

Establishing a reliable communications network for SOS Children's Villages in the Central African Republic

Case Study:

*Thuraya ReliefComms
Voice & Land Data*

Client:

SOS Children's Villages

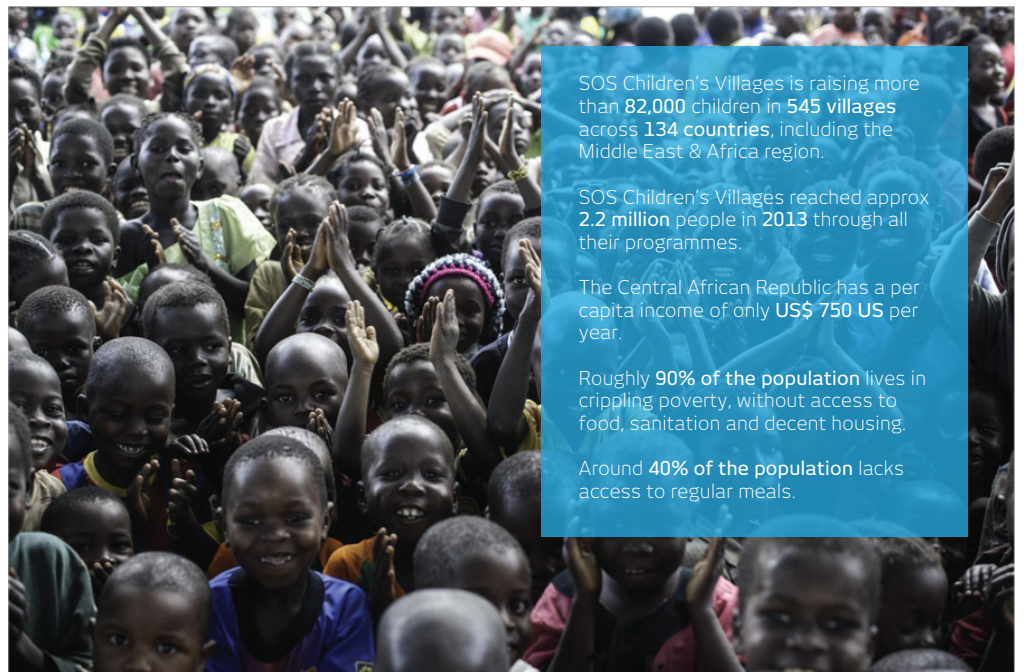
Products:

*Thuraya SatSleeve
Thuraya Public Calling
Office units
Thuraya IP*

Area of Operations:

*Central African
Republic*

Thuraya deployed vital communication links in the Central African Republic to connect SOS Children's Villages and extended their outreach to foreign aid donors



SOS Children's Villages is raising more than **82,000** children in **545** villages across **134** countries, including the Middle East & Africa region.

SOS Children's Villages reached approx **2.2 million** people in **2013** through all their programmes.

The Central African Republic has a per capita income of only **US\$ 750 US** per year.

Roughly **90%** of the population lives in crippling poverty, without access to food, sanitation and decent housing.

Around **40%** of the population lacks access to regular meals.

Background

The Central African Republic (CAR) ranks 185th (out of 187) in the United Nations Human Development Index, which assesses health, education, standard of living, child welfare, and other factors. One of the world's poorest countries, the CAR is heavily dependent upon foreign aid.

The country has more than 935,000 Internally Displaced People (IDP) – most of them women and children; food insecurity is rampant, access to water and sanitation is limited and there is a high risk of diarrhea,

typhoid, cholera and AIDS.

Nearly 50% of the population is less than 14 years of age. The ongoing civil war has made conditions extremely unsafe for young people. More than 370,000 children are orphans and grow up without either or both their parents. A majority of them are kidnapped and forcibly recruited to fight for armed militias. In 2013, some 650,000 children were unable to go to school due to the closure and occupation of schools by fighting groups.

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Situation

SOS Children's Villages has been supporting and sheltering children in the CAR since the early 1990's. In a country deeply affected by child poverty, a high infant mortality rate and dysfunctional family structures due to AIDS and political strife, the work of SOS Children's Villages is of critical importance. In 2013, the group commenced emergency relief operations in the cities of Bangui, Bouar and Bossangoa. To date, their programs have covered the needs of more than 65,032 beneficiaries.

The SOS Children's Villages' activities currently involve health, nutrition, WASH (Water, Sanitation and Hygiene), education as well as protection of women and children. The villages provide family-based, alternative care to 258 orphans. There are two medical centers that deliver primary healthcare assistance to women, children and chronically ill patients. The NGO has also established kindergartens and child-friendly spaces, besides launching mobile education services to ensure children trapped in the violence can continue their education. Their volunteers work directly with families and communities to effectively protect and care for their children. more than 1424 parents and children benefit from these programs.

The SOS teams operate within troubled regions where the ICT (Information Communications Technol-



ogy) infrastructure is very weak.

Even the slightest delay in the delivery of emergency services could spell disaster for thousands of children and parents for whom SOS is the only lifeline. In such an unstable environment, SOS Children's Villages needed a reliable communications network to coordinate and survey relief operations and logistics as well as monitor the whereabouts of their field workers.

In addition, they wanted a steady channel to reach out to foreign donors to create awareness about their humanitarian work.

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Solution

SOS Children's Villages represented by its Gulf Area Office approached Thuraya to bring satellite connectivity to their villages. Thuraya donated a number of Public Calling Office (PCO) units, SatSleeve satellite adaptors and IP satellite broadband terminals. The PCOs deliver voice, fax, data and SMS services in remote locations that are beyond the coverage of terrestrial GSM networks.

The SatSleeves are combined with iPhones or Android smartphones to make calls in satellite mode when local telecom networks fail. The IP mobile satellite terminals can be deployed anywhere within Thuraya's coverage area for internet connectivity.

"Thuraya equipment facilitates communication between all of our sites at any time, especially where internet service by local operators is impossible," says Julie Begbia, National ICT Coordinator at SOS Children's Villages CAR.



Results

Thuraya has enabled daily coordination among SOS Children's Villages and other relief organizations in the CAR. "We now have safety and autonomy everywhere when we are on the ground, even where cellular networks do not work," affirms Elie Koyela Ngnindou, Family Strengthening Program Coordinator and focal point of

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"We thank Thuraya for their generous donation as we nurture the children and families in these remote communities."

"Thuraya's satellite equipment and services will benefit our teams that are providing vital care in terms of education, development and community building. We are also coordinating efforts between the communities to ensure that they are prepared for any emergencies. Every bit of support we receive will enable us to build sustainable communities for the future."

Emergency Response Program for SOS Children's Villages in Bossangoa.

Thuraya IP terminals are regularly used to share pictures of damages sustained during attacks by armed guerrillas. They also dispatch documents and reports to international funding partners to raise appeals for emergency relief; and they create awareness about SOS Children's Village activities, infrastructure and communities.

Thuraya SatSleeves and PCOs have united families and brought communities closer. They have also expedited emergency response, connecting people in times of emergencies and distress, when communications is

needed most, to help save lives.

Nicole Nassar, Gulf Area Office Managing Director for SOS Children's Villages appreciates the contribution.

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