



SOS INSIGHT

Cape Verde, The Gambia, Guinea-Bissau, Guinea, Sierra Leone, Liberia

 **SOS CHILDREN'S VILLAGES**
INTERNATIONAL

July 2010, 4th Issue

Welcome to our
bi-annual
Newsletter!

A simple way to get some news and information about our region, to feel closer to our children and see how, with the financial support of sponsors and friends, the teams of dedicated co-workers reach always more children... and make a difference in their lives!



Photo: Claire Ledwinski

Rain, rain... and more rain!

The rainy season has started throughout the region and landscapes have gotten green again. Depending on the countries of our region, the rainy season can last up to eleven months, like in N'Zérékoré, located in the Guinean tropical forest area. But usually, the yearly average is more five to six months. And the more you would go South, towards Liberia for instance, the more it would rain!

Though the rainy season has lots of benefits for the flora and is particularly awaited in the rural areas where families mostly rely on agriculture, it's also a time that rhymes with food shortages (until crops reach maturity) and increase of malaria cases; a time when houses get washed away, trees uprooted and roads destroyed; a time when telecommunication systems are frequently down and washed clothes never dry!

While in the children's villages children love playing football under the rain and spend more time playing



Photo: Christian Leske

board games or cards, reading books and watching TV under a waterproof roof, many other children living outside in poor housing conditions have to deal with roof leakages, floods and wet beds, when they have one. This is why our family strengthening programmes critically assess the condition of housing and support families when necessary to ensure they spend a 'dry' rainy season, for the welfare of all and children in particular.

Less of a problem, it is still difficult for our co-workers

to get things done when it rains and thunders.

Let's just hope that this year, unlike in 2009, no huge tree will fall on the SOS Social Centre in Bissau, no-one will be involved in a car accident due to heavy rainfalls like it happened to some (luckily unharmed) Guinean co-workers and that no telecom antenna will fall in the SOS Children's Village of Bakoteh (luckily at night and not on a family house!).

On this note, we wish all of you a safe rainy season!

Summer holidays...

(Wendell, 16-year-old boy from the SOS Youth Facility of Monrovia)

I always spend the summer break doing new things. Two years ago for instance, I was employed in a printing press where I had a one month job experience. I encountered new friends. It was pretty excited having a job and leaving the dorm [the SOS Youth Facility] every morning for work. The work started at 9 am., lunch at job was at noon and knock out time was 4:30 pm.. It was a very nice experience though I was always tired after working hours. Back home, I relaxed by listening to music. It was pretty nice having a job!



Last summer holiday started well too, as I got my school results and was promoted to grade 12 after 10 months

of hard studies! I could now focus on my passion: Taekwondo. I spent my first month of holidays training for a Taekwondo exhibition at my uncle's place, where I was spending some time [SOS children and youth are encouraged to keep ties with their families in the communities]. There, I made myself an intensive training schedule: lifting heavy weights and practicing new techniques at night, which I would not have been able to do in the SOS Youth Facility where we normally have to go to bed at 9 pm. At my uncle's place, I used to train from 10 pm. to midnight. I started this late because I wanted to train with concentration. By then, I was a yellow belt holder in the Don Bosco taekwondo institute. And it was important I trained well, as during the exhibition I would fight to be promoted to blue belt!

The exhibition was on our country's Independence Day, July 26, at the national basketball stadium. I trusted God that I would make it! When I was called upon to defend and justify that I was ready for blue belt, my first fight was with a black belt holder. The fight was so much against me! I got really beaten by this guy, and I felt so bad. But I heard a voice saying 'strong mind, strong body' and that is the motto of the Bafan-cobra school.

For more information on our programmes, more stories and pictures, visit our Website!

www.sos-ro.org



I had five fights in total. I had already lost the first one. The second one was with a red belt. I managed to equalize the score. For the third fight, I met another red belt. He was short so I had height advantage. I defeated him with one point margin (3-2). I finally fought a blue belt but through the grace of God and seriousness I made it somehow. I was awarded a blue belt certificate and a blue belt, and this was my major achievement over my past break!

One year has past since my last summer holidays and I am now a 'super red' belt in Taekwondo! This coming summer holidays, my plans are all set! I'll still practice Taekwondo to get the next belt and as I should soon be a graduate from the SOS Hermann Gmeiner Senior Secondary School of Monrovia, I'll also have to study for the aptitude test for the college entrance. And in between, I'll not forget to rest and spend time with my friends!

What we love and hate about the rainy season?

SOS children and SOS mothers answer...

"We always get wet coming back from school! Even if you have an umbrella, the rain still wets you!"

Elizabeth, 9-year-old girl

"It's good for crops! They grow really fast in the rainy season!"

Baboucarr, 13-year-old boy

"I like when it rains! I can go outside and shower. There is so much water falling from the roof of our house that it's sometimes even better than the real shower!"

Baboucarr, 14-year-old boy

"Clothes don't dry!"

SOS mother Rose

"Everything gets dirty."

Isnaba, 8-year-old boy



Like all over the region, SOS Children's Villages The Gambia celebrates SOS day in grand style!

SOS day - 23 June - is always a day full of emotion and fun, where the family spirit is at its highest. This day commemorates the work and vision of the late founder, Hermann Gmeiner, and celebrates the good work of the organisation towards the positive changes made in the lives of vulnerable children.



Photo: Claire Ladavicius

In The Gambia this year, both children's villages in Bakoteh and Basse had organised their day's programme to offer the opportunity to each of the

families living in each village to display their talents. The programme included contests to elect the best singing house, the best SOS Mother and Aunt, the fastest running mother, the cleanest house of the year, the best house cake, the house with the best front yard and last but not least, 'Miss Mama SOS 2010'.

A panel of neutral judges critically assessed each candidate or family house in each category, while friends, neighbors and partners enjoyed the show and shared the villages' happy moments.

Eleven-year-old Adama, one of the SOS Children from



Photo: Claire Ladavicius



Photo: Ebrima Jobe

Basse, explained how delighted and good she felt to be part of such celebrations. "People were happy with our performance and I'm also very proud with my [SOS] mother, Saffie, as she won the 'best mothers' award", concluded the young girl.

"It was a great and fun day", sums up 13-year-old Anna from Bakoteh, whose family won the 'best cake award'. "I hope we'll celebrate it again this way next year", she concluded.

The party ended late at night, and all families went home with their respective trophies. Another day in the village to be remembered!

SOS Children's Villages Sierra Leone honours co-workers and friends for their dedication and commitment!

29 January 2010 brought joy and inner satisfaction to 19 co-workers and eight friends of SOS Children's Villages Sierra Leone who were awarded certificates and gifts for their commitment, dedication and long service to the organisation.

In his speech, Mr Olatungie Woode, National Director of SOS Children's Villages Sierra Leone said this ceremony was for all to reflect on the good work of the awardees and sufferings of orphans, destitute and abandoned children in Sierra Leone. "It's a way to show appreciation and extend a big thank you to co-workers who have served the organisation with commitment, dedication for one or more decades, co-workers who have put the children first, who have accepted that every child has the right to a family, a home, education, health and to be treated with respect," he further stated.

Mr Woode added that the eight awarded friends had demonstrated they believe in the cause of the organisation and the welfare of the children and are always willing and ready to render their services in diverse ways.

He called on Sierra Leoneans to make it a point of obligation that children are cared for, protected and treated with utmost respect and dignity at all given times and urged all SOS co-workers to continue to work hard for the best interest of children.

Speaking in the capacity as guest speaker Dr Saccoh Kabia, Hon. Minister of Social Welfare, Gender and Children's Affairs, said SOS Children's Villages Sierra Leone has been playing a leading role in championing the cause of vulnerable children in the country. He assured his audience that his ministry would support the organisation in the drive to protect children taking into account the Child Rights Act that was passed into law in 2009.



Children from various SOS programmes entertained the guests with melodious songs and a short drama, and the distribution of certificates and gifts to awardees climaxed the ceremony. Speaking for all rewarded co-workers, Mrs Rosaline Kamara who has served SOS Children's Village Freetown for over eighteen years had this to say: "Our sacrifice for the children has not gone in vain. Now we are proud to have been recognised for our commitment and dedication".

Building each other's capacities!

Co-workers from the Regional Office have decided to get together on a regular basis to share and learn on various topics to improve their skills and work performance. From computer skills to child's rights, HR or photography skills, whoever wants to participate is free to join. These "bite-size" training are meant to last no longer than 2 and a half hours, to be fitted into anyone's calendar. Co-workers take up turns to facilitate according to their competencies. The first training took place on the 11th of June and was designed to improve the use of MS Outlook. Participants learned how to get their mailbox organised and created rules, as well as use the calendar function to invite colleagues to meetings, set their travels, etc.

SOS Children's Villages The Gambia hosts an inter-region video training

From 2 to 4 July, three regional editors from Africa got together under the supervision of the "two Roberts", two professional video experts from Austria.



Photo: Claire Ladavicius

The purpose of the training was to initiate the three SOS colleagues to video making and raw material shooting.

The shootings made within

all the various Gambian programmes will be used to make a short promotional clip for SOS Children's Villages the Gambia. It should be available for download on the Texts and Pictures Agency (on the SOS Intranet) very soon!

SOS Kindergarten pupils march for the 2010 Carnival in Bissau

The colourful Carnival celebrations lasted four days in SOS Children's Village Bissau (13-16 February 2010). Children celebrated within their schools, within their community and within the children's village.

As much as children enjoyed the party in their school, they also love the march past in the centre of Bissau where many other schools participated and competed for the best costumes and dancing and singing shows. Dressed in traditional costumes and representing all the Bissau-Guinean ethnic groups, children marched in the major streets of the capital city, on the rhythms



Photo: Adalberto Pereira

of local music and under the applause of many people standing by the sides of the streets. This year, pupils from the SOS Kindergarten of Bissau took the 6th place.

For these important celebrations in the Guinea-Bissau culture, SOS mothers also bought costumes for their smaller children and organised a party and a little march past within the village.

Cape Verde organises its 10th "Infantile Games"



Photo: SOS Archives

Respecting the right of the child to play and following the motto "It's through children we build a developed, reliable and safe Cape Verde", this year's "Infantile Games" gathered hundreds of participants (aged 4 to 5) throughout Cape Verde, including 50 pupils from the SOS Kindergarten of Assomada and São Domingos. More pedagogical and educational than competitive, the games ended on June 26 and will leave great memories to many!



HOW CAN I HELP?

There are several ways in which you can assist the SOS Children's Villages operation in our region: you can become a child sponsor or a facility sponsor, or just donate anything you want to help us give children the chances they deserve in life. For more information, please contact Mrs Mama Yaffa, the **Regional Sponsorship Coordinator**:

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Additional information can also be found on our regional website: www.sos-ro.org
or on the homepage of SOS Children's Villages International: www.sos-childrensvillages.org