

# FamilyMatters

Autumn 2015

## Being part of the SOS family



**Also in this issue:**

Supporting refugees  
across Europe

Alexander McCall Smith,  
BBC Radio 4 Appeal



SOS CHILDREN'S  
VILLAGES  
UNITED KINGDOM

# Message from our Chief Executive



## Chipata

So much has happened since I wrote to you last Spring - across the globe, in the UK and within SOS Children's Villages UK.

I was fortunate enough to pay my first trip to our Village at Chipata in Zambia, where I had the opportunity of seeing once again the amazing care SOS Children's Villages gives to the most vulnerable of children. The love and devotion

shown by our SOS mothers and staff to these youngsters is truly inspirational. Please do read the articles on pages 4 and 5, where two of our supporters talk about their own visits to Chipata.

My trip showed me that we can't rest on our laurels though. There's still much more we can do to help improve the lives of the children in Zambia, and I have returned with a number of fundraising needs for Chipata which we will share with you in the near future.

“He who rejects change is the architect of decay. The only human institution which rejects progress is the cemetery.”

Harold Wilson

## Annual Supporters' Meeting

I'd like to thank all those who came to our Annual Supporters' Meeting in Cambridge on the 5th September. We were particularly delighted to have Shree Shankar Pradhananga, the SOS National Director of Nepal, address this event and to hear first-hand about the work he and his team are conducting in the aftermath of the earthquake. Please find an overview of Shankar's update on page 9. I was also really glad to hear the overwhelmingly positive feedback from our supporters about what we're doing to help children and how we go about that. With your endorsement, we shall continue to be alive to your views and make further improvements.

## Refugee crisis

The need to help more children is an ongoing one and has recently been brought into sharp focus by the refugee crisis in Europe. As you know, the conflict in Syria is now in its fifth year. Millions of families are realising a return to peace is a distant prospect and this is causing a huge wave of new migration. Africans also constitute a large number of the migrants and their continent remains a priority area for SOS Children's Villages.

Our challenge is to produce a response tailored to the different circumstances of the various destination countries whilst continuing our work in the countries of origin. As you can imagine, the needs of SOS Greece are different from those of SOS Hungary for example, or SOS Austria. As

a consequence, we have decided to establish a generic fund for donations which will be used to direct money where and when it is required. Please see page 13 for more details about the SOS programmes being set up across Europe and the Middle East and how you can help.

## Striving to do more for the child at risk

Judging from feedback at our ASM and elsewhere, I also sense a growing desire - most recently prompted by the refugee crisis - for the need to help children here in the UK. It is too early to decide what form such help might take (as we will be beginning from a standing start), and whatever we decide upon will need to have been carefully researched and thought through. One thing is clear, we will need adequate resources (in terms of finance and influence, to name but two) if we are to succeed.

As our Chair of Trustees has pointed out in her letter to you, this is one of the reasons why we must ensure that all the work we do is underpinned by solid financial reserves.

**Thank you for your continuing support and the trust you place in us that we will use your donations wisely, in order to help as many vulnerable children as possible.**

**Simon Etherington OBE**

## Being part of the SOS family



## Chipata: Returning home

“If the circumstances of one’s birth and early childhood are anything to go by in determining a person’s destiny, then I should not be who I am or where I am today.” So says Suzgo Ndhlovu, who grew up in a remote district of Eastern Zambia, Lundazi, near Chipata. As a young boy, Suzgo recalls how he would spend cold nights on reed mats. When he saw visitors from the city, Suzgo says he became aware about the possibility of a better life and felt education

must be the way to find it. Despite his difficult home circumstances, his teachers were very encouraging. Suzgo particularly remembers his geography teacher, who told him “Happy are those who sit on pins for surely they will rise up.”

However, his father (who was divorced from his mother) didn’t see the point in paying for Suzgo to go on to higher secondary school. Thankfully, Suzgo’s mother heard of his predicament and made arrangements for him to travel to the north of the

country where an uncle lived, so he could attend secondary school. Suzgo says “for the first time I felt loved and cared for. My uncle provided me with everything a child could hope for.”

Suzgo was eventually admitted to Zambia’s top university, where he graduated with a Bachelor of Science and Education. Suzgo taught in many African countries and is proud that his former pupils have gone on to become doctors, teachers and engineers among other professions.

Now retraining at the University of Edinburgh to teach in the UK and married with a family of his own, Suzgo raises funds for the SOS Children’s Village in Chipata by running in the Edinburgh Marathon Festivals. The photo shows him surrounded by the nursery children on a recent trip to Chipata. Suzgo is thrilled that in his very poor home area, he is helping some of the poorest Zambian children find a loving family and the encouragement they need to achieve their dreams, just as he did.

# “Incredibly happy children”

If SOS Children's Villages were a military organisation, Mary Scott would be awarded our Meritorious Service Medal. Mary is a weekly volunteer in Cambridge helping with administration and fundraising events. But understanding how the UK office operates wasn't enough for Mary. She was keen to see our work on the ground and meet her sponsored child - even if that meant travelling all the way

to eastern Zambia!

Our team at Chipata don't receive many visitors, which isn't a surprise given the region's remoteness. So staff were delighted to greet Mary, her 20-year-old daughter, Louisa, and 17-year-old son, Alex. Mary was thrilled to cuddle her sponsored child, Matthew\* and meet his SOS mother, Grace (pictured below).

Alex says “from the moment we arrived at the Village, it was clear to see the love and devotion that

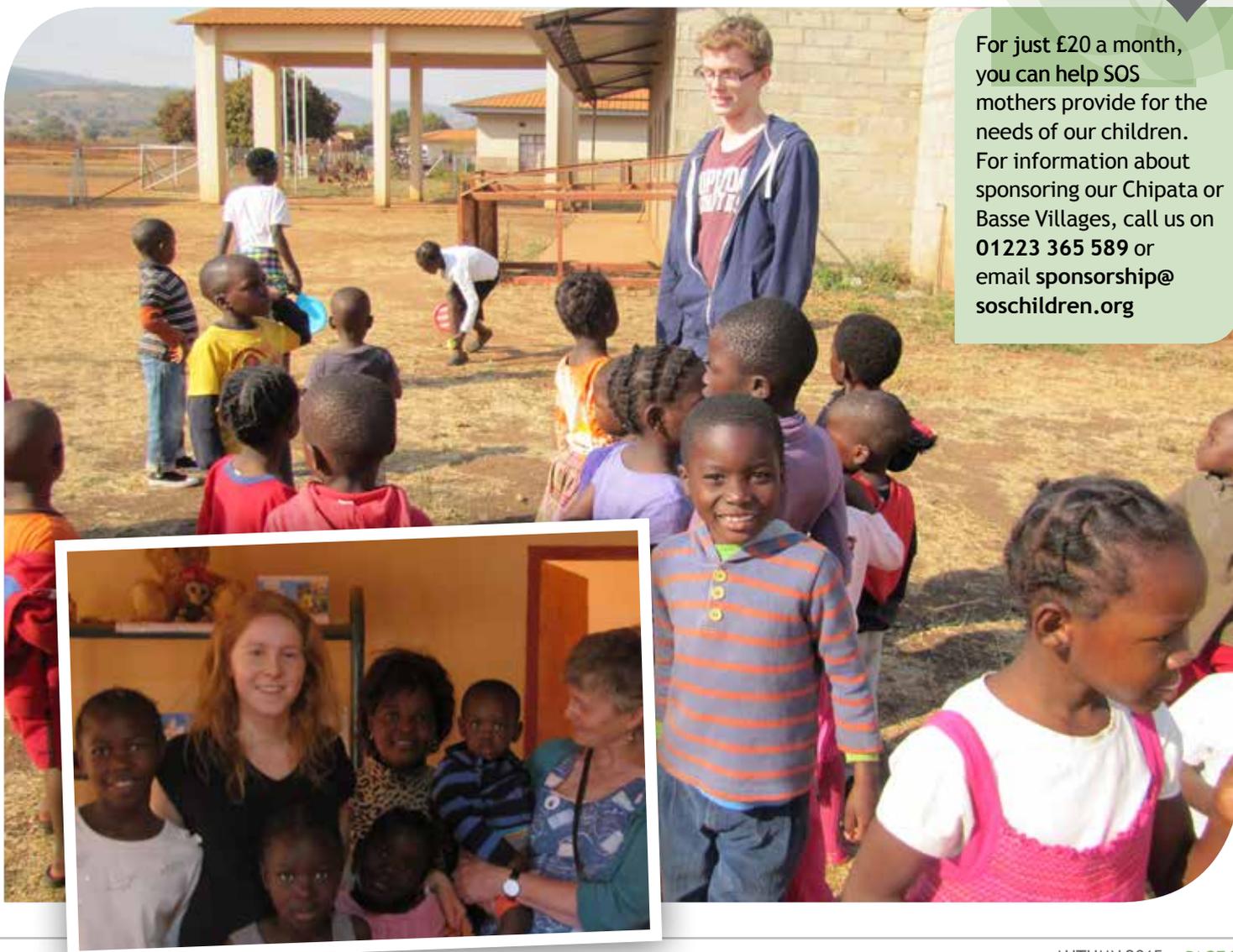
the SOS mothers give to every single child”. As a widowed mother of two children, Mary says she felt humbled to see how hard the SOS mothers work. Mary describes how they rise at 5am to light the braziers in case of power cuts and to do the washing. Though each mother cares for ten children, Mary said the homes were so neat and well-kept, with the children proudly folding their clothes in the bedrooms.

Mary, Alex and Louisa were glad to spend time playing with the children. Alex (pictured outside with the children) says how “fun” and “inquisitive” they all are. “They especially loved taking photos of each other with our camera.” Mary says her family's abiding memories will be of the “incredibly happy children” and seeing “the passion of the SOS mothers” in caring for them.

\*Name has been changed to protect our children's privacy.

Can you help our Village?

For just £20 a month, you can help SOS mothers provide for the needs of our children. For information about sponsoring our Chipata or Basse Villages, call us on **01223 365 589** or email [sponsorship@soschildren.org](mailto:sponsorship@soschildren.org)



# Being part of the SOS family

## Meeting your SOS child Never work with...

**D**ennis Hopkins and his wife, Hilary, had been thinking about sponsoring a child. Then at the start of this year, a trip was hurriedly arranged by their son for the family to meet up in Cambodia. It seemed like the perfect opportunity to visit an SOS Children's Village and see a newly sponsored child.

Since all the arrangements were last minute, Dennis describes how he didn't think to check the location of the SOS Village at Angkor Siem Reap and there were no address details on the SOS website. However, he and his family felt this was a positive thing, helping to maintain the privacy and safety of the children. With the help of a local tuk-tuk driver, Dennis eventually found the Village and describes how the next day, he and his family were shown such kind hospitality by the SOS staff and mothers.



The saying goes that you should never work with children and animals. When Dennis and his family were taken to the nursery to visit their sponsored little girl, they were "mobbed by a wave of smiling, excited children, with one exception!" Their sponsored 5-year-old was clearly

having an "off day" and looked glum (as you can see in the photo, left) while her friends chattered and laughed. Dennis says "we found it highly amusing that we travelled thousands of miles to see her and she was the only one not the slightest bit interested. But that's children for you -

you cannot predict." Dennis was keen to stress that he and his family were in no way disappointed, because the children "aren't there for our benefit!" As visitors, they were simply glad to experience a small slice of life at Siem Reap in such a "happy and welcoming environment".



## A memorable visit to SOS Children's Village Bataan

In February this year, Mark Jenner contacted us to say he was visiting the Philippines and would like to meet his sponsored child. We put Mark in touch with the local sponsorship coordinator in the Philippines, who helped him arrange his visit to the Children's Village at Bataan.

Mark says "on going to the site with my companion Paula, the first impressions were very good. The whole place was bright and clean and had an air of happiness about it. As soon as I saw some of

the kids, they were waving, smiling and coming up to me and putting my hand on their foreheads, a sign of respect there."

Mark and Paula were taken to meet the Village Director who chatted to them about the history of SOS Children's Villages in the Philippines. He also spoke to them about the children and their care at the Village. After lunch, Mark met his sponsored child, Malcolm\* and says "what a smashing little lad" he is, with a really infectious smile (which

can be seen in the photo of Malcolm with Mark above).

Malcolm loves gardening and animals and took Mark to see the Village vegetable patch and the animals. Mark describes how "we fed the pigs and he seemed to know what to do and just got on with it". Mark sees this as a good sign that through their upbringing the children are encouraged to think for themselves and to be responsible.

Of his trip overall, Mark says "I did not want to say

goodbye to Malcolm, a kid with so many smiles. Malcolm has some learning problems, but all I could see was a bright happy boy. He was saying words in English and he knows all his plants by name. I was so proud of him. I was also very proud of all the SOS mums who work so endlessly hard for the benefit of the children and the staff for all their commitment to the welfare of those in their care. Thank you SOS Children's Village Bataan."

## Being part of the SOS family



# Ebola crisis: Helping families rebuild their lives in Sierra Leone

**H**earfelt thanks go to everyone who supported our Ebola appeal last year. Though the worst of the crisis is over, the country is now dealing with the terrible after-effects of losing so many people.

The SOS Children's Villages in Freetown, Bo and Makeni are taking in children orphaned by the virus. You may remember our story on Charles (pictured), who was one of the first children to come into our care last year. We're happy to report that he and the other orphans at Makeni have now

settled well into their new home with SOS mother Mabinty.

Since our UK appeal raised a wonderful £60,000, we have been able to use funds to help affected families get back on their feet. In Makeni, Bo and Freetown, we have provided parcels containing staples such as bags of rice, beans and cooking oil, mosquito nets and hygiene items such as soap and Dettol to prevent fresh disease. This is part of the process of restarting our food security project, which had to be suspended during

the Ebola outbreak, through which caregivers will receive loans and livestock training.

26-year-old Marie Mansaray (second from left in the above photo) heads up one of the families on the SOS food security project in Goderich, Freetown. Marie lost her mother, daughter and sister to the Ebola virus and says their deaths have "left a big scar". Since her mother was looking after ten grandchildren when she died, Marie has taken over this huge responsibility. "The value of the shade is

not known until the tree is cut down," says Marie of her mother's life. Although the family is still coming to terms with the deaths of so many loved ones, Marie is determined to look after all the children and keep them in school. To that end, she is looking forward to the extra income which rearing livestock in her backyard should afford the family. Marie is deeply appreciative of the support being provided by SOS Children's Villages, all thanks to the generosity of our donors.

# Supporting children in Nepal

At our Annual Supporters' Meeting on 5th September, we welcomed Shree Shankar Pradhananga, the SOS National Director of Nepal.

Shankar showed video clips of the Kathmandu streets when the 7.8-Richter earthquake struck, giving us a small idea of the terrifying experience. Nearly 9,000 people died and more than 22,000 were injured, though if the quake had hit during the week when children were at school, the death toll would have been much higher; in the 14 worst-affected districts, 95% of schools collapsed.

Shankar gave a wonderful talk on how SOS teams

responded to help children and families in the immediate aftermath of the earthquake. For example, in Dhulikhel, Kavre, where 90% of houses were destroyed, a large relief camp was set up for displaced families. Shankar was proud of how SOS young people from our Village helped care for children at the camp, as shown in the picture of one SOS teenager looking after an infant at Kavre (see photo).

In the weeks and months which followed, SOS teams worked to reunify children with their families and distribute food and tents. Nine child-friendly spaces were also set up across

the affected districts and looked after around 2,000 children every day while their families began the process of rebuilding their lives. Three of these child-friendly spaces were in Sindhupalchowk, which suffered the highest death toll due to the collapse of all the houses.

The focus will now move on to helping communities reconstruct houses and schools. SOS Children's Villages is also running a 'home-in-a-box' scheme to distribute essential household items and will support extended families who have taken in orphaned children. 39 children who have been left with no one

to care for them have been taken into SOS Villages at Bharatpur, Gandaki, Kavre and Sanothimi. Shankar estimates that another 150-200 orphans will be moved into our Villages in the next year. This process is taking some time because the Nepalese government has temporarily suspended the movement of children from the earthquake-affected districts to prevent child trafficking. But once restrictions are removed, staff in Nepal look forward to welcoming these children into loving homes as soon as possible.

On behalf of everyone in Nepal, Shankar thanked all our supporters and corporate partners who gave so generously. Our UK appeal raised an incredible £387,000! The first tranche of this money has gone to Nepal and the remainder will be transferred as the new reconstruction and support programmes get underway.



Please help!

If you would like to continue supporting Nepal, we would particularly welcome new Village sponsors. For more information, please call us on 01223 365 589 or email [sponsorship@soschildren.org](mailto:sponsorship@soschildren.org)

## Being part of the SOS family



Jeremy with children from SOS Children's Village Semarang, Indonesia.

## Just popped out for a cycle ride!

Like many people, Jeremy Reed came across SOS Children's Villages through an internet search for a children's charity to support. So when he set off on a fundraising cycling tour from England to Australia (an incredible 15,000 miles), he didn't know quite what to expect from our Villages along the way.

Jeremy visited six SOS Villages in five countries on his route through Europe and Asia:

- Lekenik in Croatia
- Tbilisi in Georgia
- Ganja in Azerbaijan
- Luang Prabang in Laos
- Vientiane in Laos
- Semarang in Java, Indonesia

What he found at every single Village wowed him. "All the children I saw and met seemed happy and content," he says. "I was immensely impressed by the standard of housing and the love and care given to all the children."

But what impressed him the most was the mature and responsible attitude shown by the SOS children. "I was inspired by the values the children were taught - respect and responsibility for themselves, the other children, the SOS mothers, the houses and the Village as a whole."

So far, Jeremy's incredible journey has enabled him to raise nearly £4,000 in support of SOS children. That's what we call a cycling champion!

# Joining Alexander McCall Smith



In August, SOS Children's Villages UK recorded its first BBC Radio 4 Appeal. We were thrilled that novelist and long-time supporter Alexander McCall Smith agreed to voice this for us.

Born in Africa and a frequent visitor to the continent, Alexander lived in Gaborone, Botswana for a year in 1980. While there, he heard about the work of SOS Children's Villages and went to see our Village at Tlokweng, a 20-minute

drive from Gaborone.

Alexander has been a regular visitor to the Village over the years. "What impresses me most is that every child gets unconditional love. Despite their difficult backgrounds, it's wonderful to see how children thrive, thanks mainly to their SOS mothers. These are incredible women who are deeply committed. They always have big cheerful smiles on their faces."

The renowned author also explained how a piece of the Village has worked its way into his literary life. One of the SOS staff members at Tlokweng, Betty Mpodi (pictured), was the inspiration for the character of Mma Potokwane in *The No. 1 Ladies' Detective Agency* series. These books have sold over 20 million copies worldwide and so Betty's fruitcakes are now legendary.

But it isn't only Alexander's books which have gone on to be so

successful. Alexander has noted how successful many of the SOS children have done in their studies, some gaining scholarships to top schools. The author says simply that "this success is testament to the wonderful care and encouragement the children receive from their SOS mothers and the Village as a whole."

The Appeal raised a total of £17,021 so a huge thank you to everyone who listened and supported!



Photo courtesy of Mats Ögren Wanger

## Being part of the SOS family

# Refugee crisis:

## Helping children in Syria and Lebanon

In Syria, our emergency programmes continue to support thousands of families displaced by the war. As well as distributing food and clothing, our staff in Syria are expanding the number of child-friendly spaces and temporary child-care shelters, where children separated from their parents are taken. SOS mothers and staff also continue to carry out the everyday work of providing a loving home for orphaned or abandoned children and supporting SOS young people.

Lebanon hosts over 1.1 million refugees - a quarter of this small country's population - and life is harsh for most refugee families.

SOS Children's Villages has been working with the refugee community in Lebanon since March 2014. A child-friendly space and day-care centre provides around 250 children an escape from the chaos and hardship. Refugee women living around

Beirut have also been helped to earn a living to support their families.

At Khonshara in the Lebanese mountains outside Beirut, an interim emergency care centre has been set up for unaccompanied children. So far over 200 such children have been cared for and given access to schooling and psychological support.

Four-year-old Tarek is one of these children. His home in Syria was destroyed. Tarek and his brothers were found on the streets of Beirut, living in a cardboard box with their father. He was relying on handouts from passers-by.

Today, Tarek and his brother are staying at the SOS emergency interim care centre. The boys attend school while their father looks for a job and a house where they can once more be together. In the meanwhile, Tarek is happy to play and learn with other children like a normal little boy.



Photo courtesy of Björn-Owe Holmberg



## Supporting refugees across Europe

**A**s conditions in Syria and its neighbouring countries worsen, thousands are now seeking a better life. On the refugees' transit through Europe, we are on the ground providing immediate help and humanitarian aid.\*

**Austria**  
In Austria, more than 30 refugee children and young people who travelled on their own have already found new homes through SOS Children's Villages. Plans are underway to find a loving home for at least 70 more in 2015.

**Italy**  
SOS Children's Villages Mantova and Vicenza are looking after unaccompanied children who came to Italy's shores.

**Serbia**  
In Serbia, SOS Children's Villages is creating a child-friendly space for children arriving in Belgrade. This is a safe, secure place where children can play and escape from the challenges surrounding them. Over the coming months, SOS Children's Villages Serbia will provide boxes of nappies, baby food and other essential items to children and their mothers.

**Macedonia**  
In Macedonia, a team of SOS staff will be working at the Vinojug refugee site on the Greek border. The team will include a psychologist, child development specialist and education professionals. A house in SOS Children's Village Skopje will provide a temporary home to children who have made the journey alone, or who have become separated from their families.

**Greece**  
In Greece, we will provide homes for unaccompanied children in our Children's Villages throughout the country. We will also offer counselling,

food, clothing and support for parents and children living in refugees centres.

**Finland**  
We are providing care to unaccompanied children at our Finnish SOS Youth Home and our Children's Village in Tapiola.

**Croatia**  
Backpacks filled with essential items such as warm clothing and toiletries will be given out to refugees.

Please get in touch with us if you would like to help support vulnerable children and adults in emergency situations.

Please help!

## Being part of the SOS family



## Record-breaking swim

**B**en Hooper, 37, is set to embark on a truly amazing challenge in aid of SOS Children's Villages by attempting to swim 2,000 miles from Senegal, West Africa, to Brazil. If successful, Ben will be the first person in history to have swum across the Atlantic Ocean.

The endurance swimmer, from Cheltenham, will

start his swim from Dakar Harbour in December 2015 and hopes to arrive in Natal, Northern Brazil, at the end of April 2016. Ben will swim at least 17 miles (24k) a day for up to 12 hours in a staged swim, tackling physical, mental and emotional challenges, enduring sharks, storms, currents, heat and discomfort. In between

he will rest and receive food from a support boat, piloted by Atlantic rower and sailor Roy Finley. To help him achieve his goal, Ben will wear a specially designed shark protection wet suit and the support boat will be equipped with counter-shark equipment.

Ben has been training in open water since 2013,

working under the guidance of his support team and sports psychologist. Through his extraordinary efforts, Ben hopes to raise £1 million for three charities, including SOS Children's Villages.

Ben says: "It is a privilege to be able to raise funds for SOS Children's Villages. It is my goal to inspire all children and adults alike, to show nothing is impossible and that with hard work and self-belief we can chase down our dreams."

You can follow Ben's progress on our Twitter and Facebook pages as well as [www.bensmiles.co.uk](http://www.bensmiles.co.uk) and [www.swimthebigblue.com](http://www.swimthebigblue.com)

## Amec Foster Wheeler gets moving for 'Steptember' fundraiser



In September, SOS global corporate partner Amec Foster Wheeler plc held "Steptember" – an international fundraising initiative raising money for SOS Children's Villages projects worldwide. Employees from a number of Amec Foster Wheeler's offices walked, jogged or ran whilst using the 'MapMyWalk' smartphone app to track their distances and raise money.

The Abu Dhabi-based team completed an 8km walk along Abu Dhabi Beach; whilst employees in Philadelphia, U.S.,

walked 2,500 steps through LOVE Park. Staff at the Vancouver offices raised more than £600 through an employee golf tournament and the Paradip Site team in India completed a 3km walk.

Projects benefiting from Amec Foster Wheeler's fundraising include SOS mother training in Beijing, China, and vocational training in San Lorenzo de El Escorial, Spain.

**A big thank you to everyone who took part!**

## Cirque du Soleil

Since 2014 SOS Children's Villages has worked in partnership with Cirque du Soleil to help young people in Mexico, Brazil and South Africa develop the skills they need to become independent, confident adults.

Through the unique 'Cirque du Monde' project, skilled instructors use interactive exercises such as jugglery, acrobatics, Chinese yoyo, hula hoop, theatre and stilts as a way of fostering self-confidence, trust, expression and cooperation among participants. The unique project is funded through tickets sales worldwide and the troupe's current show, AMALUNA will be continuing the support throughout 2016.



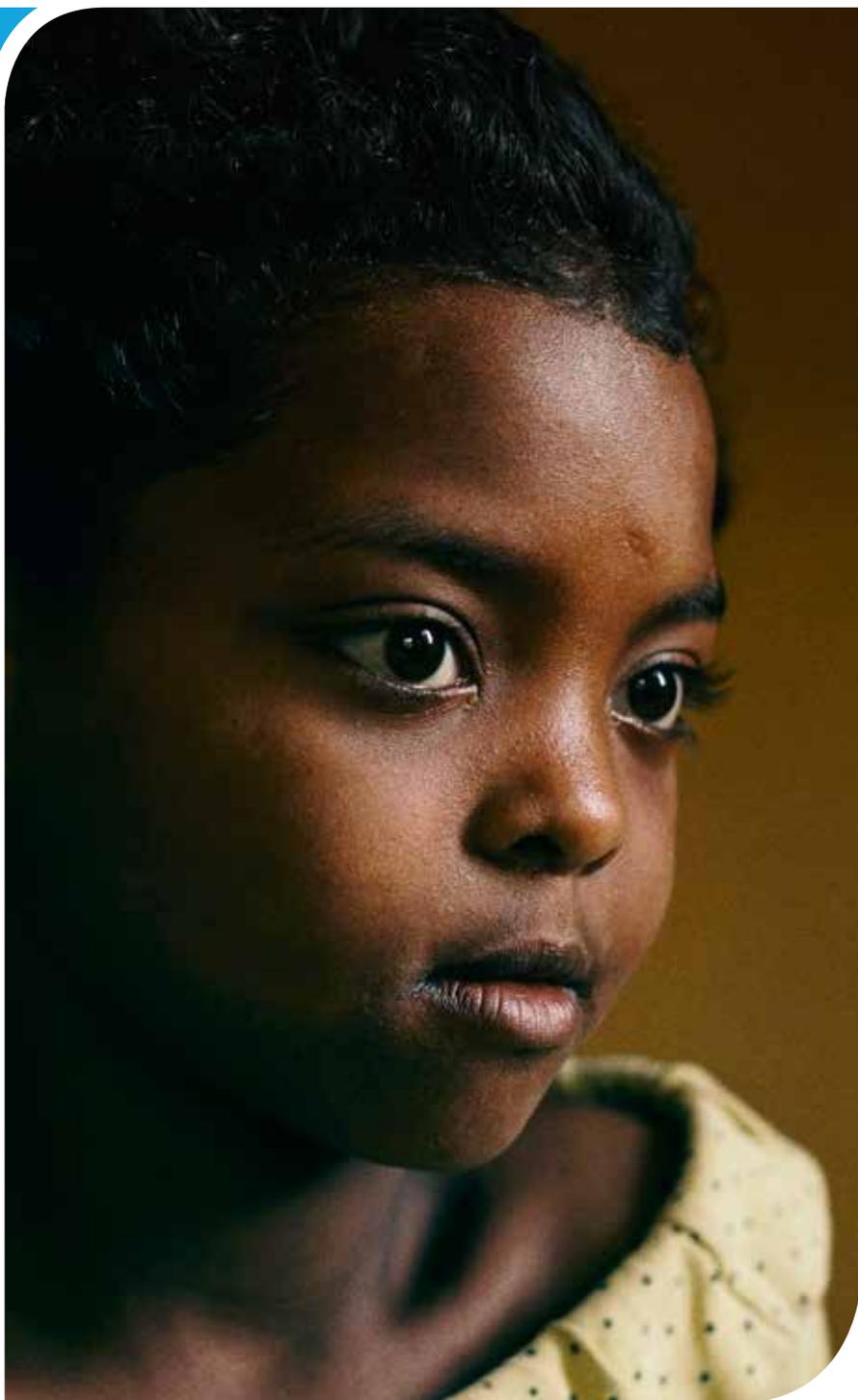
## SOS Children's Villages gift cards

This festive season, make your money go further for SOS Children's Villages by purchasing a gift card. This special card can be used at over 21,000 leading shops nationwide, while supporting orphaned and abandoned children. You can even add a personal message and have the gift card delivered directly to a friend or family member on whatever day you choose.



The SOS Children's Villages gift card is available now from: [soschildren.charitycash.org](http://soschildren.charitycash.org)

# What will you leave behind?



## One sentence in your will could change a child's life.

Childhood should be a special and carefree time. Unfortunately, through poverty, disease and war, many children lose the mothers able to give them a safe and normal childhood.

SOS Children's Villages provides a loving home and mother to 82,000 children and young people around the world, but we would like to help more orphaned and abandoned children.

By leaving money in your will, you can ensure a child has all the love and security they need to grow into a happy, healthy adult and one day have a family of their own.

**Please remember a child in your will today.**

For more information about leaving bequests in your will, please visit our website at: [www.soschildren.org/legacies](http://www.soschildren.org/legacies)

Or email [remember@soschildren.org](mailto:remember@soschildren.org) or call us direct on 01223 222 977



**SOS CHILDREN'S  
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