

# Family Matters



**The latest news  
from Ukraine**

**Care leavers uniting  
in Africa**

**A day in the life of  
an SOS mother**



# A BIG THANK you to everyone who supported our Ukraine emergency appeal

**Your amazing support has helped us raise over £400,000 to date, for the children and families affected by the war.**

You can read more about the situation in Ukraine on page 4, along with the news on how your donations are helping.



*Young girl sheltering in a basement in Ukraine*

# We all need someone to lean on.



As the 17th Century poet, John Donne said, “No man is an island.” And nowhere has this been more apparent than in the current crisis in Ukraine. As we watch the horrors of war unfold in front of our eyes, I have been overwhelmed by the humanity and generosity of people from all over the world rallying together to support Ukrainian refugees, providing safe passage, security, food and much needed resources in their time of need. Our colleagues in SOS Poland have been working tirelessly with teams in Ukraine to evacuate children and vulnerable families and with your support, we have been able to ensure that vital supplies are sent to those fleeing the country and those still inside.

In the last couple of years, the pandemic has starkly reminded us of how hard things can be without our circles of support. And so, in this issue, we ask: what does support mean to you? To us it means being a shoulder to lean on. Our ethos has always been to support and strengthen families and young people so they can rely on themselves and can in turn support their own communities.

The world is a complex place, and no child, family or challenge is the same. That is why we tailor our support to the unique needs of each and every child or family that we work with. In this issue we showcase the many forms of support that not only we provide as a charity, but how the people we work with support each other. Be inspired by the young care leavers in Africa creating networks to support each other and advocate for change in their countries, and the heart-warming story of best friends Pema, who is partially blind, and Leki who has become her eyes. Read about our partnership with the Standard Chartered Foundation, providing mentoring and skills training for young people across the world so they can support themselves.

Finally, thank you all for your continued support without which we would not be able to do any of our lifesaving work. In my experience, love, support and kindness are paramount in our work. Many of the SOS mothers, such as Margarita from Peru, who gives us an insight into her life later in this issue, will tell you that often with a little love and care, our children can go a long way.

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

# The latest news from Ukraine

For months before Russia launched a full-scale offensive against Ukraine in February, our incredible colleagues in SOS Ukraine had been cautiously trying to plan for all possibilities: hoping for the best, but preparing for the worst.

Unfortunately, we all now know what came next. The eastern and southern regions of Ukraine have been the hardest hit by the war. There have been attacks, including missile strikes, in other parts of the country, most recently in central Ukraine. The civilian toll continues to grow as Russian forces have targeted residential buildings, schools and hospitals, driving significant humanitarian needs across the country.

This has led to the fastest-growing refugee crisis since World War II. More than a quarter of the population of Ukraine has been forced to flee their homes, with an estimated 5 million people having fled to neighbouring countries already. Nearly two-thirds of Ukrainian children have been displaced in the last six weeks. Hundreds of schools and educational facilities have been attacked, while others are serving as shelters for civilians.

Since the beginning of the war, despite the horrific conditions, our colleagues at SOS Ukraine have continued to work, scaling up in some areas to



provide as much help as possible to vulnerable families and children affected by the war. They continued to support 492 families and 1,275 children as well as helping with evacuations to other countries.

Most children and families we support have now been relocated to the Czech Republic, Poland, Austria and Romania. SOS colleagues from many other countries have also welcomed children and families into their premises and are currently focusing on developing and consolidating longer-term support plans. Responding to the needs of the affected population from different regions of Ukraine became a top priority, and by working with partners, SOS Ukraine has reached 2,978 people with life-saving support, evacuation and transportation, provision of shelter and accommodation, and trauma support.



Being able to stay close to family members and friends is vital to ensure well-being. Amidst the current refugee crisis, SOS Children's Villages has been able to provide shelter to entire families and groups of friends.

It is truly devastating to watch this terrible situation unfolding, and the lives of children and families torn apart. The only consolation has been seeing the incredible support our colleagues have been able to provide at this time, and that is thanks to each and every one of our supporters.

We will be there for as long as it takes to support Ukrainian children and families to rebuild their lives, wherever and whenever it is safe to do so, and we could not do this without your continued support.

To thank you, we thought you might like to hear the story of Robert (pictured right). He grew up in an SOS Children's Village in Poland himself and when he heard about families fleeing the war in Ukraine coming to Poland, he went along on his day off to volunteer to help. It is thanks to the kindness of supporters like you and amazing people like Robert that these families will get through whatever the next months and years hold for them. Thank you for your continued support.



**SOS Romania is providing shelter to Viktoria and three of her close friends, all of whom have two children, and all of whom fled the war in Ukraine and found shelter in SOS Children's Village Bucharest. Viktoria describes how:**

*"Back home we had our lives, our full families. We had plans – some for the weekend, others for the summer, for next year. Now, we do not know what to do next. Should we plan? Plan for what? What can we go back to?"*

*Our wish was to stay together, but we were almost sure that no one would agree to have eight children, aged between three and 15, and four adults in the same apartment or house."*



*We are thankful to SOS Children's Villages for having us all stay in the same house. We feel much more comfortable when we are together. We can support and comfort each other," says Hanna.*

She adds that her sister and her parents managed to get to Romania and will soon join them in the same house in the SOS Children's Village in Bucharest. *"It will be such a relief to have them here,"* she says. Whenever possible, these four mums take their children to the parks of Bucharest. *"The parks here are simply lovely,"* Viktoria says. *"We also went to the Grigore Antipa National Museum of Natural History – the children loved it. We try to go on as many outings as possible – this keeps us busy; the children learn new things and we all have fun."*

# Supporting families to stay together against all the odds

**Often in extreme poverty or crisis, the family unit falls apart. We believe strongly in helping families stay together by supporting them to get back on their feet.**

**No family or situation is the same and there is no one-size-fits-all solution. We provide support depending on each family's needs. This can range from financial assistance, food, healthcare, education, counselling, therapy and much more, all with the aim of helping families thrive, not just survive!**

## No more hungry mouths for Delphine

Delphine and her husband live in a rural village in Rwanda with their children. The family could only afford one meal a day and the children often went to bed hungry.

In 2019, SOS's Family Strengthening Programme stepped in to help Delphine obtain a loan from the local savings group. With it, she bought a piece of land, some goats, a cow and a pig.

*"Life has completely changed now, because in the past we had nothing to eat. Now we can harvest and eat good food,"* says Delphine.



SOS also helped Delphine's children go to school for the first time, paying for their fees and textbooks so now the family can look forward to a brighter future.



## Keeping Aman and his siblings together

12-year-old Aman and his four younger siblings lived with their mother in the industrial town of Bawana, India. Their father, an electrician, and the family's main breadwinner had died in a workplace accident four years earlier. Their mother, who worked in a plastic factory to support the family, contracted coronavirus and tragically died early in the pandemic.

"After the death of my mother we were alone. There was nobody to look after us. We didn't have any money," laments Aman.

The siblings lived alone for six months before their landlord contacted SOS. At risk of being separated in order to find adoptive families, SOS ensured the children were kept together and given a new loving home with an SOS family.

When they came to the house all the children were quite distressed," says SOS mother, Pratima Kundu.



"Now they are eating properly, playing, and sleeping uninterrupted by nightmares."

The Indian National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR) estimates that by last June around 10,000 children lost parents or were abandoned due to the pandemic. This figure has likely climbed. While the Indian government has launched welfare schemes, SOS India continues to be a trusted ally in providing long-term and short-term support to children such as Aman and his siblings.

## Investing in family

SOS Maizelands Kindergarten provides educational, physical and recreational activities as well as much needed food for children who come from desperately poor families in Zimbabwe. 98% of families here survive on subsistence farming or casual work.

Children receive two nutritious meals a day and free childcare so their parents can go to work or attend SOS skills training in order to support their own families.

SOS Maizelands also raises chickens and rabbits and grows vegetables in the garden, often giving the surplus to local families.



# Care leavers unite in Africa

## Who knows better what care leavers need than care leavers themselves!

Across Africa, young people who grew up in alternative care are uniting to support one another and push for change that can help in their transition to an independent life.

A care leaver network is already well established in Zimbabwe and others are currently being formed in Zambia and Ghana.

For many care leavers, the groups are a valuable source of community and support that can help to ease the transition from alternative care to adulthood.



"The network gives hope to care leavers," says Gift Dzorai, Director of the Zimbabwe Care Leaver Network. "They have hope that the future will be brighter."

Samuel Musekiwa, a network member from Zimbabwe adds, "Young people leaving care frequently feel isolated, lonely and lack the safety net of someone to talk to and advise them in a crisis."

These networks connect young people from different provinces, backgrounds and care facilities, but they are not just a social network. They also aim to advocate and lobby governments to change policy and legislation, accurately reflecting the needs and wants of care leavers on a national level.

"Policymakers must have a careful look at alternative care in relation to care leavers' transition from care facilities and integration into the broader society by formulating policies that support this process," says Lukaya Folami, founder of the Ghana network. "Particularly with a major focus on after care,



educational support, accommodation and jobs and career support."

In Zimbabwe, one of the network's chief priorities is the introduction of an Aftercare Act, to address the lack of aftercare provision in the country. To inform its work, the network is conducting a national survey, with the help of SOS, to collect statistical data on care leavers throughout the country and give them the chance to speak about their needs, experiences and difficulties.

Samuel, in Zimbabwe, also aims to improve digital access for those in rural and disadvantaged communities. A lack of education and skills due to limited access to information is a huge problem for many young people as they exit the care system – one that has only worsened during the pandemic. Samuel hopes to tackle this by partnering with organisations who can donate old digital devices to them.

Similarly, the network in Zambia hopes to expand their reach through partnership with the national Ministry of Youth, Sport and Arts, creating programmes and influencing legislation to help care leavers integrate into society.



"This network will equip those preparing to leave care so that they don't face the same challenges we are facing," says Joseph of the Zambia Care Leaver Network.

The message that care leavers are most keen to emphasise is that they don't need hand-outs, they need hand-ups. They are the best placed to advocate for themselves and their needs, and look forward to continuing to grow their networks, supporting each other and working with other organisations to maximise their impact.

# Youth employability partnership with the Standard Chartered Foundation

We are delighted to be working with the Standard Chartered Foundation on a two-year partnership to support the Futuremakers initiative, helping young people leaving care to get the skills and training they need to work their way out of poverty and the resilience and confidence to become independent.



An estimated 267 million young people worldwide are not in employment, education or training according to the International Labour Organisation. Those leaving alternative care are disproportionately affected because they have fewer opportunities to access training and are required to be financially independent at a much earlier age than those living with their families.

**We have made significant progress particularly in the prioritisation of women and disabled people. Together we are supporting more than 4,000 young people in seven countries across Africa, the Middle East and Asia to receive crucial support and training to find long-term work and be competitive in today's employment market.**

Through SOS's global digital platform, YouthLinks, Standard Chartered employees are offering young people across the world career counselling, CV writing, interview preparation, financial management and ICT training through one-to-one and group mentoring.

By supporting opportunities, together, we are identifying solutions for sustainable livelihoods, thereby opening up a new world of employment.



# Supporting the environment

Today, pollution and the depletion of natural resources remain a global concern. SOS communities are taking it upon themselves to find more sustainable ways to live and protect our environment.



## SOS youth launch Go Green initiative in Lebanon

Since 2015, Lebanon has suffered from an ongoing waste crisis, ranking 5th on the pollution index. A group of young people living in SOS Children's Village Bhersaf are taking matters into their own hands.

19-year-old Michal, co-founder of Go Green, tells us all about the initiative in his own words:



*"We, the Green Committee, created Go Green to start recycling in our Village and to empower and engage children."*

*We started by teaching the children how to recycle and take care of the environment. We then expanded the training to include the caregivers and educators. We conduct the training ourselves with the help of SOS YouthCan, a youth empowerment scheme, which supports us in building partnerships. Our partners include Spinneys supermarket, waste management companies, the Holy Spirit University of Kaslik, and the local municipality.*

*The initiative has been hugely successful and is now part of Village life. Every house has its own recycling monitor, someone who checks the process and continues to teach children in sustainability.*

*Our ultimate aim is to create a movement. We would like to see a Green Committee within SOS Children's Villages worldwide to evolve out of our initiative because small changes can make a huge difference to our world."*



## Green Energy Project in Benin

Benin has continuously been faced with limited access to electric power and endemic electricity shortages with over half of the population not having access to electricity.

Building photovoltaic mini-stations to power family homes will have a significant impact on the lives of the children living within SOS Children's Village Abomey-Calavi. Continuous lighting means that families will not have to rely on the generator, which is prone to breaking, every time there is a power outage of which there are many.

With an improved and consistent electricity supply, research has shown that children's interest and performance in schools improve, households have fewer respiratory ailments from burning coal or wood and fewer accidents. Women and girls also feel safer and subsequently, more able to move around for work or education purposes.



This environmental Village electrification project is a big step forward in reducing energy bills for the Village and protecting the environment for future generations.

# A day in the life of an SOS Mother, Peru...

**Margarita lives in SOS Children's Village Zarate in Ayacucho, 5km outside of the capital Lima on the southwest coast of Peru, a rural area where families live in crippling poverty and are at risk of severe flooding. She has taken care of 25 children over her 16 years as an SOS mother.**



## ***Please could you tell us a bit about the children you look after?***

I currently have six children and each of them have very different characters. They all do their own thing, but they are increasingly showing love and affection for me every day. Two of my children are receiving psychological, speech and language therapy and therapy for attention and concentration deficit, and we also have the support of the SOS educational team.



## ***What did your average day look like during the pandemic?***

I got up at 6am and I prepared a delicious, nutritious breakfast for my children. They got up. They washed, made their beds and we had breakfast at 7am. They would start their online lessons at 8am. At 1pm we had lunch and each of them helped with their chores – either they set the table, or they cleaned up. Then they had a nap or if they don't want a nap, they watched an hour of TV. Then we did their homework.

After that, maybe we'd watch a film together as a family, or make a dessert, and at 7pm we had dinner. At 9:30pm all the children were in bed. It was tough for all of us at home, but we did it.

## ***What do you enjoy most about being an SOS mother?***

I like seeing my children growing and discovering their own talents. When I wake up and find they've left a little card on my door, or when we're cooking together and they unexpectedly give me a hug, those are the moments I really love.

## ***What are some of the challenges involved in being an SOS mother?***

Taking care of each of the children's individual needs can be challenging as many of them have been through suffering and pain. So, it can be hard to get through to them, but with love and patience you can do it. And thankfully, I have been able to work my way into the heart of every one of them.



### ***What was the most difficult situation you have had to cope with as an SOS mother?***

There was a girl who came to me as a baby and I loved her very much, but then the day came that she could go back to her biological family. That was very painful for me because a part of me went with her. I missed her a lot, but I knew that in her case, it was better for her to be with her parents.



### ***What hopes and dreams do you have for your children's futures?***

I hope that they are happy and that they are good people. Like all mothers, I want them to finish their education. These dreams, I am sure can be achieved with love and perseverance.

## **A small enterprise making a huge difference**

**Buying gorgeous gifts for a beautiful baby is one of life's pleasures. But too many babies in the world have no one to give them gifts, or anything else.**

We are proud partners of From Babies with Love, an independent gifting brand which donates 100% of its profits to vulnerable and abandoned children globally.

This social enterprise sells beautiful, sustainable gifts with purpose and every penny goes to children in need offering them a more positive future full of love and hope. Instead of traditional company shareholders, the children are their shareholders.

*"We partner with SOS Children's Villages because of the incredible social impact our customers create when purchasing a beautiful gift from our collection. Our customer is giving twice, once to their friend, perhaps in celebration of a new arrival, and once to the thousands of children we are together empowering through the work of SOS Children's Villages."*

For every gift bought, a child has an opportunity to grow up in a loving family. Together we're helping 26,000 children around the world so far

**To start a chain reaction of change today, visit [www.frombabieswithlove.org](http://www.frombabieswithlove.org) for beautiful gifts for kids, new parents and friends and make a difference.**

## NEWS IN BRIEF

### Mali gets a chance in life

Crying and alone, Mali was found abandoned on a riverbank by a group of children on a fishing trip in Laos. SOS could not find her biological parents and Mali was placed with her new SOS mother, Sommai in SOS Children's Village Luang.

Unfortunately, Mali's story is far from unique. Many children from poor families in Laos are at risk of ending up on the streets because their parents cannot meet their basic needs.

Thanks to Sommai and her SOS family, Mali is growing up in a safe and loving home with a new chance in life.



### Anh's University scholarship

With the support of her SOS family, Anh received a Lion's Heart Scholarship to attend the prestigious British University Vietnam. This is the only university in Vietnam to award direct degrees from the University of London. Anh grew up in a SOS Children's Village. With the love and care of her SOS mother and siblings, she has been supported throughout her life to follow her dreams. She is now studying for a degree in marketing and hopes to get a good job with a good income so that she can give back to the SOS Village that she grew up in.

*"Many former care-leavers donate to keep us going, visit us often and keep in touch with their SOS families," says Village Director Namdol Tashi. "For us, it is a sign that we are making a small difference to lives that can shine with a little push."*

### Forever friends in India

Pema and Leki are best friends. The girls who hardly ever leave each other's side, live in the SOS Tibetan Children's Village in Suja, India, a unique village for Tibetan refugees. The village was built in 1963 and cares for Buddhist children who, for various reasons, have lost adequate parental care.

Pema was brought to the village in April 2021 by an uncle. Born partially blind, her family found it increasingly difficult to take care of her, as she could not work in the fields.



Leki often acts as Pema's eyes, helping her navigate the many stairs in the Village. The girls can often be seen having fun together. They are inseparable in school and Leki has become Pema's shadow. She walks her to school, sometimes packs her bag and often helps her with her lessons.

"They are chatterboxes when they are together," says their SOS mother who often has to shush the girls when they are chatting at night.

The Tibetan Children's Village cares for some 600 children. They learn about their Tibetan culture, religion and identity as part of their education. As a marginalised people in India, it is very difficult for them to access resources even if they have Indian citizenship. The Village gives children loving homes, education and a good support system to establish themselves in society.

## Run Kate run!

Thank you to Kate, for her Herculean marathon efforts. Despite being injured, she raised a whopping £2500 for SOS Children's Villages UK.

**"**I believe every child has the right to grow up in a safe, loving and supportive environment and by raising funds for this charity, I am hoping to help to provide both immediate assistance and, in the longer term, the chance for children to grow up in a nurturing family-like environment."**"**

The crowd, the atmosphere, the city, and her supporters are what Kate says got her across the line in an impressive three hours and 48 minutes!

**The funds raised will go to the vital work SOS does to help children and families in need across the world.**



## Caring is sharing – donate with ShareGift


If you have shares which are uneconomical to sell, you may wish to consider donating them to ShareGift, the share donation charity. ShareGift is an independent UK registered charity (No. 1052686) which specialises in releasing the money locked up in small shareholdings, but which can accept donations of any size. ShareGift works by collecting together small lots of shares until there are enough to sell and then donating the resulting proceeds to a wide range of charities. To date ShareGift has donated over £40 million to more than 3,200 charities. ShareGift make their grants based upon research and suggestions from donors. You can help support SOS Children's Villages UK by donating any small shareholdings you may have to ShareGift and mentioning that you support us.

If you are a UK taxpayer, you can claim income tax relief on the value of most stocks and securities when you donate them to a charity. In addition, donating shares charitably gives rise to neither a gain nor a loss for Capital Gains Tax (CGT) purposes. For more information on ShareGift, go to [www.sharegift.org](http://www.sharegift.org)

## THANK YOU to the Polish Cultural Institute

We would like to say a huge Thank You to the Polish Cultural Institute in London for raising over £11,000 for our Ukraine appeal at their Solace concert, hosted and supported by Wigmore Hall in April.

**Thank you to everyone who came and to all the incredible musicians who performed!**



**We are so grateful  
for all the support  
we receive from  
our donors and  
partners.**

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



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Registered Charity No. 1069204

Telephone: 01223 365 589  
Email: [hello@sosuk.org](mailto:hello@sosuk.org)  
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