

Our work in Los Mina, Dominican Republic

2022–23 Impact Report



**SOS CHILDREN'S
VILLAGES**
CANADA

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SOS Children's Villages in the Dominican Republic

The Dominican Republic is home to more than one million children — 20% of whom are either abandoned or orphaned. Poverty, limited access to education, health disparities, child trafficking, domestic violence and crime are ongoing challenges for children and their families.

An estimated six out of 10 Dominican children suffer psychological or physical abuse and a third of women experience gender-based violence within the home. Violence within the home affects women and children's wellbeing, often resulting in mental illnesses, substance abuse, and school dropouts.

Violence also limits women from actively participating in society and is often the primary reasons for children losing the care of their parents.

Despite recent improvements in the education system, children in the Dominican Republic still face issues accessing quality education. Today, only 60% of children complete their primary education, with boys being more likely to drop out than girls. The quality of education is a challenge, with schools lacking the resources needed to support struggling students. This low quality of education is contributing to the 16% unemployment rate faced by Dominican youth.

SOS Children's Villages started working in the Dominican Republic in 1979 to provide a safe home for children who have lost the care of their family and to support vulnerable families at risk of having to abandon their children.



SOS Children's Villages Dominican Republic works with a team of 118 national staff. The organization implements development programs aimed at supporting vulnerable children and families in three locations: Santiago de Los Caballeros, Santo Domingo - Los Jardines del Norte, and Santo Domingo - Los Mina.

The organization works in close collaboration with national and local government authorities as well as local and community-based civil society organizations.

Our work in Los Mina

Los Mina is an impoverished neighbourhood in the outskirts of Santo Domingo, the capital city of the Dominican Republic. Two-thirds of its population currently lives in urban poverty and families often reside in overcrowded homes with little access to city services such as reliable drinking water, sanitation facilities and electricity.

The neighbourhood faces many issues, including high levels of crime, illegal drug use, child abandonment, unemployment and domestic violence.

Since 1984, SOS Children's Villages has been working in Los Mina to respond to the needs of vulnerable children.

Through the SOS Children's Village, more than 90 children who have been orphaned or abandoned

in Los Mina were provided with quality alternative family-based care this past year.

A Family Strengthening Program, called Familias Unidas, brought together SOS Children's Villages, parents, children and youth, community leaders, and local child protection structures to make the community safer for children and directly empower 30 families.

Our youth programming also supported 22 youths' transition to independence by equipping them with the skills and experience they need to succeed in the job market or in entrepreneurship.

Key program results and activities

With your support, SOS Children's Villages has been able to provide critical support to more than 500 children and families in Los Mina. These are some of the key results we have achieved together in 2022-23:



87 parents and caregivers developed their employability skills by learning about entrepreneurship and the job market.



33 parents and caregivers learned about children's rights and how to report violence against children.



27 children received mental health support from a trained mental health provider.



14 children benefited from tutoring support to improve their school performance and ensure they keep up with their peers.



22 youth participated in the new YouthCan! initiative and benefited from mentorship, soft and technical skills training, and internship opportunities.



12 abandoned children were reunited with biological family members and supported in their reunification process.

Real lives impacted by your support



Journey to independence: Diana's success

Diana and her four siblings lost the care of their family in 2021 and have since been cared for at the SOS Children's Villages in Los Mina.

At 17 years old, Diana was used to being a maternal figure to her younger brothers and sisters. But years of having the responsibility of caring for her siblings at such a young age brought on its load of stress. Diana suffered from anxiety and struggled to develop trusting relationships with other teenagers and adults.

With the support of SOS Children's Villages, Diana received counselling and participated in workshops to strengthen her social and emotional skills. Knowing that her siblings were safe, she slowly learned to trust and to focus on herself and her own needs.

Showing great academic ambition, Diana was supported to finish her secondary education and then enrolled in a bachelor program in administration and tax management. This year, Diana's skills and motivation earned her an internship at a local cooperative where she gained firsthand exposure to her chosen industry. In response to her hard work, she was offered a paid position at the cooperative at the end of her internship – a success that was greatly celebrated.

In 2024, Diana will leave SOS Children's Villages in Los Mina but continue to receive support through SOS youth programs. She plans on sharing an apartment with her younger brother and will receive counselling and guidance from SOS Children's Villages as she learns to live independently and manage her finances. She has a bright future ahead of her and is ready to jump into adulthood.



Hope blossoms: José Miguel's journey

José Miguel was two years old when he and his three siblings, including a twin brother, were abandoned by their mother who could no longer care for them.

It was then, nearly 30 years ago, that his journey began with SOS Children's Villages.

Growing up in the SOS Village in Los Mina, José Miguel developed strong bonds with his biological and SOS siblings.

He completed his pre-university studies while living in the SOS Village and graduated with excellent grades. As he transitioned to independent living, he received continued support, including vocational training, mental and physical health care and more.

Exhibiting remarkable leadership qualities, José Miguel and his twin brother are now trusted figures for other SOS program alumni, offering guidance and support to their peers based on their own experiences.

Educated, enriched, and now raising a loving family, José Miguel attributes his accomplishments and knowledge to SOS Children's Villages.

"The SOS Children's Village is the essence of the human that I am today. Each of the people working there contributed a grain of sand towards the person you see now, one who can achieve all dreams and contribute and give back to the society I live in," he expresses in gratitude.



Thank you for your support!



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