Namibia Impact Report

Ondangwa and Windhoek

2023-2025



SOS CHILDREN'S VILLAGES CANADA

SOS CHILDREN'S VILLAGES NAMIBIA



Executive summary

SOS Children's Villages Namibia is a vital source of support for children, young people, families, and communities experiencing poverty, safety risks, and limited access to healthcare, education and opportunities in Ondangwa and Windhoek, Namibia.

Through alternative care, family and community strengthening, youth employability, safeguarding, health, and advocacy programs, we support children, young people, and families to be healthy and stay safe, remain connected to family and community, and be better equipped for brighter social and economic futures.

Thanks to our generous supporters, SOS Children's Villages has responded to the needs of children in care and families facing social and economic hardship through holistic care, education, health and nutrition support, safeguarding, family strengthening, and economic empowerment. **Between 2023 and 2025 in Namibia, this included care for 389 children, successful reunification of 107 children with their families,** expanded individualized support for families and communities, and practical skills, mentorship, training, and work-readiness opportunities for young people.

This report highlights a shift from crisis response towards stronger family and community systems. **With an investment of CAD $3,682,951** in SOS Children's Villages Namibia, the organization provided quality care to hundreds of children while expanding support to families and communities. The data shows fewer children remaining in alternative care, more children safely reunified with their families, and more families and community members receiving support to strengthen resilience. This progress demonstrates that SOS Children's Villages is contributing to stronger families, reduced family separation, reduced poverty-related vulnerability, and improved community resilience.

Young people in Namibia are also gaining stronger foundations for independence through access to post-secondary education support, start-up capital, mentorship, internships, career guidance, leadership training, and practical employability skills.

This report summarizes three years of program activities, key achievements, and human impact stories across alternative care, family and community strengthening, youth employability, safeguarding, health, and children's and youth rights advocacy in Namibia.

The challenge for children and families in Namibia

In Windhoek and Ondangwa, children and families face interconnected challenges that make it difficult for children to grow up safe, healthy, and with the care they need. Poverty remains one of the most significant barriers to child wellbeing – **more than half of children in Namibia (51.3%) were living in multidimensional poverty in 2021** (UNICEF, 2024), where families struggle to afford food, transportation, school materials, healthcare, and safe housing. Unemployment and rising living costs further limit the ability to provide stable care. At the same time, recurrent drought and environmental degradation worsen food insecurity, increasing the risk of malnutrition, poor school attendance, and unsafe coping behaviours among children.

These economic pressures also heighten the risk of family separation. When families are overwhelmed by poverty, unemployment, illness, or lack of social support, children may be left without consistent adult care. Children experiencing difficult family circumstances, living in sibling-headed households, or without stable parental care face increased risks of neglect, exploitation, child labour, abuse, and emotional harm.

Together, these challenges form a cycle: poverty weakens family stability, weakened stability increases safety risks, and those risks make it harder for children to stay in school, stay healthy, and build secure futures. Breaking this cycle requires sustained, community-based support so children receive the care and protection they need, families have the practical support to stay together, and communities have stronger systems to protect children before crises occur or deepen.





Care and Protection

Across Namibia, **more than 376,000 children are living without or are at risk of losing parental care** (The Ministry of Gender Equality and Child Welfare Namibia, 2025). Children who lose parental care, whether through abandonment, family breakdown, or the loss of a caregiver, face profound risks, including exploitation, poor health outcomes, disrupted education, and long-term emotional harm.

SOS Children's Villages' priority is always to keep families together by strengthening them from within. When that isn't possible, or when a child has no family to turn to, SOS Children's Villages provides reliable, compassionate care tailored to each child's individual needs and local context.

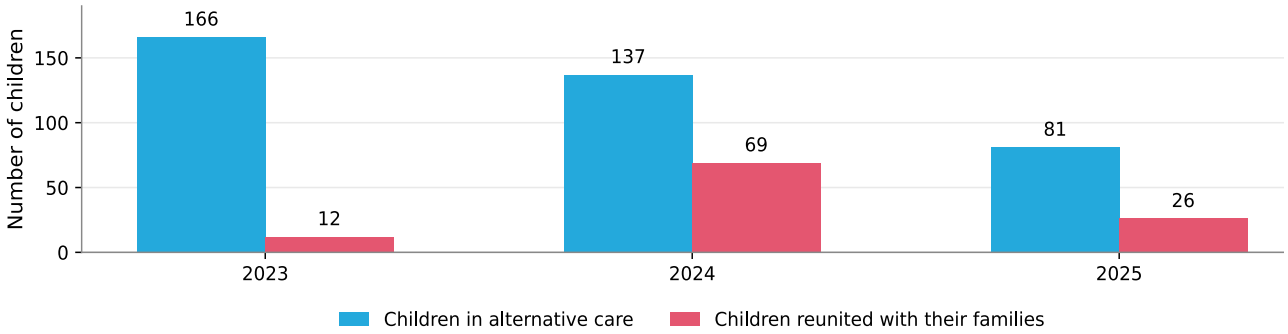
Between 2023 and 2025, SOS Children's Villages Namibia provided care for **389 children and young people across Namibia**. Every child received consistent, individualized support for their health and wellbeing, as well as educational support including enrollment in appropriate schooling and tutoring so they could keep learning and growing.

Reuniting children with their biological families, when it is in the child's best interests, remains a cornerstone of this work. SOS Children's Villages social workers carefully coordinate with local authorities and courts to ensure the process is smooth, supportive, and sustainable. In instances where a child remains in long-term care and their family cannot be located, they continue to receive care and support as they transition into semi-independent or independent living. Where appropriate, children may also be reunified with extended family. In 2025, four young people achieved self-reliance and transitioned from alternative care, compared with 15 in 2024 and three in 2023.

Keeping families together

Between 2023 and 2025, SOS Children's Villages Namibia's work increasingly focused on strengthening families, preparing children for reunification when it is in the child's best interests, and supporting lasting resilience at home. The number of children in alternative care is steadily decreasing, while successful family reunifications are increasing, reflecting progress toward more children growing up in safe, supportive family environments.

Alternative Care and reunification (2023-2025)



Reunification increased from 12 children in 2023 to 69 in 2024, contributing to a decrease in the number of children in alternative care. By 2025, the number in alternative care had decreased to 81, from 166 in 2023, reflecting successful family reunification efforts.

In 2026, SOS Children's Villages Namibia continues to facilitate family tracing and reunification when it is in the child's best interests. In Windhoek, the plan is to support the reunification of eight children with their biological families, and in Ondangwa, seven children. These numbers may change based on each child's individual circumstances.

Lessons learned and actions

Recruitment of foster families has remained below project targets over the past two years, limiting progress in strengthening family-based alternative care for children without adequate parental care. Limited support for foster families, particularly amid significant cost-of-living pressures, is a barrier. In response, SOS Children's Villages Namibia will continue community-level recruitment and awareness-raising with families and community leaders, while strengthening coordination with government authorities to identify and recruit suitable foster families.

Child and Youth Safeguarding

Ensuring children's safety goes beyond a safe place to sleep; it depends on effective safeguarding practices, trusted reporting channels, and timely responses to concerns.

Violence against children and gender-based violence remain serious concerns in Namibia. Many children experience or witness physical, emotional, verbal, or sexual abuse, often within their homes or familiar environments where signs of harm can go unnoticed or unreported. The Namibia Violence Against Children Survey found that violence in childhood remains widespread nationally, with **39.6% of women and 45% of men reporting experiences of physical, sexual, or emotional violence during childhood, and 41.2% of boys and 32.9% of girls experiencing physical abuse before age 18** (Ministry of Gender Equality and Child Welfare, 2020).

Although corporal punishment in government schools was declared unconstitutional in 1991, some households and, according to children consulted, some public schools still use it as a form of discipline. Weak community-based protection systems, limited reporting pathways, and inadequate access to psychosocial support make prevention, early identification, and timely intervention more difficult.

The pillars of SOS Children's Villages Namibia's child safeguarding approach are awareness, prevention, reporting and response.



Awareness: SOS Children's Villages Namibia conducted awareness activities across communities and schools to strengthen understanding of children's rights, violence prevention, and reporting mechanisms. Through sports events, school outreach, and community dialogues, about **600 children and young people participated in sessions** on their rights and responsibilities, safety and responsible incident reporting. Gender-based violence awareness sessions addressing violence and discrimination are also held for communities and families, **reaching about 300 people each year.**



Prevention: Three positive parenting workshops reached 203 parents and caregivers. **In 2026, SOS Children's Villages Namibia aims to reach 375 parents and caregivers through 15 workshops.** Between 2024 and 2025, five active fatherhood training sessions reached 90 caregivers. Delivered in partnership with Project Hope Namibia and Metumo Home-Based Care, the sessions aimed to encourage greater male involvement in childcare and child protection, address gender-based violence, and empower participants to speak out. In 2026, SOS Children's Villages Namibia aims to reach 400 caregivers through **six active fatherhood training sessions.**



Reporting and response: An increase in reported child protection concerns, including heightened visibility of violence against children, has led SOS Children's Villages Namibia to intensify its safeguarding efforts. **Nine SOS Children's Villages Namibia staff have been trained** as national investigators to respond to reported safeguarding and misconduct incidents, with a further **33 staff and 65 community members planned to receive training in 2026.**

In 2025, SOS Children's Villages Namibia established new partnerships with the Ministry of Gender Equality and Child Welfare, social workers, local schools, police, and organizations such as Lifeline/Childline to strengthen understanding of abuse prevention, reporting mechanisms, and referral pathways. These initiatives have contributed to more timely and effective protection and response for children and young people.

Lessons learned and actions

SOS Children's Villages Namibia staff have observed that strong collaboration with government ministries and civil society partners has strengthened child protection interventions. In 2026, SOS Children's Villages Namibia plans to establish at least two new community child protection committees and identify and strengthen four existing committees. These efforts aim to build communities' capacity to identify, report and respond to child protection concerns.



Family and Community Strengthening

While safeguarding systems help protect children from harm, strengthening families and communities addresses the root causes that can place children at risk in the first place.

Initial needs assessments conducted in 2022 with Family Strengthening Program participants found that most enrolled caregivers were unemployed, leaving children in households with no working adults. SOS Children's Villages Namibia's assessments consistently identify poverty as the primary factor placing children and families in situations of vulnerability, compounded by high unemployment, limited skills and post-secondary education, substance abuse, and limited access to capital for starting a business.

As one staff member shared: "*Most of the children are living in poverty as the parents are unemployed and living below the poverty line. Such parents and caregivers cannot afford to buy food and other basic goods for their children*."

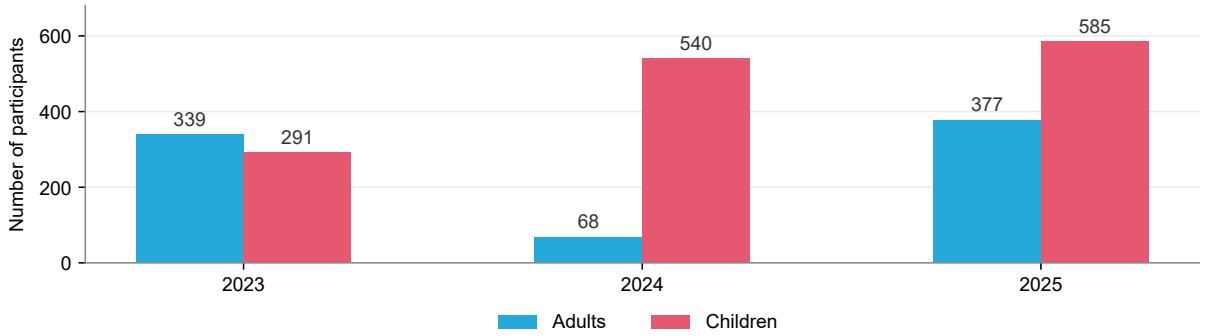
Our response

SOS Children's Villages Namibia's Family and Community Strengthening approach is holistic, addressing these interconnected challenges to help keep families together and prevent separation. Our interventions include:

Support to caregivers and households: SOS Children's Villages Namibia supports families and parents with positive parenting and active fatherhood activities, emergency food assistance, and information on nutrition, safe water and hygiene practices.

Family and community strengthening: Participation in family and community strengthening activities increased overall between 2023 and 2025.

Family and Community Strengthening participation (2023-2025)



Family and Community Strengthening participation increased overall from 630 people in 2023 to 962 in 2025. Children accounted for most participants in 2024 and 2025, while adult participation rebounded substantially in 2025 after declining in 2024.

Economic strengthening: SOS Children's Villages supports families to build sustainable livelihoods by providing access to agricultural projects and training, vocational training, and small loans. These opportunities enable households to generate income, increase food security, and build the stability needed to help children thrive and prevent family separation.

Together, these efforts reflect our belief that every family deserves the chance to stay together and flourish.

Program highlights 2023-2025

The number of participants in Family Strengthening Programs has grown significantly from 630 in 2023 to 962 in 2025 and is projected to reach 3,900 individuals in 2026. SOS Children's Villages Namibia is increasing its focus on family strengthening and parenting support to prevent family breakdowns that can lead to child and family separation.

585 families and community groups received livelihood support.

65 families received emergency food assistance.

40 caregivers completed financial literacy training enabling them to secure loans to start or grow their businesses.

203 caregivers received training in positive parenting, children's rights, and household self-reliance.

20 community participants completed a one-day nutrition training.

2 Village Savings and Loan Associations were established engaging 39 participants.

Lessons learned and actions

Community-based livelihood initiatives helped families improve their economic resilience. In 2026, SOS Children's Villages Namibia will expand on income-generating activities and strengthen partnerships with vocational training institutions and local businesses.



Education and Livelihoods

As families become stronger and more stable, young people also need opportunities to build the skills, confidence, and pathways that will help them move towards stable futures. Namibia continues to face high youth unemployment, creating significant barriers for young people as they transition from school to work and independent adulthood. According to the 2023 Census report from Namibia, the unemployment rate for those aged 15-24 was approximately 54% (Namibia Statistics Agency, 2025). In Windhoek (Khomas region), the youth unemployment rate is 44.2%, and in Ondangwa (Oshana region) it is 49.4%.

These challenges are compounded by limited private-sector growth. A 2021 World Bank study found that only a small share of Namibians benefit from employment income, while many households rely on social grants or subsistence farming. Poverty and limited economic opportunity can increase young people's exposure to risky coping strategies, including transactional relationships in exchange for money, gifts, or basic needs.

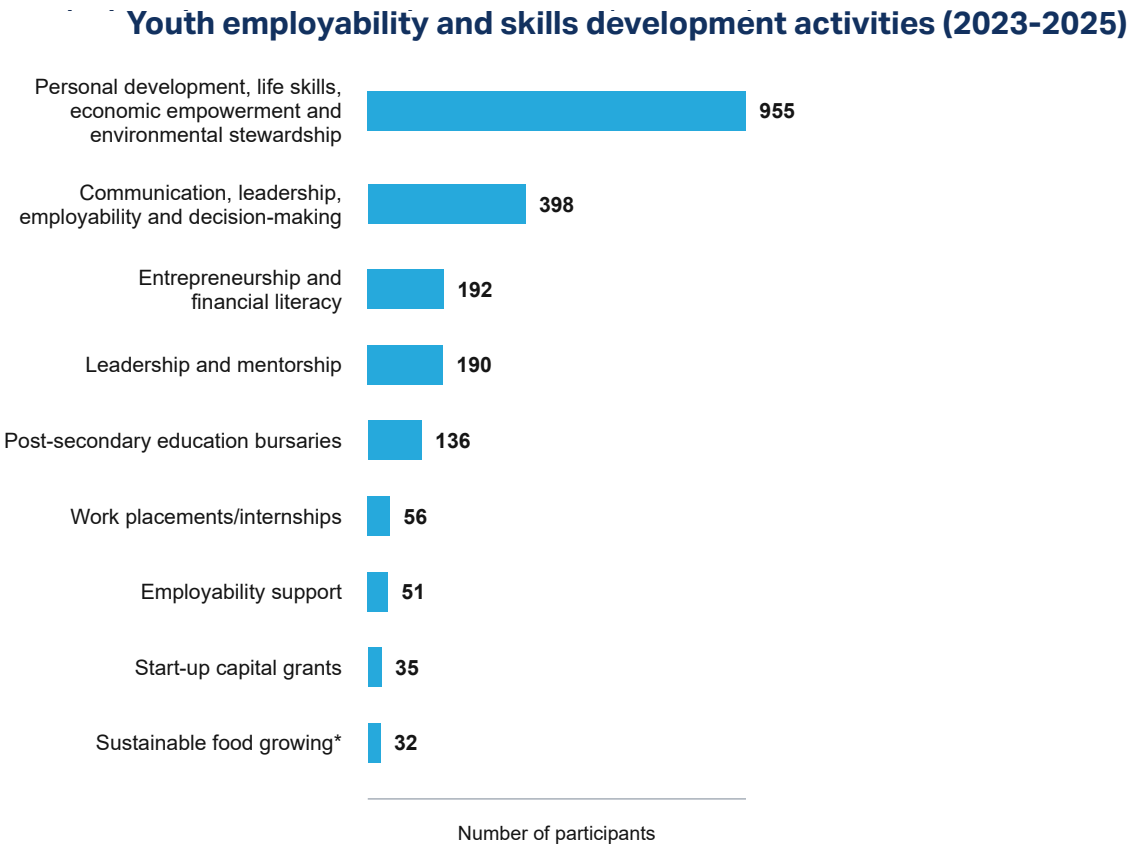
Access to education and future opportunities is also uneven. Young people who grow up without parental care, or in families experiencing hardship, often face additional barriers, including limited access to skills training, career guidance, employment networks, and safe pathways to independence.

Our response

SOS Children's Villages Namibia helps young people, particularly those without parental care or in families experiencing hardship, build the skills, confidence, and practical experience they need to enter the labour market and work towards stable, independent futures. This support focuses on:

- Career orientation and coaching, including leadership training
- Financial assistance for tuition for post-secondary students
- Strengthening vocational and entrepreneurial skills
- Access to work experience through internship opportunities with corporate partners

Impact highlights 2023–2025



**Young people from SOS Children's Villages in Windhoek who trained with Kambashu Institute applied their new skills by establishing Food Circle Garden projects.*

- Between 67 and 81 early childcare spaces were provided annually through one early childhood development centre.
- 3 new partnerships were established with Welwitchia University, the Community Skills Development Centre, and KAYEC, expanding opportunities for young people to access skills training and work placements.
- 2 community youth groups in Ondangwa received seed capital to strengthen local livelihood initiatives.

Empowering young people to achieve self-reliance

Looking ahead, SOS Children's Villages Namibia plans to equip young people with vocational, entrepreneurial, digital, and employability skills, alongside mental health and reproductive health services, to support successful transitions to independent living. In 2026, the initiative is planned to support 598 young people (98 in Ondangwa and 500 in Windhoek). The program will continue vocational and entrepreneurship support while expanding opportunities in digital skills, job placements and on-the-job training. It will also support young people transitioning to independent living and strengthen access to life skills, reproductive health education, and mental health support.

Partnerships for career development

Meaningful partnerships with organizations such as DHL Namibia, Lufthansa and the Namibia Airports Company help connect young people to real-world learning, mentorship, and career opportunities.

DHL Namibia

In September 2024, SOS Children's Villages Namibia and DHL Namibia organized a Career Week in Tsumeb for 25 young people (15 women and 10 men) from Tsumeb and Ondangwa. Participants strengthened practical employability skills, including CV writing, interview preparation, job searching, time management, stress management, and learned about internship opportunities in Namibia and abroad. Through the partnership, two young women studying at the International University of Management completed internships with DHL Namibia in logistics and ICT.

Namibia Airports Company and Lufthansa

In February 2025, SOS Children's Villages Namibia partnered with the Namibia Airports Company and the Lufthansa Group's Discover Airlines team to host a career exploration event for 20 young people, 10 women and 10 men aged 15–19, from five schools. The event introduced participants to career pathways in the aviation sector, giving them the chance to engage directly with professionals from airline operations, firefighting, logistics, and related fields. Through department tours, observation of airport operations, and conversations with industry representatives, the young people gained practical insight into different career options and the skills needed to pursue them. This exposure broadened their understanding of future pathways and strengthened their confidence to make informed decisions about education, training, and employment. Reflecting on the experience, a Lufthansa Group representative shared:

"It was an honour to be part of this initiative and share our passion for aviation. We look forward to more opportunities to inspire future leaders."

— Paul Havenga, Lufthansa Group Station Manager, Windhoek International Airport

Lessons learned and actions

Staff working with children and young people in alternative care identified that many children did not achieve expected academic outcomes in 2025, despite existing support. To address this, SOS Children's Villages Namibia is expanding tutoring initiatives and strengthening academic monitoring systems in 2026, helping to identify learning needs earlier and provide timely educational support.





Health

Alongside support for care, family stability, education, and livelihoods, SOS Children's Villages also helps children, young people, and caregivers access the knowledge and support they need to protect their health and wellbeing. Health challenges facing children, young people, and families in Namibia are deeply interconnected with poverty, social pressure, and limited access to services. Needs assessments highlighted two priority areas where children and caregivers required more information and support: reproductive health, and mental health and psychosocial wellbeing.

Reproductive health

In Namibia, poverty and social pressure can increase girls' vulnerability to relationships or cohabitation with older men, heightening their risk of early pregnancy, HIV infection, and long-term dependency. Early pregnancy can interrupt education, limit access to healthcare, and affect mental health and emotional wellbeing during a critical stage of development. Strengthening access to reproductive health information and services is therefore essential to helping young people make informed choices and build healthier, more independent futures.

In partnership with Project Hope Namibia, SOS Children's Villages held reproductive health sessions that reached more than 300 individuals. Through these interventions, young people and caregivers improved their knowledge and confidence to make informed and safer decisions. The sessions also increased awareness of available services and referral pathways, strengthening access to appropriate information, care, and long-term wellbeing.

Mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS)

The 2022 needs assessment conducted within communities in Windhoek and Ondangwa identified suicidal ideation as a serious concern among both children and caregivers. Caregivers most often linked their distress to financial strain and the inability to provide for dependents, while adolescents described pressures related to social exclusion, appearance, material possessions, and experiences of abuse. Respondents also raised concerns about peers using binge drinking as a way to cope

with poverty-related stress. These findings underscored the need for accessible mental health and psychosocial support for adolescents and caregivers facing overlapping pressures related to poverty, loss, and abuse.

In response, mental health has been integrated as a cross-cutting priority across alternative care, family strengthening, and youth engagement programming. Children in alternative care have access to professional mental health support, and SOS Children's Villages Namibia staff are trained in trauma-informed care.

In 2024, **419 participants** took part in mental health awareness sessions that created safe spaces to discuss emotional wellbeing, resilience, and available support. The sessions focused on reducing stigma, building self-esteem, addressing bullying, and sharing practical coping tools. They also helped connect children, young people, and caregivers to resources for managing depression, suicidal thoughts, and other mental health concerns.

In 2025, Lifeline/Childline trained **30 teachers** to integrate mental health and psychosocial support into school environments, strengthening their ability to support children experiencing emotional or social challenges.

In 2025, nine community health sessions were conducted on nutrition, water and sanitation, and reproductive health, compared to ten in 2024 and none in 2023.

Youth Power Project: Mental health support and youth engagement

The Youth Power Project shows how SOS Children's Villages integrates mental health support into youth engagement. The project focuses on mental health awareness and suicide prevention, helping young people in situations of vulnerability to better understand emotional wellbeing and where to seek help.

Implemented in four schools in Windhoek, the Youth Power Project reached **391 adolescents and young people**. Participants learned how to recognize mental health challenges, respond to difficult situations, and identify trusted sources of support when they or their peers need help.



Advocacy

Building on this support for health and wellbeing, SOS Children's Villages also creates opportunities for young people to participate in community life, advocate for their rights, and contribute to solutions that affect their futures. SOS Children's Villages seeks to amplify children's voices, advance their rights, and strengthen local systems through youth leadership and partnerships.

Eco Champions: Empowering youth for climate action

Climate change affects children and families in vulnerable situations the most, deepening existing inequalities and disrupting livelihoods, education, health, and safety. In Namibia, environmental pressures are increasingly linked to food insecurity, household stress, and children's safety risks. Young people are responding with ideas and local solutions, but many need support, recognition, and resources to turn those ideas into lasting community action.



In 2024, a severe drought, exacerbated by El Niño, contributed to widespread food insecurity, economic hardship, and environmental degradation. **More than 1.4 million Namibians experienced acute food insecurity, placing additional pressure on families already facing difficult circumstances** (Integrated Food Security Phase Classification, 2024).

At the same time, flash floods in informal settlements in Windhoek – neighbourhoods where many families have limited access to secure housing and basic services – displaced families and increased risks for children. This shows how climate-related shocks can quickly affect housing, safety, and family stability.

The Eco Champions project was launched to help young people respond to these challenges through environmental awareness, youth-led advocacy, and practical climate action. The initiative reflects SOS Children's Villages' commitment to supporting young people not only as program participants, but also as leaders and problem-solvers in their communities.

In 2025, **four Eco Champions** from Namibia, three women and one man, received funding to strengthen their initiatives, such as creating a community garden, recycling materials to create new products, and installing solar floodlights for families without access to electricity. In addition, **157 young people and other stakeholders** attended the 2025 Youth Climate Change Conference in Ondangwa, creating a platform for youth leadership, learning, and collaboration on climate action.

Lessons learned and actions

Youth leadership initiatives, including climate action programs and life skills workshops, increased youth participation and confidence in community engagement. Building on these results, SOS Children's Villages Namibia will continue to integrate youth leadership and environmental education into youth programs and strengthen partnerships that support youth development.



2026 program priorities

Looking ahead, SOS Children's Villages Canada will continue to support programming in Namibia to strengthen child protection systems, family resilience, and community capacity across Windhoek and Ondangwa. In 2026, this includes:

3,900 community members reached through child protection, livelihoods, youth employability and health programming.

145 families provided with sessions on positive parenting and healthy living, including nutrition, health and sanitation, and reproductive health.

90 children and young people provided with mental health support.

65 children and young people provided with quality alternative care in Windhoek and Ondangwa.

20 foster families recruited, alongside activities to raise awareness of foster care as a local alternative care option.

By expanding direct and community-based family strengthening while continuing to provide a range of alternative care services, the program will enhance family resilience and community capacity, ensuring that children grow up in safe, stable, and supportive environments.

One of the most valuable lessons from 2025 was the importance of strong monitoring and evaluation systems to capture impact and collect consistent, reliable data across programs in Namibia. Building on this insight, SOS Children's Villages Namibia is recruiting a local Monitoring and Evaluation Officer in 2026 to standardize our monitoring tools and reporting templates across every location. This investment will strengthen the quality and consistency of program data and help assess whether programming is meeting participants' needs.

Human impact stories

From adversity to world champion: Rodney cycles into history

Rodney, 18, won gold in the 5-kilometre cycling event at the 2023 Special Olympics World Games in Berlin.



Rodney grew up in alternative care at SOS Children's Villages in Windhoek, where he received individualized support and had opportunities to pursue his interests and develop his skills.

He attended Dagbreek Special School, where he received support tailored to his learning needs and discovered his passion for cycling. With guidance from his coaches, Willem and Jeffrey, Rodney developed his skills and trained for competition while his caregivers provided ongoing support.

His commitment to cycling took him to Berlin, where he crossed the finish line to become a Special Olympics world champion. It is a powerful reminder of what's possible when young people have the support and opportunities to pursue their talents and ambitions.



Turning skills into climate action: Anna brings solar light to 20 families

Anna, one of Namibia's Eco Champions, turned youth-led climate action into practical community support by installing solar floodlights for 20 families in Ondjengo Village in Windhoek. These households had limited or no access to electricity or reliable lighting, and the project improved safety by reducing reliance on harmful and expensive alternatives like kerosene.

Drawing on her professional skills, Anna provided and installed the lights herself, giving families access to a more sustainable lighting source. Her initiative shows how young people can use their skills and ideas to develop practical solutions to community challenges.



Thank you for your support in creating lasting change for children, young people, and families across Namibia.

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