

Child Stories

Edward SOS Children's Village Bindura, Zimbabwe

Edward and his two young brothers from Zimbabwe, found themselves alone after their mother and father died in 2007. This meant that Edward, who was aged just ten, was left to look after his two brothers (aged eight and four) - alone. Edward struggled to find enough money to feed his family and caring for his little brothers meant he was unable to attend school.

Thankfully, Social Services soon placed Edward and his brothers in the care of the SOS Children's Village in Bindura and the three boys were welcomed by their new SOS mother, Patricia, in 2008. Under Patricia's care, they have found a safe and loving family. Patricia says "The boys mix easily with others and are very responsible. Edward enjoys helping me in the garden." Edward is particularly happy he is able to attend the SOS Primary School, "I'm very happy to be in a home with my two brothers and SOS family members - I'm also happy to be back at school after so long!" he says.

Child-headed households are an increasingly common occurrence in Zimbabwe, particularly due to high prevalence of HIV/AIDS. Children not only have the distress of seeing their parents becoming ill, but they often end up caring for themselves and their siblings. SOS Children's Village Bindura comprises of fifteen family houses which offer a home for up to 180 children, many of whom are HIV/AIDS orphans.



Edward

Mala SOS Children's Village Pondicherry, India

Mala comes from a fishing community in Karaikal, India. She came to the SOS Children's Village Pondicherry, aged six, after her mother died in the Boxing Day Tsunami in 2004. Today, she is looked after by her SOS mother, Banumathy. "When she first arrived in the Village, Mala did not want to study or play. She would often sit alone" Banumathy says, "but slowly Mala accepted her new home and family and started going to school. She also made friends with her new SOS brothers and sisters in the house."

Today, Mala has adjusted well and is progressing at school. She is very close to her SOS mother and siblings and is attached

to her new friend Saranya who is her classmate.

The SOS Children's Village in Pondicherry was built following the Boxing Day Tsunami, to provide a home for children who had lost their entire families. They are helped to overcome their traumatic experiences with the help of a mother, a home, a family and a sense of belonging.



Mala and her SOS family

Rati SOS Children's Village Shillong, India

Ten-month-old Rati came to SOS Children's Village Shillong in India when she was just two weeks old. She was extremely malnourished and very ill. Rati's native home is a village in Meghalaya, a federal state in the north-eastern part of India. The village is located about 200 km away from the closest city, is extremely poor and can only be reached by foot.

Rati's mother died immediately after her birth, leaving Rati in the care of her father and other relatives. However, the family lived in severe poverty and were unable to feed the baby. Rati soon fell very ill with severe diarrhoea. A Social Worker from SOS Children's Village Shillong visiting the village found Rati in a terrible condition. "When I saw Rati for the first time she was very small, malnourished and it seemed as if she could collapse at any moment. I immediately took the baby with me and hospitalized her," he recalls.

After one week of hospitalisation Rati showed signs of improvement. The Village Director contacted her father but he refused to take the baby back. During the following months, Rati grew into a healthy and charming child. She is a passionate 'crawler' and has already learned to stand up by holding on to a table. She has also started uttering a few words like "ouch" and "mama". "Rati is everyone's darling. She is the centre of attention in the family. All the kids are extremely fond of her", says her SOS mother.

At present there are 39 SOS Children's Villages in India, 15 SOS Schools, 7 SOS Vocational Training Centres, 33 SOS Social Centres and 9 SOS Medical Centres.



Rati



Salam SOS Children's Village Ksarnaba, Lebanon

Four years ago, a two-day-old baby was found close to SOS Children's Village Ksarnaba, in the Bekaa region of Lebanon, on the same day that marked the end of the 2006 war on Lebanon. The baby was taken into the care of the Village staff and was named 'Salam' (meaning "peace" in Arabic).

Salam, now aged four, lives with his SOS Mother Majdaand and three siblings. Salam, the youngest sibling, is by far the cheekiest, according to his mother. "He is very lively and bright. He imitates his older siblings, whatever they do. When I sneeze or cough, he pats my back gently and says 'bless you'. I bought him new boots the other day. He looked at them and expressing fascination he asked 'this is for me? WOW, thank you'," says Majda. His Nursery teacher says: "For a long time Salam was the youngest baby at the nursery. He was so quiet and calm, but he has changed a lot this year. He has become very energetic and likes to explore everything."

SOS Children's Village Ksarnaba is located approximately 7 miles north of Zahle, the largest city in the region. It consists of 8 family houses, an SOS Nursery, Social Centre and Vocational Training Centre. In the SOS Nusery, 75 children from the SOS Children's Village and from the neighbouring community are cared for daily.



Salam

Otto SOS Children's Villages Nairobi, Kenya

At the age of twelve, Otto was an innocent victim of the 20-year civil war in Uganda, having suffered terrible facial wounds from a bullet. Today, thanks to SOS Children's Villages, Otto is regaining his lost childhood.

Otto was kidnapped by the notorious Lord's Resistance Army of Uganda, which regularly abducted children to use as child soldiers and sex slaves. Thankfully, Otto's abductors were ambushed by the Ugandan army shortly after he was taken, Otto was rescued. But even though Otto was freed, he was shot in crossfire, incurring serious facial injuries that left him without a nose, only partial hearing, and in terrible pain.

SOS Children's Villages staff in northern Uganda in May 2002 found Otto and decided to take him to Nairobi, Kenya, where he could be treated, free of charge, by a plastic surgeon. Otto moved into a family house at SOS Children's Village Nairobi and underwent several operations to rebuild the damage to his nose and to his ear. His nose was partially restored but there was still a lot of reconstruction to be done. So when Placet, an organisation based in Germany that provides plastic and reconstructive surgery to victims of terror, war and torture, offered

treatment to children from SOS Children's Villages, Otto's name was the first to be put forward.

Otto spent ten months in SOS Children's Village Berlin under the care of an SOS mother. The reconstruction of his face was not easy and Otto estimates that he underwent up to seven operations before the surgeons were happy that they had done all they could. Otto's recuperation lasted seven months and he finally arrived back at the Nairobi village in August 2008.

In his short life Otto has experienced so much. From a normal boy living his childhood in Uganda, Otto became an innocent victim of a brutal war and suffered unbearable pain. Slowly beginning the long and painful road to recovery, starting at the SOS Children's Village Nairobi, Otto learnt how to become a boy again - to live with a family, to go to school, to make friends and to play with them, in a secure and peaceful environment far from the horrors of war.

Today, Otto is making plans for the future. He is looking forward to going back to Uganda for two weeks, to completing his school education and, he hopes, to begin his training in mechanical engineering at the SOS Vocational Training Centre Nairobi - something he aspires to. But despite his plans for the future Otto will never forget all those people who have

helped him. To the SOS staff and the many doctors who have helped him, he has only one word to say from the bottom of his heart: Thank you!

In June 2002, SOS Children Uganda started an SOS Emergency Relief Programme in Gulu, in order to provide active assistance to displaced children and children traumatised by the conflict. This was later converted into an SOS Children's Village which today cares for some of the many displaced children who could not be reunited with their families.



Otto

Yusri and Yusrani SOS Children's Village Meulaboh

Ten-year-old twin brothers Yusri and Yusrani, like most children who live at the SOS Children's Village Meulaboh, are survivors of the 2004 Boxing Day Tsunami. They were just five when the powerful Tsunami killed many people, including their parents in their home town of Tanom. Following the tragedy, their elderly grandmother did her best to care for them, but grief stricken and poor; she found it difficult to cope. She decided the best thing to do was to take them to live with a new mother and family at the SOS Children's Village in Meulaboh, one of six Villages built following the tragedy.

At the SOS Children's Village the boys have found a very loving and caring home where they now live with their new siblings and SOS mother, who is also a Tsunami survivor. They enjoy regular visits from their grandmother and are doing well at school.

More than 130,000 people died in Indonesia following the Tsunami, and thousands of children were separated from their parents. The 200 km coastline between the cities of Banda Aceh and Meulaboh was the worst affected area. SOS Children's Village Meulaboh consists of 15 family houses, offering a new home for up to 150 orphaned or abandoned children.



Yusri and Yusrani



Yusri and Yusrani with their SOS mother

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Luisa SOS Children's Village Tuxtla Gutiérrez, Mexico

SOS Children helps children like six month old Luisa, who arrived at the SOS Children's Village Tuxtla Gutiérrez in Mexico with severe head injuries caused by domestic abuse. She receives the love, education and medical care she needs to have the best quality of life possible.

Despite being born in perfect health, following months of sustained violence, doctors feared Luisa might never be able to walk or talk. After time spent in intensive care, and soon after her first birthday in February 2005, Luisa came to live with her new family at the SOS Children's Village. Thanks to the love and care of her SOS mother Valeria, and intensive therapy from the SOS Therapy and Rehabilitation Centre, she is making excellent progress and can now sit up by herself, eat better, and is making fantastic progress.

SOS Children's Village Tuxtla Gutiérrez offers a home to 70 physically or mentally disabled children. It consists of nine family houses, and an SOS School for children with special needs, including five classrooms and a library. The SOS Therapy and Rehabilitation Centre for children with special needs offers different types of occupational, speech, hydro-and physiotherapy. Both the School and Therapy Centre are open to children from the local community, and offer respite care for families.