

January, 2005

Dear Friends,

Yet another year has gone by and it is time to present a report of our activities, but let me first extend warm greetings from all of us associated with SOS Children's Villages of Pakistan. We wish for you and your loved ones a happy and healthy New Year, and a joyous Eid celebration. As we survey the recent catastrophic events in South Asia and the on-going tragedy in other regions of turmoil, we pray for all those who are affected. May 2005 be a year of peace and understanding and bring an end to the suffering of so many innocent victims of mindless violence.

This year marks an important milestone in our lives as we complete three decades of service to the orphans of the nation - three decades which have seen us grow from a dream, to a network of projects extending to many parts of the country. And we will, inshallah, continue to grow, until the time arrives when we can offer a home to every deserving child, in need of one. This may sound Utopian but, it is possible. Remember that we admit only those children who are complete orphans, or have been abandoned. Fortunately, there are not that many in our society as families will often provide the necessary care.

For everything that we have been able to do we must give credit to all of you who support us so generously. Without your assistance we could have done nothing, and with your help there is no limit to what can be achieved. Our most sincere and never-ending thanks for your support, your concern, your trust and your confidence in us.

Although we often bemoan the lack of facilities in every sphere, it is a matter of great satisfaction that civil society has taken up this slack and there is ever-increasing involvement in so many vital areas. This is as it should be because private sector initiatives, by setting high standards and inspiring confidence in donors, are able to attract funding and provide good models for others to emulate. There is still a long, long way to go but it is gratifying to see the generosity of our people channeled into the establishment of centres of excellence.

One such centre of excellence, which will be ready this summer, is the SOS National Training Centre in Lahore. This will provide facilities for the training programmes organized, on a regular basis, for staff from all over the country. As we expand, it becomes increasingly important to impart thorough and uniform training to key personnel, especially the Directors and 'mothers' who are essential to our success. The construction of this Centre will help enormously in maintaining high standards and, as with all our projects, has been made possible through the assistance of our well-wishers.

I must also thank those many people who make it possible for us to construct, manage and maintain our various projects. We do this through dedicated and competent committees whose members take on the responsibility in their respective localities, and ensure that policies are understood and implemented. As I often say, to establish a project is relatively easy, to manage it well is the real challenge. Sincere thanks to all of you for your continuing support and assistance which has enabled us to make SOS Children's Villages of Pakistan an organization of which we can be justifiably proud.

Similar thanks go out to all our committee members abroad who are, not only collecting funds for sponsorship of the children and the construction of new projects, but also publicizing our work in the expatriate Pakistani community.

Last year I reported that the South Asia Foundation, established by the remarkable UNESCO Goodwill Ambassador Madanjeet Singh, had sponsored a joint SAF/SOS Environment Camp in Sri Lanka. Children from all the SAARC countries participated, including four SOS children from Pakistan. In December a similar camp was organized in Bangladesh and, again, four lucky children from the Lahore and Karachi SOS Villages participated. They were absolutely overwhelmed by the experience and are now busy corresponding with their new friends. South Asia Foundation is also offering scholarships to deserving students from the SAARC countries. Ambassador Singh, who calls himself a 'citizen of the world' is an outstanding example of a true humanist and altruist. If only there were more like him in the world, it would be a very different place!

The Inter-Village Cricket Tournament has now become a regular annual feature. This year it was hosted by SOS Faisalabad and teams from seven Villages participated. The trophy was won by SOS Lahore and the host team was the runner-up. This is a wonderful opportunity for our youth to interact with each other, share experiences and see other parts of the country.

Now for news from the various projects:

LAHORE

Lahore, being home to the pilot project, the Training Centre and the National Office is always bustling with activity. There is a steady stream of visitors to the SOS Village, many of them being schoolchildren bringing gifts and other articles they have collected. The year began with Eid-ul-Azha and Basant in quick succession, bringing much festivity into the lives of the children. This was followed in the beginning of March, by the annual SOS Walk to benefit the school, and a week later the annual re-union of our integrated children. This re-union is always a very special event on the calendar as it is such a pleasure to welcome the children, greet the spouses of the married ones and, ofcourse, see their offspring.

March continued to be a busy month with an invitation to witness the Horse and Cattle Show in a special enclosure, courtesy the wife of the Chief Minister. Later in the month the older children from the Village, and the Youth Home boys, were invited by the Cricket Board to witness the One Day match between Pakistan and India.

April saw the wedding of one of the girls, and another marriage solemnized later in the year, brought the total number of girls married to thirty. That same month ICI Paints organized yet another treat for the children. The young staff had gone out of their way to make this a memorable outing and, not only took the entire Village to a restaurant, bowling alley and games arcade, but also gave them all nice gifts. Such kindness is never forgotten!

Despite so many distractions the children managed to do well in their examinations and then enjoyed an exciting summer programme organized with enthusiastic volunteers. In

the mornings there were lessons and in the afternoons, fun and games. We had a record number of volunteers who brought so much joy into the lives of the children. Apart from the structured programmes they took them out to McDonald's, Pizza Hut and KFC and some even invited the children to their homes. There were many tearful goodbyes and promises to visit when the sessions ended.

In September, a group of older children were included in a photography workshop organized by Fabula and Ipsum from Austria. They even learned to take photographs with a pinhole camera and their work was exhibited at the Alhamra Art Gallery.

Many of the children fasted during Ramzan and enjoyed hosting 'iftaris' for each other. As always, our donors were extremely generous during this month and the children, besides the many delicious treats, all got new clothes and shoes.

Both boys and girls are taking karate classes, which they thoroughly enjoy, and the boys continue with Scouting sessions, courtesy PIA.

Three new homes have been added to the Village - one of them donated by one of our own boys, now based in Hongkong - and two more will be added during the year.

We are still anxiously awaiting the grant of land for the construction of a new Youth Home as the old building is in a dilapidated state.

DHODIAL / ABBOTTABAD

The SOS Village in Dhodial started out with only five family homes. This number has steadily increased with the 14th house being completed last year and a 15th and final, under construction. Other plans to expand the facilities include a Girls Vocational Training Centre and renovation of the sewerage system - for both of which funds have been received from Friends of SOS in Washington - a new auditorium and paving of the approach road. In the meantime, the Girls Vocational Training Centre is located in the Administrative Block and the girls receive instruction in various skills from qualified teachers.

Sports facilities have been improved in both the Village and the Youth Home with new basketball and volleyball courts being commissioned. A regular PTI and karate instructor are conducting courses. Six boys from the Youth Home participated in a Rock Climbing and Watermanship Course arranged by the Adventure Foundation.

The SOS Health Centre located in the SOS Village serves the needs of the children and staff. A Village doctor is available to examine the children regularly and this facility is also extended to children attending the school.

The SOS Youth Home, situated in Abbottabad, presently houses 41 boys who attend local schools and colleges. The SOS Vocational Training Centre for Boys is also located in the premises of the Youth Home. Thirty-two boys from the Youth Home attend the evening sessions under the guidance of expert instructors. The Vocational Centre is affiliated with the Skill Development Council, Peshawar. The certificates which the trainees receive will assist them in job placements. A computer section has been added and will also be affiliated to SDCP.

The SOS Hermann Gmeiner School and College are located adjacent to the SOS Village in Dhodial. An art department and computer laboratory have recently been added to the facilities and in view of the impressive standard maintained by the school it is fast gaining popularity in the area. Classes up to the Intermediate level are open to girls, making this the first college level facility of SOS in the country.

During the year three girls were married and, another two, returned to their families.

KARACHI

This has been a busy and eventful year for SOS Children's Villages of Sindh and there has been considerable progress in many directions.

The family homes have all been upgraded. The steel door and window frames had to be replaced with aluminum, due to corrosion. Steel bedroom cupboards have been replaced and the kitchens improved, giving the homes a new look. The 'families' are vying with each other for the title of 'best house' and the competition, along with the profusion of plants, makes for very attractive surroundings. A TV/Activity room has been added and the new outside lights, benches and a waterfall in the duck pond, add to the beauty of the environment. The children in our Villages are fortunate, indeed, to live in such conditions and, to also have the benefit of so many other advantages which are denied to the majority of the population. Maybe this is God's way of compensating them, in a small way, for their immeasurable loss.

As always there were many outings for them. In January they enjoyed participating in the Annual SOS Carnival which is organized by Friends of SOS. Many student volunteers from different schools, and the staff of Standard Chartered Bank, assisted the committee in making this colourful day of fun, food and games, another great success. Not only does this event raise considerable funds but, also, generates a great deal of publicity for SOS.

April saw the first ever weddings of this Village. Two girls were married at a joint function and, as this coincided with a visit to Karachi, I was fortunate to be able to participate and witness the excitement and exuberance of the children. They all love to dress-up and perform on such occasions, and their talents are quite amazing!

Scouting remains an ever popular activity with the boys, running a close second to cricket.. The boys attended a seven day camp arranged by the PIA Scouts in Karachi , twenty-four scouts attended the 13th. National Jamboree held in Islamabad in April, and two boys participated in a hiking trip in the Northern Areas, with the PIA Scouts. PIA also sponsored a trip for the boys to the Naval Academy in Mingora. They visited the naval installations, had a ride on a warship in the open sea and enjoyed lunch in the diving club.

The girls were not left behind and, besides other outings, a group of older girls visited the Lahore, Rawalpindi and Dhodial Villages, where they were well looked after. They also have regular classes in cooking, sewing, arts and crafts. Besides life skills, great emphasis is laid on professional skills. Two girls are studying at the Jinnah Post Graduate College of Medical Technologies, another has completed her DIT and Computer Graphics, three are training as beauticians and one, after obtaining a diploma, is employed as a dental assistant.

The Rotary Club sponsored the technical training of eight boys at St. Patrick's, four boys are undergoing a three-year apprenticeship with Indus Motors and one is employed as a CNG technician.

The weeklong summer camp, organized once again by the Family Educational Services, was as exciting as ever. The children enjoyed many colourful and creative activities, as well as interesting excursions.

The construction of the SOS Youth Facility will commence shortly on two acres of land generously donated by Mr. Fuad Hashmi. The estimated cost of the project is Rs. 15.5 million. Total E&P Pakistan has made a sizable donation. and further funding is being sought for the four residential units, which will cost Rs.2.5 million each.

RAWALPINDI

Rawalpindi has the most facilities in our network. In addition to the three core projects – the Village, Youth Home and Community School – it has a flourishing Technical Training Centre and an innovative and unique Automobile Training Institute. The latter two institutions are imparting skills to hundreds of boys in the trades of refrigeration, air conditioning, armature winding, electrical, electronics and state-of-the-art automobile maintenance. Many outside concerns are sponsoring youth to undertake training and expansion of the facilities is being considered.

The Village too, is the largest, with twenty family homes and Dental and Medical Clinics. The Dental Clinic, as is the case with the one in the Lahore Village, is sponsored by expatriate Pakistani dentists, and also caters to children from other institutions. Doctors from the Eye Department of FFH visited the Village and checked the eyesight of all the children.

As in other projects, the children have had an interesting and exciting year. In February they visited Chattar Park and the Islamabad Children's Park. In March the boys witnessed the One Day Cricket Match between Pakistan and India, and ninety children were invited to the opening of the SAF Games. Another ninety were the guests of the management at the closing ceremony in April. Regular training is given to the boys by the PIA Boy Scouts Association and, also in April, fourteen boys participated in a Scouting Camp.

In the summer, the Manager PTDC arranged a trip to Ayubia for the older boys, and groups of children visited many other interesting places.

In October, the Chief Executive of the Mirinda Company arranged a programme for the children which they enjoyed enormously. Many visitors came to the Village to participate in the Iftar parties organized by the Committee and Eid was, as everywhere, a joyous event with all the children receiving gifts and new clothes.

A great deal of effort is going into raising the standard of the SOS Hermann Gmeiner School. It is gaining popularity and the outside admissions are gradually increasing. Under the auspices of the US Embassy the iEARN Programme has donated a computer laboratory, with online access to the internet. The children are enjoying this facility

which is similar to one donated to the SOS School in Lahore. They are being encouraged to correspond with children around the globe and take full advantage of this educational tool.

Some of the children are doing remarkably well with several girls attending College, one boy doing his MBA and another completing the Chartered Accountancy course.

FAISALABAD

Although this Village has been functioning for many years the Community Centre was still not complete. This has now been constructed at a cost of Rs.3.3 million through the generosity of Messrs. Dobotex, courtesy Interloop (Pvt.) Ltd. At the opening ceremony in May, the Managing Director very kindly agreed to also finance the Boys Home, which is to be added to the Village complex.

With the addition of the Community Centre, and landscaping of the surrounding area, the Village is now looking much more attractive and the family homes will now also be renovated. Other essential improvements have been the replacement of the tubewell pump and also the water pipes which have become corroded. The watercourse running through the Village has been partially cemented and the remainder needs to be done, as seepage is causing problems. This is an expensive undertaking and we are approaching the local authorities for their assistance.

The Rotary Club has kindly arranged a 'Jugnoo Literacy Programme' for educating those 'mothers' who are illiterate, as is being done in all our projects.

As everywhere else, the children have been fully involved in various activities, both in the Village and in the community. An Eid-ul-Azha Mela was organized with the assistance of the Rotract Club which provided items for the stalls. Soon after Eid they all visited the Gatwala Park and Zoo and, later in the month, a Basant Mela was organized for them. In March they were invited to yet another Mela, organized by the Beaconhouse School Parents Association. On this occasion all the proceeds from the event, as well as a television set, were presented to SOS.

Eid Milad-un Nabi was celebrated with Quran Khwani, distribution of sweets and illumination in the Village. Two events were organized in June, to raise awareness about the need to protect the environment. On World Environment Day the Serena Environment Society invited the children to participate in a speech competition on the subject of 'How do we want our seas and oceans ---- dead or alive'. Three of our children won prizes. The District Forest Officer also arranged an awareness/training class on forestry, with the help of slides and pictures, and added to their knowledge of the subject.

A month long summer camp was held in the month of June, with special emphasis on English language skills, for which the Serena Hotel Management kindly provided a tutor. In July, four of the older girls participated in a Girl Guides Camp organized in Murree and on Independence Day, in August, the City Nazim was the Chief Guest.

In October, the Rotary Club arranged a dinner in the Village for all the children, with the co-operation of Pizza Hut. This was followed by puppet and magic shows, as well as distribution of gifts to the children.

The final, and perhaps most exciting event of the year, was the hosting of the Inter-Village Cricket Tournament which was generously supported by the National Fertilizer Corporation, Serena Hotel and other donors. The Youth Home Committee did a splendid job in making the match arrangements while the Village Committee ensured that the board and lodging were well taken care of.

As you will note, community involvement is so important for our success, and we appreciate all these thoughtful gestures which add so much to the quality of life of the children. The Friends of SOS group has also been re-activated and has held two successful meetings. The members are keen to get involved in supporting the Village further, and we have great expectations from them.

SARGODHA

This project is now well established with the appointment of capable and concerned staff. The children are doing well but we continue to face problems with the physical infrastructure. Due to the high salinity in the underground water we have had to repeatedly bore in search of sweet water, and have been only partially successful. This salinity has also affected some houses and, major repairs, including replacement of underground water pipes in three units, were carried out under the competent guidance of NESPAK. Soon they will be ready for occupancy and, in the meantime, 115 children occupy 11 family homes.

There is ever increasing support from the community as we continue to try and attract more local involvement. We are especially pleased to note the interest of the schools. Several groups of schoolchildren have visited the Village and brought many gifts for the children. One group even donated their pocket money and spent many hours visiting the homes. Besides these groups some individuals have been most generous. The Regional Manager and staff of MCB visited during Ramazan, and decided to organize an Eid Milan party for the children. The PAF Base Commander also visited and, along with another donor, purchased new shoes for all the children. Others donated items for iftari and new clothes.

Donations in kind enable us to reduce our running expenses and, as in other Villages, the level of items being received is steadily increasing. Material for making uniforms, bedsheets etc. is very useful and always welcome. We greatly appreciate the support of the medical fraternity which provides free consultation, and often medicines, when needed.

The children have had the opportunity to visit many interesting places

A day trip to Islamabad was an exciting adventure and picnics have been arranged in various scenic spots. On the occasion of Eid-ul-Azha a funfair was organized in the Village and on Basant day, they all had kites to fly. An interesting programme was the rejoicing on passing the annual examinations held in March. They celebrated with tea parties in their homes, to which they invited each other, and had great fun planning.

On Independence Day, they visited the PAF Base and saw the various types of aircraft and, on another occasion, went there to see a Flower Show. After the summer camp groups of children visited Lahore and Murree.

The Police Department arranged a party for the children in the Village, and brought refreshments and gifts. They also donated eight water coolers and, another group of well-wishers, has collectively purchased a carpet for the hall as well as curtains, bedsheets, shoes and Eid clothes.

The SOS Hermann Gmeiner School is steadily improving its educational standards, and attracting more admissions from the community. Regular extra-curricular programmes are held, such as poetry competitions, art exhibitions, sports and the celebration of national days.

MULTAN

Although the SOS Children's Village in Multan is our newest project, it has lost no time in catching up with the others, even surpassing some, in terms of activity, fundraising, publicity and general dynamism in approach. No sooner have the children settled into their new homes than plans are in hand for acquiring land - and funding - for the establishment of a school and youth facility. The DCO has offered his assistance in procuring the land, and the construction of both projects will commence as soon as possible. In the meantime, a temporary school was opened in September, on premises generously offered by Colony Textiles Mills, in their compound. There is such a demand for good education that over 100 children from the outside have already enrolled, in addition to our own 132.

The children are benefiting from a variety of activities planned for them. On both Eids they were treated to visits to Funland, the National Wildlife Park and KFC. A mega Basant Mela was organized, in association with Multan Crescent Lions Club, and featured a magic show, face painting, a musical programme and, ofcourse, kites and gifts for the children. On a more serious note, 'World Women's Day' was celebrated, in March, with children presenting a drama and giving speeches on "Wajood-e-zan say hai tasveer-e-kainat mey rang" to pay tribute to their 'mothers'. At the end of March, with the help of the Forest Department, the Chairperson and Committee members, assisted in planting about 2000 saplings and, in the same month, the Rotary Club provided a teacher and books for the 'Jugnoo Literacy Programme' which will educate those 'mothers' who are illiterate..

In May, Shama Ghee Mills Ltd. and Daily Khabrain organized a musical programme for the children from the SOS Village and Sahara Foundation. Moin Akhtar, Mona Lahori and a popular band provided entertainment. Imagine the delight when Moin Akhtar visited the SOS Village the following day and entertained them again!

A group of journalists from Daily News Express also arranged a magic show for the children, donated grocery items and gifts of wristwatches to the school-going children.

During the summer vacation trips were arranged to Shah Rukn-e-Alam Amusement Park and Chanab Lake. Independence Day was celebrated with great fanfare, flag hoisting, speeches and taranas followed by a sumptuous lunch given by the Chairperson. On World Peace Day, in September, the children released pigeons as a symbol of peace.

Despite these varied and interesting experiences, the greatest pleasure of all is derived from anything related to cricket and this, too, they had in abundance. The year started with a tournament organized by the Sahara Sports and Welfare Organisation. The SOS team won but, in a spirit of sportsmanship, decided to share the trophy with the Sahara team which had lost by 11 runs.

In March a Cricket Tournament, between six private schools and the SOS team, was organized by Nestle Milkpak, and the final prize distribution was followed by a musical evening.

The visit of the Pakistani and Indian Cricket teams to the SOS Village, in March, was a thrilling event. The cricketers, including Tendulkar, Shewaga and Balaji, played cricket with the children, visited their homes and were entertained to an elegant dinner in the Village, courtesy of Colony Textile Mills. This has to be the highlight of the year for the lucky children!

The last, but not least, event of the year was a fundraising programme, sponsored by our longtime supporters, Shell Pakistan, and featuring Zille-Huma. This was held in the Village premises and attended by the elite of the city. Not only were considerable funds collected for the construction of the youth facility but, by all accounts, it was a memorable event.

KASUR

The SOS Rural Support Programme which is being implemented in Kasur District is acknowledged as a model for integrated rural uplift. This is operational in thirty-one villages, situated in the remote border area, and numerous teams have come to study the working and learn from our experience. Initiatives being taken in the fields of health, education, adult literacy, water supply, sanitation, micro-credit and so on, are transforming the lives of thousands of families.

The community has been fully involved in all the initiatives and separate committees for men and women, consisting of approximately thirty members each, hold monthly meetings. They discuss the problems faced by the community and find ways of solving them through self-help. This is a great improvement in the attitudes prevailing when we first entered the area and tried to mobilize the population. There was tremendous resistance by the entrenched upper hierarchy to allowing persons of a lesser caste join the deliberations, even if they happened to be better educated or qualified.

Some of the achievements of the programme:

- * The literacy rate for women has increased from 15% to 50% and that of men from 40% to 55%.
- * Thirteen primary schools have been established and one school each, for boys and girls, constructed. Current enrollment exceeds 1500 children.
- * Over 1000 women have learned reading, writing and basic accountancy.
- * A sanitation and drainage scheme benefits over 1000 households
- * Safe drinking water supply to over 1500 households.
- * Two dispensers visit six villages daily and provide free treatment and medicines for

common ailments.

- * A regular immunization programme against major childhood diseases, has achieved 100% coverage.
- * Over 3000 livestock de-wormed to increase milk production.
- * Organic vegetables are being cultivated in 650 kitchen gardens.

MUZAFFARABAD

This project has faced inordinate delays due to the extra precautionary measures required in connection with stabilizing the hillside on which it is situated. The construction of the Village and Primary School was completed some time back but there was a further problem with the approach road. This is now all behind us and the first children will start moving in by February. We are anxiously looking forward to this as there is a great need in that area. Presently we are scouting the refugee camps for deserving children and prospective 'mothers', and will also shift the Kashmiri children temporarily accommodated in the Rawalpindi Village. I would like to make a special appeal for sponsorship of children in this Village, as the local support on which we usually rely, will be limited.

SIALKOT

The construction of the Village is nearing completion and it will be ready for occupancy by the spring. The Chairperson and her family have not only made generous donations themselves, but also convinced others to donate family homes. However, there is a shortfall in funds and five of the fifteen family units are still to be committed. We appeal to the large hearted people of Sialkot to lend their generous support to this project, as they have to so many other deserving causes. The cost of a family home is Rs.1.2 million and will house 10 children. Do consider giving this sadqa-e-jaria and help us complete this facility for the orphans in your area.

SOS AFGHAN RELIEF PROGRAMME

With the return of the refugees located in that area, the facilities in the Shamshatoo Camp have been closed down. However, the population of the Badaber Camp is still in place, so we continue with the Girls School and Basic Health Unit, which are both being utilized to capacity. The SOS Medical Centre, situated in Peshawar, continues to be busy in providing a high standard of care to the children being referred from the camps. Although our BHU in Shamshatoo has been closed down, other health facilities in the refugee camps are also referring seriously sick children for treatment in this excellent facility.

FUTURE PLANS

There is no limit to our dreams and, apart from the immediate implementation of the various projects mentioned earlier, we are actively pursuing plans for the establishment of four more SOS Children's Villages. These are as follows:

Peshawar – It has been our longtime desire to have a project in this area but, we have been held back due to land not being made available. The provincial government finally took the highly commendable step, of acquiring and purchasing land for the establishment of an SOS Village but, unfortunately, delays are being faced in the

handing over. As soon as this benevolent gesture on the part of the authorities is implemented, we will immediately establish this project.

Islamabad – A very generous donor has offered to finance the complete construction of this project. The Capital Development Authority was approached for land and, for the first time in its history, the Board has recommended a free grant. As soon as this materializes plans can be implemented.

Quetta – Land has been donated by the provincial government and the Committee is exploring avenues for funding the construction. Maybe another kind donor will take up this project!

Jamshoro – For quite some time the Committee for SOS Children's Villages of Sindh has been pursuing the acquisition of land in the Hyderabad area. The University of Jamshoro has very generously offered a suitable site and the matter is being processed.

You will gather from all these reports that a great deal of activity is taking place and plans are on-going for further development. Encouraged by your support we continue to plan ambitiously, confident that more and more friends will come forward to make our schemes a reality. Please invite others, who may not be familiar with our work, to visit one of our projects and see for themselves what we are doing.

We are proud to be making a difference to so many lives and, as we celebrate the achievements of the past 30 years, we re-affirm our commitment to give the children a fair chance in life, by providing them with love, dignity and the opportunity to realize their potential. We also reiterate our pledge to do this with integrity, dedication and firm resolve.

There is no greater satisfaction than seeing a homeless, neglected child, whose world has turned upside down, transformed into a productive member of society. You are helping us make this possible and, as the journey continues, we look forward to your being there with us.

Thank you for caring!

Yours sincerely,

Souriya Anwar
President