



Connecting Africa

Reaching out to improve the lives of vulnerable people in Africa



**SOS CHILDREN'S
VILLAGES**
INTERNATIONAL

Since 2013, BT has been helping some of the world's most vulnerable children and families through its ground-breaking Connecting Africa programme.

Working closely with the charity SOS Children's Villages, BT has used its global satellite capabilities to successfully deliver broadband internet to some of the remotest parts of sub-Saharan Africa.

So far the programme has touched and improved the lives of around 700,000 people who have been able to enjoy a better education, improved healthcare and a stronger link to the global community.

But BT's work in the region remains far from finished. Two new social impact programmes created using the Connecting Africa network the power of communications will help increase literacy and modernise healthcare in the SOS Villages and beyond.



Connecting Africa delivers long-term benefits for thousands of people

For more than 65 years SOS Children's Villages has been helping the world's most vulnerable children and families. The charity works to keep fragile families together and prevent children from ending up alone. When a child is orphaned or abandoned it provides them with a permanent, loving home in an SOS Children's Village.

Connecting villages

In 2013, BT teamed up with SOS Children's Villages to launch the Connecting Africa programme. This involved the company using its global satellite capability to deliver broadband internet to 20 SOS Children's Villages in 12 sub-Saharan African countries. Establishing the network saw BT setting up VSAT (very small aperture terminal) satellite connections in areas where the terrain and distance between locations made terrestrial broadband physically impossible or prohibitively expensive. The company also put its own people on the ground to help make the project sustainable. For example, BT engineers trained local SOS Children's Villages technical support teams to operate and maintain the network themselves. This meant any technical glitches could be dealt with locally helping the communities achieve self-sufficiency.



Making communities self-sufficient

By having access to the internet, children, adults and others living in and around the villages have been able to enjoy a better learning experience in schools, improved healthcare and a stronger link to the global community. Whole communities have been able to take advantage of a wide range of e-learning courses developed by SOS Children's Villages and other BT partners. The broadband connectivity is also enabling the charity to run its operations more efficiently. The programme's success has seen it being extended to a further 10 SOS Children's Villages across 13 countries.

About Connecting Africa

Originally, broadband via satellite was delivered to SOS Villages in: Malawi, Mali, Kenya, Gambia, Guinea Bissau, Sierra Leone, DR Congo, Benin, Burundi, Swaziland, Central African Republic and Zambia. Since then, a further ten SOS Villages have been connected to the satellite network (making 30 in total) and the BT Connecting Africa programme now spans 13 African countries.

The social impact

To date, Connecting Africa is estimated to have directly impacted 5,000 people living or working in the villages but it has also touched and improved the lives of around 700,000.

The long-term value of the Connected Africa programme is now being accurately measured thanks to a BT social impact study. The results are helping BT to quantify the impact that the internet is making on the lives of people.

Explains Anna Easton, BT's Sustainable Business director: "We want to better understand the influence that being connected has on outcomes such as education, employability and standards of living. Carrying out this kind of study also gives us the opportunity to put a financial value on the impact we were making."

Increasing employment

Study results have shown that access to the internet is delivering specific benefits to different groups of beneficiaries. For example, exposure to online education is opening up more employment opportunities for students once they leave school. Teachers have come to rely on the internet to give them the means to plan lessons and to learn more effective ways of teaching the children. Meanwhile, SOS Village mothers use the internet to keep in touch with children who have grown up and left the village to become independent or find work. SOS staff use it to stay in contact with other SOS Children's Villages and locations across the globe.

Connectivity save lives

BT's Connecting Africa network has also been acknowledged for the role it plays in helping other charities do their work in sub-Saharan Africa. For example, when the Ebola crisis emerged in Sierra Leone, BT increased the bandwidths of its satellite network to enable charities, aid workers and others carry out essential communications on the ground.

Now, BT is working on two more major social impact projects which are both being delivered using the Connecting Africa satellite network. The SOS Villages Healthcare Management System pilot is already transforming healthcare across the SOS Village network, while the Open Space Literacy initiative is set to improve literacy rates through the use of ICT in education.

"The value of this partnership is the way that BT is helping us as an organisation. BT has the vision to understand that, with improved systems and architecture, we will be better able to bring long-term value to incredibly vulnerable children and families".

Meryl Davies, Director of fundraising at SOS Children's Villages

Highlights at a glance

- So far the Connecting Africa programme has touched and improved the lives of around 700,000 people.
- It has directly impacted more than 5,000 people – changing their lives for the better
- Over the next five years in Kenya, the Open Space Learning programme is expected to reach 135,000 direct beneficiaries (children aged 6-9), 225,000 indirect beneficiaries and around 4,200 teachers.
- The health management system helps to deliver quick diagnoses based on patients' symptoms, the monitoring of the flow of patients in and out of the clinic, the monitoring of medical stock and finances; and safe storage of medical records.



“Connecting Africa has been a magnificent opportunity for us in BT to show how the technology we provide and our ability to scale can help improve the lives of so many people”.

Anna Easton, programme director, BT

Enhanced healthcare systems

Traditionally, the medical records of people in the SOS Village communities have been held on paper. Storing files this way takes up lots of physical space in small clinics, and it slows down patient care – mainly because files are frequently lost. What’s more, it’s inefficient and insecure. But BT, working with a IT firm Softcom, set up a bespoke Healthcare Management Systems in seven SOS Village clinics. Now when a patient enters a clinic a record is created on the digital system. Doctors can use the digital system to prescribe medicine quickly and directly. Lab results can be entered into the patient’s digital record for speedier diagnosis. The management system also monitors the flow of patients in and out of the clinic, and monitors stock and inventory.

“It’s early days for the Healthcare Management System but we are already seeing better outcomes for patients while doctors, nurses and all clinic workers becoming so much more efficient”.

Anna Easton, Director of Sustainable Business, BT

Better learning experiences

BT is also supporting the SOS Villages Open Space Literacy (OSL) initiative to help combat low levels of literacy – initially in Kenya. The initiative introduces computers and connectivity into the learning environment to help boost reading, writing and comprehension among pupils. BT is running an OSL pilot in 25 schools across Nairobi (with an ambition to grow to 50). Some of the schools are in SOS Villages while others are government-run schools.

Raising literacy levels

So far, OSL has provided ICT equipment and connectivity to the 25 schools in Nairobi impacting around 16,000 children, 580 teachers, 140 school board management members and more than 1,000 community members. As well as helping provide much of the connectivity through VSAT-enabled broadband and the educational content, BT has also supplied the hardware for the schools (laptops and touch-screen projectors).

Over the next five years, OSL hopes to reach 300 schools and expand to several regions in Kenya – reaching 135,000 direct beneficiaries (children from grades 1–3 – ages 6–9), 225,000 indirect beneficiaries and around 4,200 teachers.



Offices worldwide

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