

Family Matters

SOS CHILDREN'S VILLAGES UK SUPPORTER MAGAZINE
SPRING 2021

IN THIS ISSUE

Abena's story:
Securing her
right to education

SOS therapy:
We are not defined
by our trauma

**New family centre in
Brazil:** In memory of
Professor Lis Mosekilde

**Breaking
barriers
in India**



**SOS CHILDREN'S
VILLAGES**

[f](#) [soschildrensvillagesuk](#)
[t](#) [@soschildrenuk](#)
[i](#) [@soschildrenuk](#)

Chinta Padma poses for the camera outside her home with five-year-old daughter, Rani, who has both mental and visual impairments. After her husband suffered a terrible accident which affected his ability to walk, Chinta received support from SOS Children's Village Tirupati in 2015.

Using community loans to buy a cow, she started a milk business and within three years almost doubled her family's income.

"I can now provide fresh milk for my daughter, to keep her strong and healthy. She needs more care and support because she is special. Today I have a happy family life," smiles Chinta.

Women are disproportionately affected by poverty and many have little or no say in the decisions which affect their lives, even when, as in Chinta's case, circumstances mean they are the main breadwinners. Empowering women to become financially independent and improving their living conditions is one of the ways we are helping families stay together.



Getting through the pandemic **together**

It has been an especially tough year or so for families all over the world. We have all had to dig deep to find the strength and resilience to weather the coronavirus storm. For many of us the vaccine heralds an end to the pandemic, but for others it is just the beginning of a journey to rebuild their lives.

Coronavirus has undoubtedly reversed decades of progress on poverty, healthcare and education in many of the poorest communities around the world, further widening the gap between the richest and poorest countries. It is the worst human and economic crisis of our lifetime impacting children and families, and that is why we need you more than ever.

Thanks to your continued support SOS Children's Villages was able to help families in desperate need of urgent food supplies, personal protection equipment and antibacterial kits as soon as the pandemic broke, as well as extending our long-term programmes to even more people affected by the crisis.

As with all of our work, we know that there are no short-term fixes. With your help, we plan to double our efforts going forward to deal with the real socio-economic fall-out from coronavirus, helping families who were already struggling before the pandemic, to rebuild their lives.

We know that families' lives can be transformed with the right kind of care and support focusing on their long-term future. With your help, we are strengthening the fabric of society and creating real opportunities for children to thrive.

This year has seemed bleak at times but love and hope are prevailing. I have been so inspired by the strength of the children and the families we support, the wonderful SOS teams who have worked harder than ever before and you, our supporters without whom none of this would be possible. Together we can provide a better future for all children everywhere.

Alison Wallace,
Chief Executive Officer,
SOS Children's Villages UK



Escaping armed conflict

When deadly clashes re-erupted in Nagorno-Karabakh in September last year killing over a hundred civilians and displacing thousands, SOS teams rapidly co-ordinated the safe evacuation of vulnerable children and their families from the conflict zone.

Having worked in Armenia for over 30 years, we were able to step in immediately to care for children like Liana and Eduard who were taken under the wings of SOS teams at Kotayk and Yerevan.

15-year-old Liana and her younger siblings were brought to the safety of the SOS Children's Village in Kotayk from a state orphanage in Nagorno-Karabakh, but their 18-year-old brother, Michael, was separated from them.

When Liana finally got a call from him, she was elated to hear that he was okay. She says, "For so long I felt as if something was clenching my heart, and when I heard his voice it went away." She now looks forward to a time when they can be reunited.

Similarly, Eduard and his family fled to Yerevan with only the clothes on their backs. They sheltered at a hotel where they received support from SOS. "It was like a miracle," says Eduard's mother, Maria, of the assistance which continues to this day.

Eduard longs to go home, but the family can't return.

"I miss our house and my toys. I miss my school and my friends," he sighs. "Here I go to school, but it's not the same."

Because SOS has been active in the region for more than 30 years, we were able to respond quickly in this humanitarian crisis, which was intensified by the onset of a harsh Caucasus winter and the impact of coronavirus. We will continue to provide urgent care for Liana, Eduard and their families as well as supporting them and many others like them to rebuild their lives in the long-term.



Care and support turns a family's fortunes around in Ghana

"My future is all I am thinking about right now. I am no longer tied down by worry and work; I am free and my heart sings with joy." - Abena

At just 15, Abena had to go out on the streets of Ejisu, Ghana, every day to sell nuts, making barely enough money to feed her siblings just once a day. When Abena's father abandoned them, it triggered a mental health crisis in her mother, Helena, meaning she could no longer work and provide for the family. Abena felt she had no choice but to step in.

"I saw people mugged and beaten on the streets," Abena recalls. "I had to be brave. Seeing my little brother and sister eat a small meal made the risk worth it."

Thankfully, in 2019 Helena found SOS Children's Villages, and almost immediately they were able to help every member of the family. Helena received a grant to start rearing pigs, so she could sell the piglets to other farmers and earn enough to provide for her children.

But they didn't stop there: the SOS team also gave Helena crucial training in pig and maize farming, access to parenting workshops to restore her confidence as a parent and support in financial and business management to expand her business in the future.

Abena was delighted to return to school, along with her seven-year-old sister, supported by SOS with a school uniform, textbooks, exercise books, school bag and shoes.

When the coronavirus caused schools to close, thanks to SOS, Abena didn't have another gap in her education. She went to study in one of the centres SOS set up for children without access to radio, television or internet at home.

Having returned to her re-opened school in October, Abena is excited about what the future holds and dreams of becoming a nurse. Helena says she no longer feels isolated as she did before, "I am pleased that our quality of life has improved and my dignity as a mother has returned. Family means a lot to me; without my family and my children, I do not really have any meaning in my life. We are very happy and comfortable and my children have hope that they too, can be great in the future."



As a result of the coronavirus pandemic, SOS Ghana:

Provided food or hygiene items to all the 268 families they were working with

268
families

Raised awareness of good hygiene through posters and radio broadcasts, and they set up e-learning to help 900 children across eight communities.

900
children

We are not defined by our **trauma**

Virtually all children in SOS's care will have experienced some form of distress or loss. Many children will also have been exposed to mistreatment, neglect, violence or other traumatic events. The impact of trauma on a child's wellbeing can be extreme. It's vital that they get counselling early.

Because of the way SOS works with children long-term, meeting their immediate needs and being there for them consistently as they grow up, we often only see this trauma coming out in children long after the actual traumatic event has taken place. This is why providing counselling and emotional support is an essential part of our work with children at all stages of their lives.

Drawing out the pain

When Magnoudewa came to SOS in Togo, she was a traumatised little girl. She had experienced the loss of both of her parents and witnessed the brutal murder of her older sister. Today our psychologist is helping her work through her pain in a child-friendly space where she can express herself through drawing.

Magnoudewa's first session was heart-breaking. She drew a picture of herself hiding behind her sister's skirt, being shot at by an armed man. This devastating memory might never disappear, but Magnoudewa is learning that it doesn't have to define her.

After six months of love, support and counselling, Magnoudewa drew a new picture, of a mother and children playing in the sun. This was her new reality and is just one example of how counselling and long-term individual support can help children overcome trauma and see a brighter future.



"When the children come to us, we offer them affection, love, healthy relationships with other children, education and a normal life. We see them start to thrive and become proactive," enthuses Teresa Ngigi, SOS psychologist. *"They start to see life differently and to believe in themselves."*

Changing the channel

In the Sinjar province in Iraq, 13-year-old Behram was unable to focus at school, and his grades were slipping. He couldn't stop reliving the night ISIS had attacked his village. Though he and his family had escaped, Behram could not escape the horrors he had seen in the war and his mind was replaying it constantly.

But SOS counsellors have taught him ways to cope with the experience. Whenever he has flashbacks, he pretends his head is a television set and uses his imaginary remote control to change the channel from that petrifying memory to the day he was safe again and given toys and colouring pencils. Almost immediately, he was able to focus again, and he felt he had more control over his life because he knew what to do when the terrifying, traumatic past tried to come back to haunt him. Feeling more confident, his schoolwork soon got better.

Magnoudewa and Behram are just two of the thousands of children and young people around the world who receive long-term support and counselling to help them cope with what they have been through. Their memories may last a lifetime, but with the right support, those memories don't have to define who they are.





Lis speaking at a conference



Remembering Lis

Built in honour of Professor Lis Mosekilde, a distinguished doctor and highly acclaimed bone scientist who sadly passed away in 2002, the Lis Mosekilde Centre, affectionally known locally as the 'Lis Centre,' opened its doors in Araçoiaba, Brazil, in December 2020.

The centre was made possible by a generous donation from Mr Michael Hewitt, the late Lis Mosekilde's husband; a fitting tribute to a woman who spent her life caring for others. As well as covering construction costs, Mr Hewitt's donation will also pay for the first year of running it.

Despite opening in the midst of a global pandemic, we did not let coronavirus hamper us and in two short months, 500 adults (90% of them female) and 550 children had already received health care, meals, educational support, help with access to public services, family support and employment advice.

In addition, during the national lockdown, we visited 92 vulnerable families and when restrictions prevented us from doing home visits, we used video calls and WhatsApp messaging to support them instead.

"Having a health centre near my home is a blessing. Now I don't have to walk for hours to reach the clinic and to receive assistance."

When children could not eat at the centre due to lockdown restrictions, we took the food to them, ensuring 350 families didn't go hungry. We handed out face masks and sanitiser and launched a coronavirus prevention campaign using video and WhatsApp to reach the community. And whilst schools were closed, we hosted online educational and social workshops for over 200 children and teenagers.

In a very short time, the 'Lis Centre' has embedded itself firmly in the hearts of local people. It has become known as a welcoming and safe place for people in need, keeping Lis Mosekilde's legacy well and truly alive through its continued work.

We are so grateful to everyone who donates in memory of a loved one, or who leaves a gift in their Will to SOS Children's Villages. If you would like to find out more, please call us on 01223 365589 or email: tracey.mccluskey@sosuk.org

Building a better future

Finding employment and decent work is essential for young people to become self-reliant members of their communities, but 68 million young people around the world remain unemployed today.

Life changing skills

23-year-old Aaden from Somaliland could so easily have been one of them. Instead, he stands out as a shining example of how a new skill can be the difference between poverty and prosperity.

Just four years ago, Aaden was desperate. In Somaliland, a country with one of the world's highest youth unemployment rates, he had few opportunities.

We started working with him and his family in 2017 and helped him to join a technical school in his home town, Berbera, learning how to make aluminium furniture and installations. Now, he makes stylish window and door frames, tables and shelves, popular amongst the architects designing Berbera's new building districts.



"Before I learnt how to do this job my mother, six siblings and I lived in one small room," explains Aaden, "We did not have a latrine and had to share the one in the neighbourhood. Today, my family is comfortable in a three-room house. We even have our own latrine. My younger brothers and sisters are in school, and these days food is not a problem."

Nurturing a better future

In Vietnam, SOS mother Phan shows that when children and young people are cared for and supported, they can become their strongest selves.

She has created a loving home and an empowering and motivational environment for the 28 children she has looked after over the past 17 years, enhancing the development of each and every one of them so they can build lasting relationships and prepare themselves for their future.



"My motivation as an SOS mother is to see my children grow up, develop and have a stable job. I'm pleased when they can build their own family and lead a happy life."

Including the most **vulnerable**

In too many societies around the world, stereotypes, prejudice, and stigma contribute to the discrimination and exclusion experienced by children with disabilities in all aspects of their lives. But with the right support, education and developmental care, they can have the same opportunities to thrive as anyone else, which is why it is absolutely critical that no-one is left behind, especially the most vulnerable.

Fighting the stigma in Nepal

"In Nepal, there is still a stigma in society about children with disabilities. It makes me so sad that the children have to face it," says SOS mother, Saraswati.

For the past 40 years, SOS Children's Village Jorpati in Kathmandu has provided a loving home for children with physical and mental disabilities whose families can no longer take care of them. The children receive physical therapy and tuition and when they are ready, they join local mainstream schools. For those children who require more intensive support, we have an educational programme to develop their independence and prepare them for the transition to adulthood.

Finding hope in Venezuela

When Alex's family joined the SOS family strengthening programme in 2017, he was only eight months old.

"My little Alex was always rejected," says Sixa, Alex's mother, "people advised me to look for professional help, but I was in denial."

With the help of SOS, Alex was diagnosed with a moderate psychomotor development delay affecting his physical and mental development.



With special care and therapy, he can now walk and talk, and soon his motor skills and speech will improve enough for him to attend school.



Breaking barriers in India

17-year-old Manimeghlai, known as Mani amongst her friends, has been living at SOS Children's Village Khajuri Kalan in India since she was three. When she arrived at the village, no one would have ever imagined that she would one day win gold in the 500 metre cycling event at the Special Olympics World Summer Games in Abu Dhabi in 2019.



Mani lives with numerous intellectual disabilities, but she has never let that hold her back. In fact, the only thing that has hindered her Olympic ambitions this year is the pandemic. Now Mani can't wait for her next competition and we will be cheering her on all the way.

Thanks to your generosity and support, we have been able to transform the lives of thousands of disabled children who are so often marginalised and abandoned, so that they can take control of their lives and write their own futures.

Working with the most vulnerable refugees in Lesbos

We continue to work in Greece, where we support about 200 children every day at the Kara Tepe Refugee Camp on the island of Lesbos. The camp accommodates more than 1,200 of the most vulnerable refugees arriving there; and more than a third of these are children.

SOS has helped more than 20,000 children in Kara Tepe Refugee Camp since 2015.

We work with children with physical or learning disabilities providing them with educational and emotional support programmes to prepare them for the day they can leave the camp and start their new lives.



White flags are a cry for extra **help** in Peru

Make-shift white flags fluttered frantically in the wind outside homes across Peru for months during the coronavirus pandemic, hung out as a cry for help, a symbol that families had no more food.

An estimated 28 million people in Peru are living in extreme poverty and the coronavirus lockdown left more than a third of them without food. Faced with a community struggling to feed itself, six inspirational women in Nueva Ciudad Inca, a small town in Peru, came together to create a soup kitchen with the support of SOS in Peru. They called it Olla Solidaria (the Solidarity Pot), and on a typical day they fed more than 250 people.



One plate for every child

For many kids the food from Olla Solidaria was their only meal of the day.

Mónica Bustos, an SOS social worker, says that children made up most of the people in the queue at the soup kitchen, as their parents were out working or looking for work.

A choice between eating and home schooling

Often, families in Nueva Ciudad Inca had to choose between eating or buying credit for their mobile phones - which their children needed to follow online classes during the lockdown.

13-year-old Marco had to leave his family and go to live with a relative in the city so that he could follow classes online.

"Since I want to study to become an engineer or a lawyer to help my mother and my community, I had to go," he explains.

Nine-year-old Laura dreams of becoming a vet. Her father took their only mobile phone to work during the week, so she could only do her schoolwork on Sundays.



Supporting soup kitchens

SOS Children's Villages has been working in Peru since 1975, and so has decades of experience of meeting the communities' needs there. SOS Peru is currently supporting 35 community kitchens in Peru to buy food, due to the additional hardship caused by coronavirus. In addition, SOS is providing organisation and leadership workshops for the six women at Olla Solidaria as well as others supporting these initiatives across Peru.

Dishes from around the world

In this issue, we asked SOS family members in Morocco to tell us their favourite dish to eat with their families at Iftar when they break their fast together, and they unanimously cried, **'Sellou!'** Sellou is a typical sweet offered to guests during parties and religious celebrations such as births, weddings and baptisms and of course during Ramadan.

Why don't you try making Sellou with your family?

Ingredients:

- 2 cups whole-wheat flour
- 1 3/4 cups raw almonds
- 1 to 2 Tbsp. ground cinnamon
- 1/2 tsp. salt
- 3/4 cup stone-ground whole-wheat flour*
- 1 1/2 Tbsp. xanthan powder*
- 1 to 2 Tbsp. ground anise
- 2 Tbsp. honey
- 1 1/2 cups sesame seeds
- 1/2 tsp. sugar
- 2 Tbsp. brown sugar
- 1/2 tsp. ground nutmeg
- 3/4 cup olive oil

*SOS Tip: You can find these ingredients in health food stores or the organic section of your local supermarket.

Directions:

Prepare ingredients:

1. First, brown the flour. In a baking tray, sift the stone-ground whole-wheat flour, and discard the leftover bits.
2. Add the whole-wheat flour and mix.
3. Spread the flour mix in the baking tray and place it in a preheated oven to 200°C for 45 minutes.
4. Stir the flour mix every 10 minutes, so that the flour bakes evenly and does not burn.
5. The flour mix is ready when the flour has a deep, golden brown colour and does not taste raw anymore.
6. Roast whole almonds in the oven at 180°C for 15 minutes. Let them cool.
7. To make the almond butter, put 2/3 cup roasted almonds in a food processor and mix.
8. From time to time, stir the almond mixture to evenly spread it in the food processor. Keep mixing for 10 minutes until the almond powder starts releasing its natural oil and transforms into a creamy almond butter.
9. Place the sesame seeds in a pan, and roast them on medium heat for a few minutes until toasted.
10. Place the toasted sesame seeds in a food processor and mix until the sesame seeds are half ground.
11. Mix xanthan powder and sugar.
12. Take remaining 1/2 cup of roasted almonds and coarsely chop.
13. Mix the brown sugar in a food processor until you get a fine texture.

Mix ingredients:

1. In a large bowl, combine the following ingredients: flour mix, sesame seeds, crushed almonds, xanthan powder/sugar mixture, ground cinnamon, ground anise, ground nutmeg, salt and almond butter. Mix well.
2. Add powdered brown sugar, honey and olive oil. Mix until all ingredients are combined.
3. Taste sellou and adjust sweetness (powdered brown sugar or honey) to your preference.
4. Knead the sellou for 5 minutes until all ingredients are mixed thoroughly.
5. Serve sellou on a plate and decorate with roasted almonds.



Send us photos if you have a go at making sellou: hello@sosuk.org – we can't wait to see how it turns out for you!



News in brief

Training young people in Sri Lanka

Lack of work can have devastating consequences for young people. It puts them at risk of poverty, social exclusion and exploitation, often creating a harmful cycle, repeating from one generation to the next. Our SOS Vocational Training Centre (VTC) in Monaragala is breaking the cycle by offering training for young people from disadvantaged backgrounds.

Chathurangani Madashani, a VTC graduate who now works as a management assistant, says proudly, "Here you learn lessons for your life, not only for your job. It has helped me a lot in my everyday life."

Whether they leave as mechanics, welders, wood crafters, electricians, computer assistants or bakers, the 150 trainees who pass through the VTC doors can confidently enter the job market with in-demand skills.



"Here you learn lessons for your life, not only for your job. It has helped me a lot in my everyday life."



Raising the next generation in Vietnam

Thuy claims that her passion for taking care of children comes from her SOS mother whose love and support encouraged her to pursue her dream to open a kindergarten in the city of Da Nang.

When children grow up without the care and support of a family, it can lead to a vicious cycle because those children then often don't know how to show love or care when they have their own children, as it is something they haven't experienced. That is why SOS staff like Thuy not only provide a safe, loving space for small children, they are also modelling loving care and ensuring many future generations have the chance to grow up feeling safe and loved.

M&G plc volunteers offer mentoring support

On February 4th of this year, SOS UK and corporate partners M&G plc launched YouthLinks, a virtual mentoring programme, with M&G plc employees taking part from India and the UK. YouthLinks digitally connects young people aged 16-25 in SOS programmes with mentors from the corporate world. Over eight weeks, mentors work with young people covering a range of employability topics including CV writing, job interviewing, resilience, and confidence building.



Ten mentors from the UK and India have been partnered with 20 mentees from India, to share knowledge and experience. This is part of a three-year partnership between SOS Children's Villages and M&G plc, supporting SOS programmes in Italy, Poland, India, France, Germany, and Spain to help prevent family breakdown and support young people into education and employment. One participant said:

"So far YouthLinks has been an amazing experience, guiding youngsters who are so enthusiastic and keen to learn. I look forward to sharing my experience and giving them enough guidance that will help them achieve their objectives." Thank you so much to M&G plc for their support!



Distributing coronavirus supplies in Ethiopia

When the mothers in Tulu Moye needed extra support, we quickly distributed food, masks and antibacterial kits to them. Having worked in Ethiopia since 1974, we were ready to respond to the coronavirus crisis immediately. Currently, we are supporting more than 1,500 children and their parents who are facing additional hardship because of the pandemic as well as holding public information sessions about the virus in markets and via radio.

Thanks to everyone who supported our Beirut appeal

If you were one of the many generous supporters who gave to our emergency appeal in response to the Beirut explosion in August last year, your generosity has made a huge difference. The response has been affected by coronavirus restrictions but the teams there have managed to reach those worst affected and provide crucial support, including setting up online one-to-one and group sessions with social workers and SOS psychologists to help people find a way forward.

Did you know that you can give zakat with SOS Children's Villages?

Thank you to those supporters who have given so generously during Ramadan.



If you would like further information on how to support our programmes by donating through zakat, please visit www.soschildrensvillages.org.uk/zakat

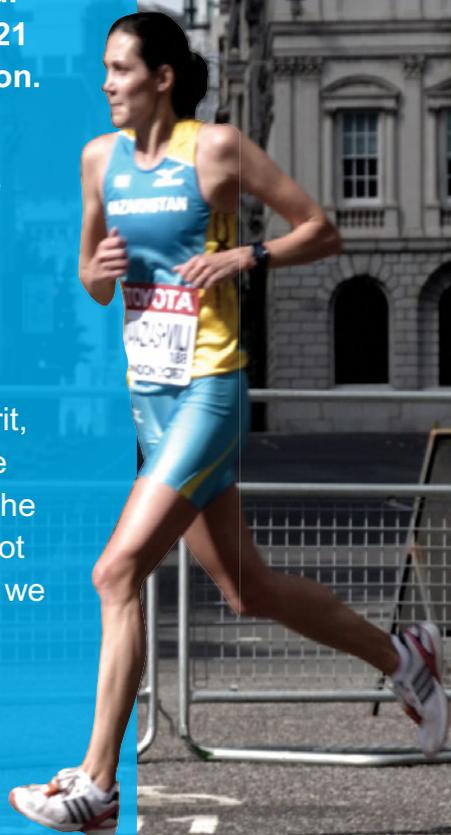
On your marks, get set, go!

You can support SOS Children's Villages and our work around the world on Sunday 3 October 2021 by running in the world-famous London Marathon.

Would you or anyone you know like to run the London Marathon? If so, it's your lucky day, as we have places and a special offer to boot for Family Matters readers of just £10 registration fee with the code 'FMSpring'.

Taking part in the London Marathon is one of life's greatest achievements. The camaraderie, team spirit, and sheer energy of the runners, not to mention the city's beautiful landmarks and jubilant cheers from the crowd is enough to fill anyone with hope and faith not only in themselves but in the good we can do when we do it together.

So, if you fancy a challenge, visit <http://soschildrensvillages.org.uk/marathon> for more information and to sign up. **Good luck!**



We hope you enjoyed this edition of Family Matters. We would love to hear what you think. Please feel free to email us at hello@sosuk.org with your feedback.



Our NEW address:

Ravenscroft House, 59-61 Regent Street, Cambridge CB2 1AB

Telephone: 01223 365 589

Email: hello@sosuk.org

www.sosuk.org

 [soschildrensvillagesuk](https://www.facebook.com/soschildrensvillagesuk)

 [@soschildrenuk](https://twitter.com/@soschildrenuk)

 [@soschildrenuk](https://www.instagram.com/@soschildrenuk)



SOS CHILDREN'S VILLAGES



FUNDRAISING REGULATOR