Drug, and Substance Abuse, and Guidance and Counseling for over 30 youths from the Bakoteh Community. The Youth Network is a combination of SOS Children's Villages participants and representatives of the young people in the community. The session was fully facilitated by the young people who took turn by turn to lead key discussions on the 4 thematic areas mentioned above. The president of the Youth Network highlighted the importance of youth participation in issues affecting them. Kalilou also highlighted the problems facing young people today such as Drug and Substance Abuse and access to Sexual Reproduction Health Rights information and materials. [Youth – led Community Awareness Raising – SOS The Gambia \(sosgambia.org\)](https://sosgambia.org)



"I have always dreamed of becoming a footballer"

As far back as she can remember, Adama has always loved playing football and dreamed of becoming a professional footballer. A dream that came true at the age of 22. Indeed, Adama moved to France in 2021 after she signed a contract with the team Grenoble where she is currently playing.

During her stay at the SOS Children's Village Bakoteh, Adama loved discussing football with her twin sister, also a football player, and other siblings in her house during her free time.

"Hearing my brothers and sisters calling us The Gambia's finest baller makes us happy," remembers Awa, Adama's twin. Adama pushes hard for her to achieve her dream. Every afternoon, after finishing school, she goes for training at a local stadium. She later joined a local football club where she played for some years.

At the football club, she performed very well, which allowed her to be spotted by the Gambian Football Federation and to join the national women's football team. And what a feat: she has won several trophies, such as the best female footballer of the year in four consecutive years. Adama and her twin sister Awa, also a member of the team, led the Gambian Women's National team to the FIFA under-20 tournament in Azerbaijan and other international and regional tournaments.

In 2022, Adama will be playing for The Gambia in the qualifier round for the women's world cup. Both Adama and Awa are hoping to get The Gambia to qualify for the tournament.

Adama and her sister Awa, cannot yet live on their soccer income. They, therefore, had the idea, together with their brother Bakary, to engage in catering and are currently running the canteen at the SOS Hermann Gmeiner Technical Senior Secondary School in Bakoteh, serving meals to some over 200 students.

Like any parent, we don't believe that a relationship ends with a child on their 18th birthday. We stand by the young people for their transition to adulthood. SOS Children's Villages attaches great importance to ensuring that the young people entrusted to its care are well prepared for the social and economic realities of their world and are empowered to develop their perspectives in life. ["I have always dreamed of becoming a footballer" – SOS The Gambia \(sosgambia.org\)](https://sosgambia.org)

3 SOS Children's Villages participants attend The Woman Boss Gala Award 2022.

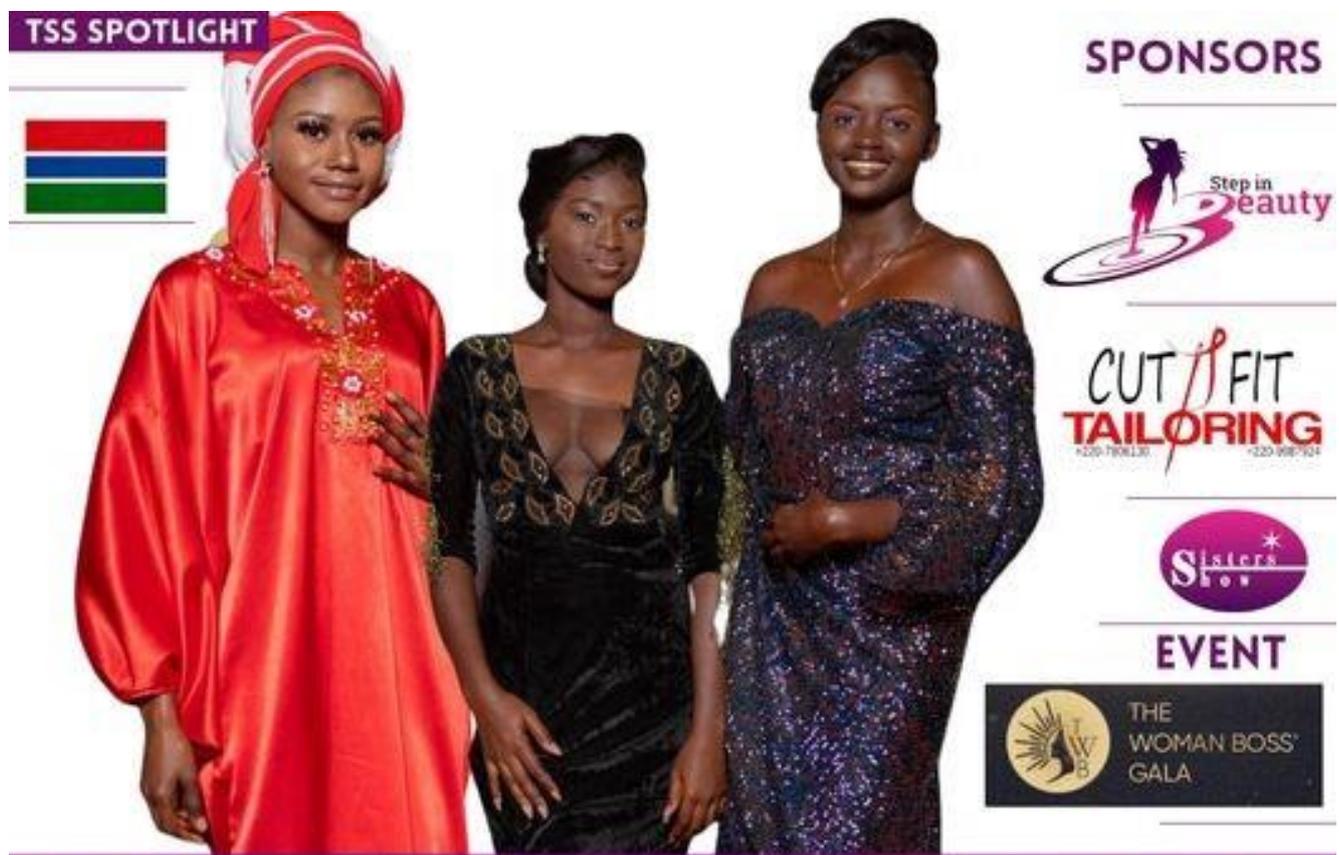
The Sisters Show is a Talk Show & Podcast Hosted By Five Siblings With Diverse Views, Different Professions & Vibrant Personalities. Bringing Honest Conversations to Connect African Descendants, to Help Educate, Inspire & Empower each other

The show aims to empower all people but particularly, African descendants by providing tools, and life lessons to be emboldened and well prepared for life in today's ever-changing landscape.

As a form of empowerment, The Sister's Show with TSS partnered with CUT N FIT Tailoring and 'Step In Beauty' to sponsor 3 SOS Children's Villages participants who are into technology and entrepreneurship to attend The Woman Boss Award Show. The Woman Boss celebrates Pioneer Women Of Excellence In Gambia; recognizing them through nominations and awards. The event was to highlight the importance of women and girls in technology and entrepreneurship and to create exposure for the girls to meet and chat with other personalities in this field.

Congratulation to the girls and Thank You to the sponsors Cut& Fit Tailoring designed the beautiful dresses above Thank you Step in Beauty the hair and makeup.

SOS Children's Villages attaches great importance to ensuring that the young people entrusted to its care are well prepared for the social and economic realities of their world and are empowered to develop their perspectives in life.



<https://sosgambia.org/main/info/3-sos-childrens-villages-participants-attend-the-woman-boss-gala-award-2022/>

Advocacy & Partnership 4 Quality Care

It is in a child's best interests to remain with the family of origin as long as the family is providing adequate care. In partnership with community organisations and governments, we work to strengthen vulnerable families in order to prevent family breakdown and separation of children from their families.

We advocate for measures to prevent the loss of parental care. We also support the development and implementation of alternative care quality standards and demand continuous monitoring of these standards. This includes appropriate support for gatekeeping, reintegration, social workforce development and the leaving care process. In our advocacy, we draw on evidence gained through our work in alternative care and family strengthening. SOS CHILDREN'S VILLAGES

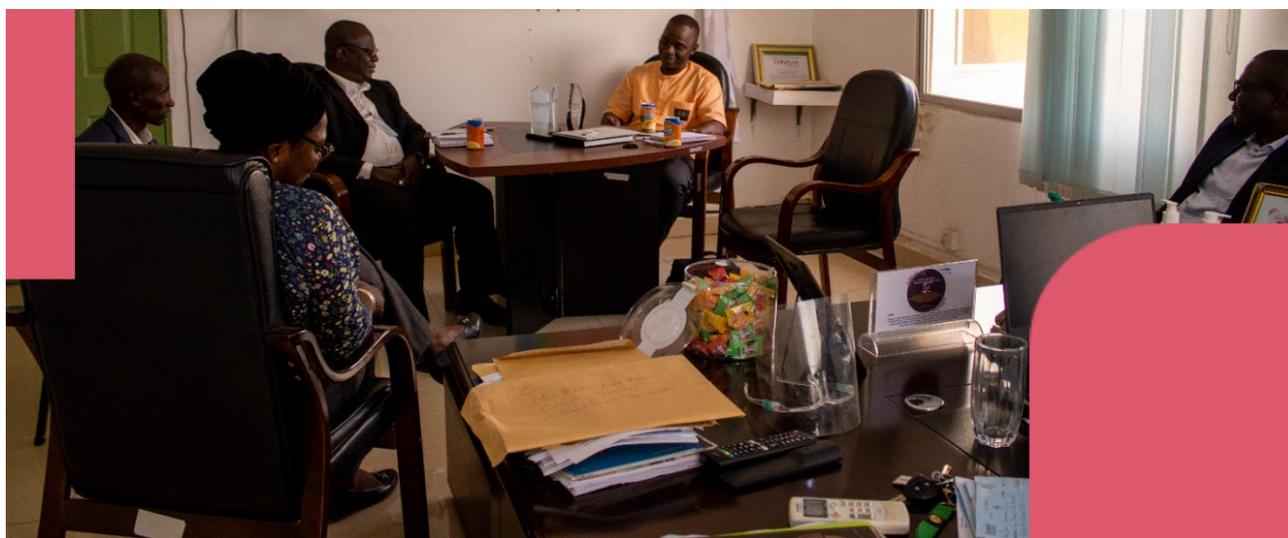
SOS Children's Villages Meets Child Fund The Gambia.

SOS Children's Villages in The Gambia believes that the need for partnership and collaboration is becoming evident and necessary especially when it comes to issues relating to children's protection and development.

On Tuesday the 22nd of March 2022, The Management of SOS Children's Villages in The Gambia paid a courtesy visit to the Country Director of ChildFund and her Management at their office in Kanifing. The purpose of the visit was to discuss and familiarize ourselves with the work ChildFund is doing in The Gambia and to share SOS Children's Village's work in The Gambia.

The team also took the opportunity to introduce the new National Director of SOS Children's Villages in The Gambia Mr. Jean – Pierre Kouamin. Both parties discussed three main areas of possible collaboration and partnership (Child & Youth Empowerment, Child Protection, and Safeguarding and Advocacy).

SOS Children's Villages in The Gambia and ChildFund agree that the need for partnership and collaboration is becoming evident and necessary especially when it comes to issues relating to children, their protection, and development. The SOS Children's Villages National Director was accompanied by the National Program Development Manager and the Communication and Advocacy Coordinator.



<https://sosgambia.org/main/news/sos-childrens-villages-meets-child-fund-the-gambia/>

Stakeholders' Dialogue Forum on Waste Management

SOS Children's Villages in The Gambia with partners held a stakeholder's forum on Waste Management. This activity is part of the ongoing project implementation on the Bakoteh dumpsite to reduce child rights violations. The forum aimed to advocate for the enforcement of existing environmental legislation in The Gambia.

A working group of experts from the Ministry of Environment, KMC, National Environmental Agency, and non-governmental actors "Waste-Aid", and "Greenup" with project beneficiary communities were able to discuss the existing legal framework and develop key messages and concrete recommendations for its implementation. Ministry of Environment Kanifing Municipal Council Green-Up Gambia National Environment Agency the Gambia and the Communities of Dippa-Kunda, Man-Njie Kunda, and Bakoteh.



French Ambassador & Delegation visits SOS Children's Villages.

The French Ambassador to The Gambia, Charge de Affairs Jean-Charles Allard, and members of the French Parliament on Friday 18th of February 2022, visited the SOS Children Villages in The Gambia to familiarize themselves with SOS Children's Villages' work. They were also joined by EGALISE an NGO in France that on Tuesday the 15th of February 2022 handed over donated items to SOS Children's Village in Bakoteh.

The National Director Jean-Pierre welcomed and gave a presentation on SOS Children's Village's work around the world and in The Gambia, this includes our mission, vision, our purpose, and why we exist.



[French Ambassador & Delegation visits SOS Children's Villages – SOS The Gambia \(sosgambia.org\)](https://sosgambia.org)



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