

2019 ANNUAL REPORT

SUCCESS STORIES



SOS CHILDREN'S
VILLAGES
UNITED KINGDOM

The mission of SOS Children's Villages UK - to build families for children in need, to help them shape their own future and to share in the development of their communities - has never been more important. Coronavirus, wars, natural disasters, and poverty are ruining childhoods and endangering children's futures. In 2019, our UK donors helped us ensure children could grow up feeling safe, loved and supported in many countries around the world. Here are just a few of the projects that have transformed the lives of children and parents in the past year – read more in our full





SUCCESS STORY

Child sponsorship changes lives

Early one morning in Nepal, a new-born baby girl was abandoned at a Kathmandu hospital.

Sadly, this is an all too common occurrence in Nepal, where more than one million children have been left without parents – and the numbers are rising. The 2015 earthquake pushed millions of people into poverty and subsequent landslides and political unrest are further exacerbating the situation.

Fortunately, this little girl would not be alone for long.

Within days, SOS mother Aadi had offered her a home at our SOS village community in Sanothimi, and she had a family to love and protect her. All the families in the village came to her naming ceremony, where Aadi proudly named her Rani, which means Queen. Though most of her neighbours call her ‘nani’ – little girl – as she walks on wobbly feet around the village, holding her SOS mother’s hand and greeting the people she passes, which is one of her favourite things to do.

“Rani is a joy for our family,” Aadi tells us. “She has brought us so much happiness.”

Our child and village sponsors, who help fund the Sanothimi village, have spared 153 children like Rani from growing up alone. Hundreds more are growing up in SOS families across the country thanks to their support. When Rani is old enough, she will join her older siblings at the nearby SOS school, which also welcomes children from the local community whose parents cannot afford their education.

The generosity of SOS UK’s sponsors meant 4,886 children grew up protected and loved in SOS families worldwide in 2019, safe in the knowledge they would never be alone.

SUCCESS STORY

No child should lose their parents because of poverty

In the mountainous district of Nuwara Eliya in Sri Lanka poverty is high, employment is hard to find, and wages are low. The country's twenty-six-year civil war hit the area especially hard and most families are still living without the basics for survival - clean water, toilets, electricity, education and medical care. For many women, the only alternative has been to work as domestic servants overseas, leaving their children behind, and some children have been forced to work to support their families or marry young.

Under such conditions, families are at risk of breaking apart. But we don't believe any child should lose their parents because of poverty.

An SOS project to support the families of Nuwara Eliya is helping parents escape poverty – training them in new job skills, offering guidance on how to set up their own businesses, and helping them obtain micro-loans. SOS community workers are also making sure children have access to healthcare and education, providing nutritious meals, textbooks and extra tuition.

Since joining the project, Sachini's teenage daughter Hiruni has been able to return to school. "Hiruni has showed a keen interest in studying since her childhood, but we were worried as we couldn't think of a way to pay for her schooling," Sachini told us. "But now she has passed her exams and is doing an advanced mathematics course." Sachini is proud as she shares Hiruni's ambition to become an engineer.



This project in Nuwara Eliya has been supported with a generous 5-year grant from The PD Foundation.



Thank you to The PD Foundation for helping us make this project possible.

SUCCESS STORY

Building futures in The Gambia

Many more young people in the Upper River Region of The Gambia can now get the skills and qualifications they need to live a fulfilled and independent life and contribute to their communities, at a new SOS Youth Training Centre. 200 students have already enrolled and are taking classes in IT and mobile phone repairs, social work, sewing and craftwork and more.

The Gambia's population is young and youth unemployment is one of the most significant challenges in the country. Almost half of young people were unemployed in 2017, and when they do find work, wages are poor and job security is low.

Offering young people the skills the Gambian workplace really needs is the key to improving their lives, and the local economy for everyone. Young women face additional barriers to training, so reaching them was especially important – half of the students are women.

“This training centre is urgently needed for the young people in Basse, who have few or no opportunities to gain the skills required to get a job or set up a small business,” the Chair of the Village Development Committee which will eventually run the centre to ensure it can be maintained in the long term, Manlafi Sanyang, says.

“I am excited by how much interest there is already from youths in the area. It will make a massive difference, and help young people stay here to help the community flourish.”

Covid-19 forced the temporary closure of all schools and training facilities in The Gambia. Teachers helped students keep up with their studies through WhatsApp and emails, until the centre could reopen its doors in mid-October – now we're hoping to expand our remote learning so we can reach even more marginalised young people in rural Gambia.

SUCCESS STORY

Saving lives after Cyclone Idai

When Cyclone Idai decimated the coastal city of Beira in Mozambique in early 2019, leaving hundreds of thousands of children homeless and hungry, SOS UK's donors helped our local teams save lives. They reached out to the poorest families who would have the hardest time recovering from the disaster first - female-headed households.

The emergency food, blankets, water purifiers, and hygiene items they provided kept children and mothers alive in those first few days and weeks - like Luisa and her six children and grandson. And at our child-friendly space they found a safe place to play, learn, and enjoy their childhood again.

"We lost everything. I saw my dream house completely flattened. But at least my family has enough food. I'm alive, and I didn't lose any of my children," Luisa told us, as the children sat in the ruins of their home.

But survival isn't enough. Children deserve more. By restoring livelihoods, getting children back to school, building resilience so families can withstand future disasters, and providing traumatised children with the long-term psychological care they need, we protected children's futures and restored their childhoods.

SOS psychologist Norah Brikenhof has been supporting children in Beira. "Life here is hard - it's about survival every day. Often there is no time to calm and re-assure a child and negative emotions are simply laughed away," she says. "Without the right emotional support, many families will not be able to continue to care for their children or their livelihoods, so my job is to reinforce parents' strengths and coping mechanisms."



“ In those early days after a disaster, we must give hope. ”

-Norah Brikenhof

The global pandemic has hit the world's poorest families hardest and thrown more children into poverty. Our work is more vital than ever for children, parents and communities - thanks to our donors, we can make sure SOS's support reaches those who need it most.

Learn more about how we are transforming children's lives in our full