



SOS CHILDREN'S
VILLAGES
SRI LANKA

A LOVING
HOME FOR
EVERY CHILD

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The SOS NEWSLETTER



INSIDE:
How YOUR contributions provide a
child the second opportunity to live in
a loving family environment.



Ranga was just one month old, feeble and crying his heart out when we found him...

How your contributions help children like Ranga to become responsible adults in life.

Ranga was just a month-old baby when he was found unattended. Ranga soon found a home at the SOS Children's Village in Galle and his SOS Mother was able to provide the much needed care immediately. At the Galle Village, he grew up in a family-based environment and became a very creative and expressive little boy.

Let me remind you that like Ranga, a large number of children in Sri Lanka live without the support of one or both parents. Thousands of children suffer from neglect, abuse, exploitation or complete deprivation as a result of poverty.

Many children like Ranga are separated from their natural parents and local communities owing to a variety of reasons. Loss of parents through death or illness, migration of parents to find paid employment, dysfunctional family relations, war-related separations, poverty, drug / alcohol addiction have led to many child rights violations where children are separated from their biological parents temporarily or permanently. Children born to unwedded mothers are often stigmatised, which in turn, compels the mothers to abandon them.



It is within a family that children secure their emotional and physical well-being, ability to spend their childhood to the full and prepare for a future where their potential is realised.

At SOS Children's Villages, we make sure every child belongs to a caring family, is protected and enjoys a sense of belonging. Here, children learn values, share responsibilities and form life-long relationships. The "family environment" gives them a solid foundation on which they could build their lives. Through love and acceptance, emotional wounds are healed and confidence is built. Children learn to trust and believe in themselves and others. With this self-assurance, each child can recognize and fulfill his or her full potential.

- *There are over 5000 children without parental care in the Northern Province of our country.*

- *1 in 7 children of all Sri Lankan children without parental care do not have access to education.*

- *More than 10 complaints of child abuse are reported daily in Sri Lanka, making child abuse a top criminal offence.*

SOS Children's Villages perceive its Family Based Care Programme and Family Strengthening Programme as two complimentary interventions. The organisation strongly believes that every effort must be made to assure that children remain in their biological families and that those children for whom this is not possible have an equal right to grow up in a caring family environment.

SOS Children's Village families strengthen the bond between children in care who live together as brothers and sisters, and a stable well trained care giver - the "SOS Mother". Every family member takes a unique position within the independent SOS Family.





Ranga came to meet me some time back. He paid me respect and bid goodbye as he had gained a scholarship to study at a prestigious university in India. He was off to pursue his dream of dancing professionally. It was a warm farewell and nostalgic as well - as I remembered how this little boy, now a foot taller than I, was received at SOS Children's Villages in the early 90's.

SOS Children's Villages ensures, with support from friends like you, that natural brothers and sisters are kept together within one family. SOS Children's Villages clearly differentiates between the role of the organisation, whose role is to provide support to the SOS families and that of the SOS family, who assumes the caregiving role.

Every child has the right to grow up in a caring family environment, yet so often, this is left unfulfilled for large number of children in Sri Lanka. With the recognition

of significant gaps in the implementation of all aspects of children's rights, a range of alternative care options have been identified and recommended. Nevertheless, these options should be implemented according to the specific needs and in the best interests of the child.

The loss or separation from the family has a primary impact on a child, leaving the child particularly vulnerable when left without the nurturing care of a protective, supportive and caring family environment. The health, overall development and well-being of the child are at risk, particularly if the loss occurs in the critical periods of a child's growth, including early childhood. Based on the assurance that the biological family is the best place for a child to live, out-of-home child care options must respect the role of the biological family and seek only to complement biological family and local community when these are unable to accomplish their responsibilities. The SOS family child-care model is put into practice around the world in many countries with different social and economic realities. This model is proved to be a better response (amongst the out-of-home childcare options) for the children who have been left alone in this world.

Ranga came to meet me some time back. He paid me respect and bid goodbye as he had gained a scholarship to study at a prestigious university in India. He was off to pursue his dream of dancing professionally. It was a warm farewell and nostalgic as well, as I remembered how this little boy, now a foot taller than I, was received at SOS Children's Villages in the early 90's. A child who was once found with no parental care, went to school, grew up to be healthy, will now find employment and one day begin his/her own family, gives so much of contentment to everyone who has been part of this great achievement. It is an opportunity I would like to extend to all Sri Lankans. After all, making a positive change in one child's life is equal to making a positive change in the community at large for years to come.



“By sponsoring, I became part of a child’s life”

I first became aware of SOS Children’s Villages and the work they do through a brochure that I happened to see at an event. I clearly remember the invitation to sponsor a child. Seeing the pictures of children who needed help made me curious about knowing more about the activities of SOS Children’s Villages. When I got to know more, I was really happy with the unique SOS concept. A concept where children previously at risk were being given real homes to belong to. This was unlike any other childcare institution!

I decided to start my child sponsorship and in return obtained details about a child named Shanuki. I was told Shanuki lived in Piliyandala and would directly benefit from my contribution. Gradually, I got to know Shanuki’s progress year after year, and later on had the fortune to meet her as well!

Though I had not met Shanuki before, I was able to recognize her amongst the other children. I felt happy meeting this young, slightly built but energetic child. I have been able to watch and help her become a teenager and it was a truly humbling experience, for which I wish to thank SOS.

Meeting Shanuki that day gave me an opportunity to observe the effort taken by SOS Children’s Villages to provide children with a family environment and their dedication to child development.

My only wish is that the SOS Children’s Villages network and cause be strengthened so they may embrace more children at risk. This will help many children to be provided with security, love and a nurturing environment. This is essential in helping them face life when they become adults.

By partnering with SOS, I was able to build a young life and to give needy children a chance to grow in a family. It is an opportunity that should not be missed. To be part of a child’s life until he or she becomes an independent young adult with skills and character, is to contribute meaningfully to the society. It is an honour for which SOS expects very little from a donor.

My wish for SOS Children’s Villages is that it receives support of many more kind hearted donors, so that more children without care are able to flourish in a family environment!



A special request

As you are aware, the cost of living is increasing day by day. This in turn increases the costs of bringing up the children. If you haven’t already increased your child sponsorship to Rs. 1000 per month, please consider to do so, as it would help us to maintain the quality of care at the levels they have been. Thank you, dear SOS friend!





“I love to draw fruits, vehicles, animals and flowers”

How your contributions are shaping Lishini's future



Lishini is a little girl who is 8 years old. Like many other children of her age, she enjoys drawing and painting. “I love drawing with my crayons”, she says smiling.

The smile on Lishini's face does not reflect the uncertain times she went through as a newborn. She was only 6 days old when she found herself all alone and afraid in an unfamiliar world. Unfortunately, her mother was not able to take care of her and the comfort of a family was a distant dream. Yet, her mother's desire was to see her daughter growing up in a normal family.

Therefore, the authorities sent little Lishini to an SOS Children's Village for better care. Here, Lishini obtained a new family as her SOS mother and siblings welcomed her with open arms. This was possible due to the support of sponsors like you. Lishini quickly became the darling of the family as well as the Village community itself, as she started getting used to her new surroundings.

Today, Lishini is growing up like any other child from the community. She has turned out to be quite a mischievous and intelligent little girl. Yet, she is also very sweet and her endearing smile has remained throughout. She is inquisitive and loves to ask questions from all those around her.

In school, Lishini has a very good rapport with her class teacher and loves doing her school home work alone. She also is very keen in learning her English and never misses a lesson. Another pursuit of Lishini is to draw. She is always being seen filling up her drawing book full of pictures which she paints in a bright blend of colours. “I love to draw fruits, vehicles, animals and flowers” says Lishini showing us her creations.

Back at the Village, Lishini ventures out to play with her brothers and sisters. She loves playing on the swing and readily takes turns, pushing her little friends and then running off to play games like hide-and-go-seek. She also likes to watch television. Lishini can instantly imitate cartoon characters she watches. She does this with such

Lishini says she wants to become a dance teacher when she grows up. Or possibly a cook, she adds giggling. These are the varied dreams of a little girl that can only take wings with the support of SOS friends like you.



Lishini as a toddler

delight that her sisters and brothers often ask her to play act, especially when friends are around.

She also has a keen interest in dance and music. As a toddler, she used to watch the older children attending dance and music classes for hours. It was no surprise when Lishini took up dancing. She has already taken important parts in dances, dramas, performances at English Days and at SOS Cultural Evenings.

Lishini says she wants to become a dance teacher when she grows up. Or possibly a cook, she adds giggling. These are the varied dreams of a little girl which can only take wings with the support of SOS friends like you. As you can see, little girls like Lishini who were once all alone in the world – are cared for and are given a real home to belong to. It would be evident that Lishini's life is similar to other little girls in families around Sri Lanka. Help us give the same experiences to those children who have no one to call their own. When we give hope and love to one child, we affect our own society positively in the years to come.



Wasanthi talks about growing up in an SOS Children's Village



I think it was 1982, and I was 4 years old when I was brought to a place with lots of trees and houses. I met my SOS mother Thilaka and my many sisters and bothers to be. I lived here, the Piliyandala SOS Children's Village with my SOS family for over 18 years. Now I am an adult and many often ask me what it was like growing up in an SOS Village, but I have no special answers. This is because it was very much like a normal family, full of love and support. Of course I had my favourite siblings, Sandun, Latha, Sriyani and Chandra. I had my own chores around the house and my elder sisters supervised me. Having many siblings was a blessing. We shared a lot of moments, both happy and sad. We used to study together. I feel very lucky when I look back.

If I speak about my mother, I have to admit she pretty much did everything around the house.

My mother was an amazing person, I remember she never left our bedsides if any of us was to fall ill. She was my guiding star and made me who I am today.

She gave me my foundation and helped me realise that I can reach whatever goal I wish to take up!

Today, I'm a supervisor working at a beauty salon. I always loved the industry and decided to start from scratch - from sweeping the shop floor to making tea, to where I am now! I did my best to learn from my mentors and won the confidence of many clients who are loyal to me today.

Even though the older SOS children are independent, the strength of the network is present. I'm forever thankful for this experience. I feel immensely lucky; there are so many children left in hospitals or worse... but I had the fortune of coming to an SOS Village. I feel we need to tell Sri Lankan society that a child from SOS Children's Villages is as lucky or even more so!

Remembering Mother Thilaka

Thilaka joined SOS Children's Villages Piliyandala and took care of over 20 children during her tenure as an SOS Mother. She suffered from arthritis later on in her life and requested an early retirement. What is remarkable about her story is that her SOS children who had left the village after marriage or were in employment, rallied around their ailing SOS Mother. The family rented a house and cared for their mother using a roster to make sure at least one family member was to be always present.

Mother Thilaka passed away during June 2009. We pray she attains Nirvana for her great service to SOS Children's Villages and the many SOS children she raised throughout the years.

SOS Temporary Care Project in Jaffna

Shanthi, 14, is a beautiful girl from a village called Kanagaraimkulam in the Vavuniya district. She now lives at the SOS Temporary Care Project where 81 such unaccompanied children like her who were once at risk live in safety and shelter.

Nearly 200 children and youth were provided care at the SOS Temporary Care Project. As of now, we have been able to reunite 120 of them with their biological families/extended families.

Shanthi lost her parents during the war. Yet she has come a long way from being afraid and alone, to a child taking lead in playing games, laughing, learning and trying to enjoy a normal life.

SOS Children's Villages Sri Lanka hopes to establish the sixth SOS Children's Village in Jaffna. In this Village, the children from the SOS Temporary Care Project will obtain the best family based care until they grow up to be responsible young adults. YOU can be part of this initiative by contributing to SOS Children's Villages.



“How lucky I am to be part of a very big family!”

Surangi talks about her experiences at an SOS Children's Village



My name is Surangi and I am proud to say that I was and am a child of an SOS Children's Village in Sri Lanka. All children need parents who love them, who can spend enough time talking to them, playing with them or just simply spending quality time with them. I strongly believe a happy childhood is a precondition to a happy life. Would you agree that a happy childhood is vital in order to be content as an adult?

Well, this is my story and I would like to share my happy childhood with you.

When I was a baby, I wondered where my mother was...I wondered- here I am... I cannot express myself... but suddenly, someone held me so tenderly, hugged me and held me very closely. I felt this person's love and I felt wanted again... I really did not know who she was...

I had a childhood filled with love and happiness lingering around me. I grew up in a lovely atmosphere where I had ample space to play, lots of children to play with (my mother told me that they were ALL are my brothers and sisters) and of course the extended uncles and aunts to advice and care for me.

Wow!! How lucky I was to be a part of a very big family!

During my schooling years, I had the enthusiasm and loved to study. I got through with the Grade Five Scholarship Examination and was awarded the opportunity to attend Holy Family Convent, Bambalapitiya. Apart from my studies, I took part in athletics and became the school sports champion for three consecutive years.

School life was different from life at home. I got to meet various children from different backgrounds. So I obtained a huge amount of experience in associating with all of them. I still recall my best friend Marina who taught me to speak in English. We had lots of fun. Those memories will never fade away and I am still in touch with her!

I got through the G.C.E. (O/L) examination and thereafter a scholarship was awarded to me to follow a three month English course at the Cambridge Academy of English in England. I could not possibly believe my luck! This was another turning point in my life. I enjoyed the time abroad very much.

Later, back in Sri Lanka I completed my G.C.E (A/L) examination in the Commerce stream. After studies I was employed at the Hilton Hotel in Colombo for some time.

When I was 21 years old, I got married. Today I have two lovely daughters, a loving husband, and a house of my own too.

Guess what? My SOS Mother is retired from her role at SOS and is now living and is cared for by me! A huge “Thank You” is not enough for my beloved mother who was behind me like a shadow. She is the pillar behind my success today. Thank you to my loving home, SOS Children's Village which provided a good start to my happy life today. Thank you SOS!



Surangi now lives happily with her husband and two children

Sponsor a Child

Your sponsorship enables a child to grow up in an SOS family, receive the best possible education and become a responsible adult. Your support provides physical, material and more importantly emotional well-being of a child.

Contact:-

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Thank you for helping us raise three generations of children!

The UN Year of the Child 1979 provided an impetus for policy change. The then Sri Lankan government took the bold step to move away from institutionalisation of orphaned children to the novel concept of children growing up in a Village with a mother. I was therefore privileged to be associated with the setting up of the first SOS Children's Village at Piliyandala in 1979 and thereafter seeing four other SOS Children's Villages established, providing a wonderful setting for a large number of children to grow-up in a safe and secure environment.

The story of Wasanthi reflects the outcome of this novel initiative. Many like Wasanthi have found tender loving care from women who have admirably played the role of SOS Mothers. At least three generations have passed through the SOS Children's Villages and we are now grandmothers to a number of little ones enjoying the warmth of a family.

During times of rapid socio-economic change a large number of young children remain "at risk" of neglect and abuse. The data and information presented daily in the media is alarming. We at SOS Children's Villages continue to express concern on such matters and have offered positive and remedial actions as in the case of the children displaced on account of thirty years of civil unrest.

Though supported by foreign donors, the SOS Children's Villages Sri Lanka remain a national venture, administered by Sri Lankan staff and children nurtured according to Sri Lankan values.

My colleagues and I record with pride the ever increasing number of local sponsors who generously contribute to the progress of the children at SOS Children's Villages.

Our priority remains to enable every child to live with love, protection and security in a loving home, to have the right to education and a happy childhood which will no doubt contribute to responsible adulthood.

In the words of Helmut Kutin, President, SOS Children's Villages International, "In adult life we reveal how we fared in childhood. The quality of childhood is critical – as a help or hindrance in later life."

Malsiri Dias, President - Board of Directors, SOS Children's Villages Sri Lanka

For just Rs.33 per day



...your donation will help a child in need to grow up in warmth and security of a family and receive an education or learn a trade which prepares them for an independent life.

The funds will be used to cover living expenses and ensure access to education and medical services.

Send your donation today!

Please feel free to call, write or interact with us at:

SOS Children's Villages Sri Lanka

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Find us online

Some names and pictures included in this newsletter have been changed to protect identities

DONATION FORM

Yes, I want to give a child a second opportunity to have a family!

Have you contibuted to SOS earlier? Yes No

I wish to...

- Sponsor a child Rs. 1000/- per month Rs. 12,000/- annually
- Sponsor a child's education Rs. 500/- per month Rs. 6000/- annually
- Sponsor a family Rs. 10,000/- per month Rs. 120,000/- annually
- Rates for non-residential Sri Lankans (Sponsor a Child) Rs. 2500/- per month Rs. 30,000/- annually

OR Make a one-time contribution of Rs. _____

Share my ideas on helping more children at SOS Children's Villages

Introduce my company to help the cause of children in need

Tel: _____

E-mail: _____

Occupation: _____

Birthday: ____/____/____

SOS is an approved charity. Your contribution is tax deductible

Payment method; Cheque Money Order

No. _____ Date ____/____/____

Please draw in favour of "SOS Children's Villages Sri Lanka"

Visa/ Master Credit Card AMEX

Card Holder's Name

Card No.

Expiry Date

____/____/____

Signature

Date

____/____/____

You may also make your donation at www.soscvsrilanka.org

Be a friend, Tell a friend...

Do you have friends interested in helping SOS Children's Villages?

Name and contact details:
