

**SOS Children’s Villages celebrate special women this Mother’s Day**

Being a mother is an attitude, not a biological relation- Robert A. Heinlein

A mother’s role is to provide the loving care and support needed by growing children. The nurturing a mother provides is unparalleled and a vital part of a child's care. As we celebrate Mother’s Day in South Africa, we pay tribute to mothers of a different kind, whose role is so pivotal in rebuilding broken lives and raising orphaned children in loving homes and environments.

“The mothers form the backbone of what SOS Children’s Villages does. They have the enormous task of motivating, encouraging, loving and supporting children that come from diverse backgrounds to believe that anything is possible,” says Siphiwe Maphanga, National Director of SOS Children’s Villages South Africa. “It is not an easy calling, and this Mother’s day we salute their incredible work,” says Siphiwe.

For 32 years the SOS Children’s Villages (SOS CV) have been caring for orphaned, abandoned and vulnerable children who have lost or are at risk of losing parental care within South Africa. At the centre of this highly successful international family-based care organisation, are the SOS Children’s Villages mothers – women who devote their lives to caring for and raising children whose own biological mothers are unable to do so – either as a result of extreme poverty, terminal illness, death, abuse or neglect.

Their task is never easy. At SOS Children’s Villages, a mother has up to ten children of all ages under her care in a family home. These children invariably come with immense emotional baggage, trust and social issues. For the mother, the physical care and attention is by far a much smaller task than the massive challenge of rebuilding the child’s trust and establishing loving relationships with a child who in all likelihood, has lived through more trauma and heartbreak than we can ever fathom.

“And despite these challenges, our moms devote their time, energy and love to heal broken hearts and the painful wounds of our country’s most vulnerable citizens. At the end of it all, she is responsible for raising well-rounded children, in a loving home environment, providing for their emotional and physical needs, seeing to their education and social welfare, to create adults that can go forth in the world with confidence and self-sufficiency. There are countless stories of children who go on to live fulfilling lives both personally and professionally and start their own loving families – thanks to the devotion and love of their SOS Children’s Villages mother,” explains Siphiwe.

**The role of mothers in the SOS**

Although the role of the mother in the SOS Children’s Villages closely tracks the role of a biological mother in any other household, the circumstances are very different. Each mother cares for between eight and ten children at a time from very diverse and often troubled backgrounds. The mother provides guidance for the children in terms of being a constant support for them and teaching them as a mother would do her own children. Household rules, chores, and discipline are part of the normalities. The mothers are encouraged to involve the children in family decisions. Her role in the house includes being a mother, best friend, comforter, child protector, teacher and counsellor. Her work never stops. In order to give the children the most normal family life possible, the mother needs to ensure that the normality in the house is maintained.

**Children need a family**

“The children in the villages come from troubled and difficult backgrounds and integrating the children into a new family with new siblings and mother is a difficult and emotionally demanding period. It is an SOS CV policy that biological siblings are never separated and should be raised together, unless there are exceptional circumstances that warrant it. During the transitional phase where new children are integrated into their home, the mother will work very closely with the social workers to monitor the process and ensure as smooth as possible the child’s integration and as little disruption to children already within the family. Each child differs and the time for the child to become properly settled and establish a relationship based on trust will differ from child to child. As the child begins to settle and establishes trust again, the rewards of seeing a once troubled youngster begin to grow, develop and embrace their dreams is incredible,” explains Siphiwe.

“Words cannot express the gratitude for all the work of our mothers. You are very important to us and I would like to thank all our moms for their hard work, the love they give to our children and for the role they play in raising well-adjusted adults. You are the ones that shape the children, encourage and support them. We see the difference that you make on a daily basis. Without you, the SOS Children’s Villages would not be able to fulfil its mandate of providing every child with a loving home. I wish you a very happy and blessed Mother’s day,” Concludes Siphiwe

To support SOS Children’s Villages SMS the word SOS to 42975 to make a R30 donation or go to [www.sosvillages.org.za](http://www.sosvillages.org.za)....

**Interview Opportunities**

If you are interested in an interview with SOS Children’s Villages, contact Anne Da Silva on (011) 894 2767 or [Anne@tscommunications.co.za](mailto:Anne@tscommunications.co.za) to make the necessary arrangements.

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**About SOS Children’s Villages**

In South Africa, the SOS Children’s Villages concept was established and registered in 1982, with the first village built in 1983 in Ennerdale. This was followed by seven more in Mamelodi, Port Elizabeth, Cape Town, Pietermartizburg, Mthatha, Nelspruit and Rustenburg. In addition to the village concept, the growing orphan crisis in Southern Africa, largely attributed to the HIV & AIDS pandemic, saw the establishment of the SOS Family Strengthening Programme. SOS CV realised that there was a need to expand beyond its children's village operations to prevent children from becoming orphaned and abandoned, and falling out of the family environment. SOS CV responded by developing community-based family strengthening programmes, which provide support to families caring for orphans and vulnerable children, with the aim of keeping these children in their families and communities of origin.

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