



# SOS CHILDREN'S VILLAGE BRITISH COLUMBIA

## The Meaning of SOS

You have probably seen the acronym "S.O.S." before but do you know what "SOS" stands for in the name **SOS Children's Villages**, the world's largest organization caring for orphaned and abandoned children?

Before it was called SOS Children's Villages, Hermann Gmeiner's (pictured to the right) *Societas Socialis* was a social club organized to raise funds for the care of orphaned children in Austria.

To Gmeiner and his supporters, SOS meant socially responsible society. Gmeiner believed that every child deserves a mother, as well as brothers and sisters, a home and a supportive community environment. Officially founded in 1949, Hermann Gmeiner refined the name to SOS Children's Villages to emphasize the call for attention to children in need worldwide.

Those four essential needs have become the principles that lead each SOS Children's Village. All SOS Villages continue to answer the SOS call of children around the world by providing safe, loving homes and happy childhoods.



## SOS in the Present and Future

Some people think "SOS" means "Save Our Souls", "Send Our Succor" or "Save Our Ship". The original use of "SOS," however, dates back to 1908 and the International Morse Code distress signal used with maritime radio systems. In Morse Code, "SOS" is a signal sequence of three dits, three dats, and another three dits spelling "S-O-S". The expression "Save Our Ship" was probably coined by sailors to signal for help from a vessel in distress.

Today an estimated 133 million children worldwide have lost one or both parents, and that number is expected to increase to 400 million by 2015. Most of these children do not have access to education, clean water, food, medical care, and many do not have homes.

SOS Children's Villages continues to respond to the call of children in 132 countries. With over 500 SOS Villages, SOS Children's Villages is currently raising more than 80,000 needy children. Calls of SOS in the communities surrounding the SOS Villages have also been heard and over a million children and adults are being responded to daily in over 2,000 SOS Family-Based Care facilities worldwide.

The SOS call is an easy thing to ignore. The noise created by the stress and complication of our own lives can easily overpower and weaken it. To some it is a faint whisper and, to others, it is silenced. However, if you stop for just a moment, you might hear it. How will you respond?