

## SA encouraged to get involved with WOW

Children's Charity, SOS Children's Villages South Africa, is encouraging South Africans to get involved by doing something 'WOW' to raise awareness for orphaned and abandoned children. World Orphan Week (WOW) 2011 is earmarked for the second week in February and raising awareness for the sixth consecutive year is the world's largest children's charity, SOS Children Villages.



Since the inception of WOW in 2005 (in the UK) SOS International has played an integral role in raising awareness around the needs of orphaned and abandoned children around the world. In South Africa, SOS Children's Villages South Africa spearheaded the introduction of WOW to the nation in 2009 and has played an important part in making every vulnerable, abandoned and orphaned child's plight known.

"Sadly, we are currently living in a society riddled by a portion of the population who are unable to speak or fend for themselves. In South Africa, many have lost their families to diseases such as HIV/AIDS and Tuberculosis; some are abandoned by family members who are no longer able to care for them due to extreme poverty; others (some 50 000[1]) are victims of domestic violence and crime. A voice for the unheard is needed and SOS seeks to be that voice" says Leigh Swartz, fund development manager for SOS Children's Village's South Africa.

### Statistics:

- Every 2.2 seconds a child becomes an orphan[2]
- There are over 160 million orphans around the world[3]
- In SA alone, the number of orphaned and abandoned children has risen 4.5% since 2005[4]
- There are approximately 3.6 million orphans in SA, 1.8 million of which is as a direct result of the AIDS epidemic[5]

"The need for organisations and individuals alike to become involved has never been more urgent. The task is simply too great for any single government or organisation to tackle alone. Together however, success is within reach! Our aim this year is to get as many people as possible working together toward the common goal of assisting those youth and children without families" says Swartz.

It is with this in mind that SOS is calling for all companies, organisations, schools, communities and individuals to do something 'WOW' for vulnerable, orphaned and abandoned children this February. Swartz encourages those wanting to participate to be as creative as possible. For those not sure where to start, Swartz gives the following ideas to stimulate action amongst all volunteers and participants.

### For companies and organisations wishing to get involved in WOW:

- Allow employees to dress in something WOW to highlight the plight of orphaned and abandoned

children - Wear anything from feathers, false eyelashes and bright nail polish to masks, ball gowns and top hats! Collect R5 per participant and donate the money to SOS.

- Companies and organisations can encourage employee-giving in the month of February. For example employees can donate a small percentage or a set amount from their February income to SOS.
- Organisations can, as part of their CSI spend, donate products instead of giving actual money. I.e. IT companies and retailers can donate old (or new) computers, clothing manufacturers and retailers can donate dead or old stock etcetera.
- Companies can display WOW posters (available from SOS) on bulletin boards in their canteens and passageways.
- Companies can educate their staff on WOW through internal emailers, newsletters and internal competitions.

### **For individuals wishing to get involved:**

- Buy a R5 WOW sticker from SOS.
- Host a WOW event for friends and family in aid of orphaned and abandoned children. Go to [www.justgiving.com](http://www.justgiving.com) for tips and ideas on how to hold such an event.
- Use social media (like your Facebook or Twitter page) to encourage others to get involved. Put a link your page to SOS's Facebook page. Invite people to 'like' SOS's Facebook Page.
- SMS the word 'WOW' to 40975 to donate R5.
- Donate online at [www.sos.org.za](http://www.sos.org.za).
- Clean out your cupboards and donate old clothing, blankets and toys to a SOS Village near you (go to [www.sos.org.za](http://www.sos.org.za) to view all villages).
- Donate your time, skills or professional services to SOS Children's Villages facilities across South Africa

"Any money raised for SOS Children's Villages will go directly to supporting the 8000 children in our care, well as toward our community programme known as the 'SOS Family Strengthening Programme' (a sustainable operation developed to support vulnerable children without removing them from their natural family environment)," explains Swartz.

"The Oxford English Dictionary describes WOW as "significant success". Our wish for WOW 2011 is that through increased awareness and participation each orphaned and abandoned child will benefit and as a result the Week will indeed be true to its name and be significantly successful or rather...WOW!"

*[1] Stats from UNISEF*

*[2] Stats from SOS International*

*[3] Stats from SOS International*

*[4] Stats from HRSC, 2010*

*[5]Stats from UNISEF*