

Metrolife

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You can give a kid a chance at life

An orphanage in war-torn Sierra Leone is desperate for funds to help thousands of kids unlikely to live past five years of age

If you happened to be situated in the middle of an orphanage in Africa and saw tiny little babies with AIDS struggling for their lives, and child upon child being left abandoned in graveyards and on the steps of the orphanage each day, what would you do?

Probably the same as Matthew Morgan-Jones has done. Matthew through his work with the Body Shop in 2001, found himself partaking in community involvement work in orphanages in South Africa and what he saw there prompted him to take further moves to help the suffering children he encountered. He set out to adopt two children.

"I had always thought of adopting, but seeing first hand the dire situation for abandoned and orphaned children in Africa really brought it home. It is so emotionally draining to witness," says Matthew. Matthew came back to Dubai and immediately began the long process involved in adopting children. Through research he came across an orphanage in Sierra Leone, Africa called All As One, who were open to international adoption. After lengthy paper-work

Matthew made his way over to Sierra Leone, where it took two months to complete the adoption process, before he could return home with an energetic little two-year old boy called Dauda and a beautiful little girl called Magda. Matthew is determined to build awareness for the All As One orphanage, where he adopted his kids, because there are plenty more orphaned children arriving there every day that need help and support and love. He is organising a charity ball on 30 March in an effort to save the orphaned children of Sierra Leone.

"It is because of the intervention of All As One, that my children are alive today, and I am

hoping the kind hearts of Dubai will share in my plight to save this orphanage, and in turn the dozens of children it saves from poverty, famine, the tragedy of war and almost certain death," says Matthew.

"By just booking one seat, it will enable a child to be homed and cared for, for several months." The situation in Sierra Leone is drastic. It is ranked as one of the poorest and least developed countries in the world, according to the UN. Since 1991, the war has displaced at least one quarter of Sierra Leone's population. In the recent past, a heavy concentration of UN forces has kept the country relatively peaceful - but in December 2005 these troops finally left Sierra Leone. In the meantime, the burden of over one million returning refugees, large numbers of discharged child soldiers, tens of thousands of children left homeless and living on the street has overwhelmed any existing government welfare programmes. The country is in chaos, with no health services and no social welfare. Only three out of five babies survive past the age of five years old, and of these children that do survive there life expectancy is only until 34 years. There is something in the

range of 15,000 to 20,000 street children scavenging the streets for food in Freetown, the capital of Sierra Leone alone.

"In Freetown I was horrified. So many stories, but one that stands out was seeing a little eight year-old boy cleaning out human excrement from the street drains as his job to survive. No gloves, no protective clothing, just a bucket which he carried on his head," says Matthew. "We gave him some food. He was blank, completely expressionless. Like he had lost the will to live. He was only eight-years-old." Most kids in orphanages in Sierra Leone have suffered either abusive backgrounds or other tremendous hardships. Their chance of survival is slim and their chance of a happy

existence in the short space of time they do live is even slimmer.

The All As One orphanage in Sierra Leone gives a flicker of light to a few children, but it is running out of money. It momentarily deals with day-to-day events in crisis management, because of lack of funds and this situation is not conducive to proper planning and giving the best potential care it can offer.

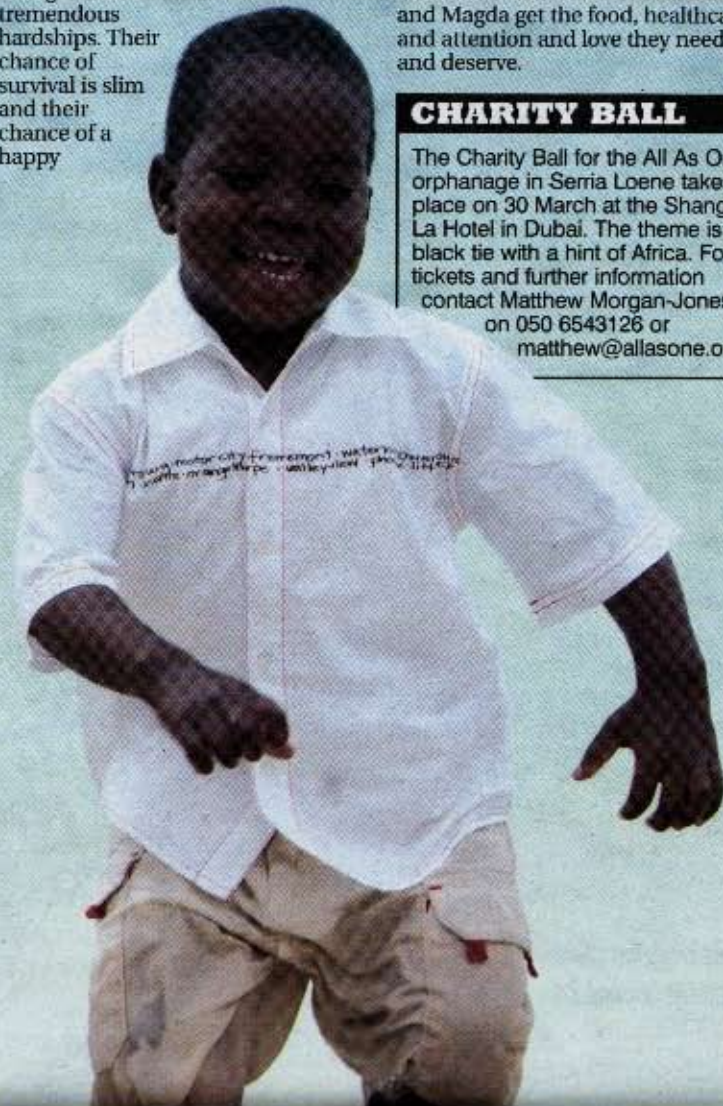
What All As One needs is to find corporations or individuals to commit to sponsoring a portion of the orphanage's monthly budget. A commitment of any portion of the budget would be extremely helpful and ensure that children like Dauda and Magda get the food, healthcare and attention and love they need and deserve.

CHARITY BALL

The Charity Ball for the All As One orphanage in Sierra Leone takes place on 30 March at the Shangri-La Hotel in Dubai. The theme is black tie with a hint of Africa. For tickets and further information contact Matthew Morgan-Jones on 050 6543126 or matthew@allasone.org

MOVIN' MELVIN

Also on the theme of giving a home and some hope to those people in need. Texan born, singing and dancing sensation Melvin Brown will perform at Dubai Polo and Equestrian Club at The Arabian Ranches on Friday 24 March, in a bid to raise money for his ongoing project to help homeless people in Texas, USA. Tickets cost dhs120, inclusive of buffet. For more information contact Siari: 050 6401946 or Dubai Polo Club: 04 3618111



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i'm lovin' it

it's what i eat and what i do

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OFF THE STREETS

Orphanage battling to save Sierra Leone's 20,000 street kids

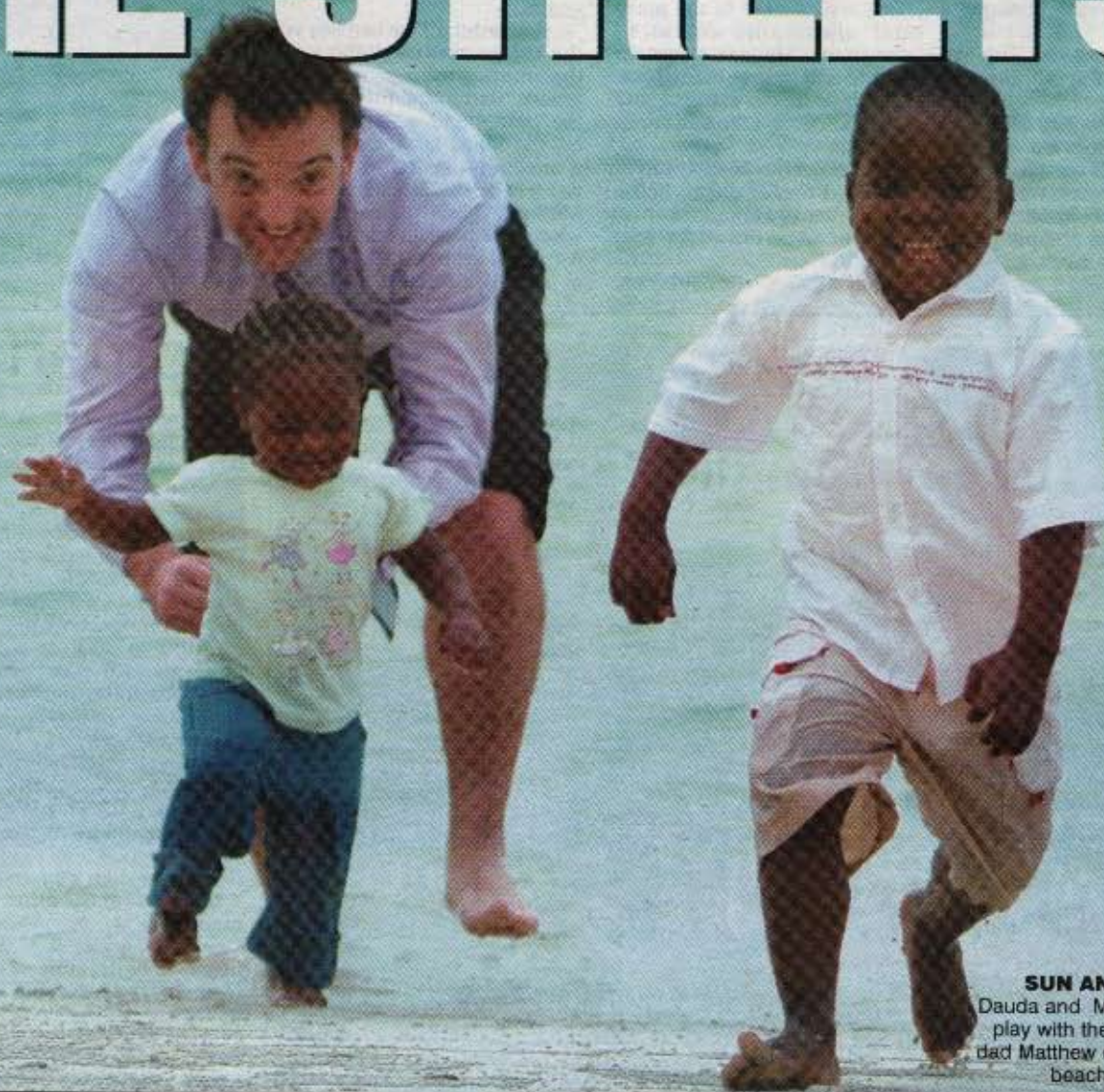
Three-year-old Dauda and one-and-a-half year old Magda (right) are two happily adopted children living amongst the fancy yachts and skyscrapers of metropolitan Dubai.

It is a far cry from their homeland, Sierra Leone in Africa. Before coming to Dubai, Dauda and Magda were orphaned children living at the All As One orphanage in Sierra Leone, a country where only three of out of every five babies survive past the age of five. After a spell of community work in orphanages in South Africa, their adopted father, Matthew felt a compelling urge to help the orphaned children of Africa, so he adopted Dauda and Magda. He describes his time in Sierra Leone as 'emotionally draining', which opened his eyes.

In Sierra Leone, the situation is dire. Eleven years of violent civil war has left the

country in turmoil, with up to 20,000 homeless street-children roaming Freetown, the capital city of Sierra Leone. Many of the street-children have no hands, because rebel gangs cut them off if they refuse to join them.

Some children - like Dauda and Magda - miraculously find themselves at the All As One orphanage. With 15 children crammed into a room and a constant shortage of food, funds, supplies, good healthcare and staff - it is no holiday home, but it is a safer refuge for children than the streets. But with no governmental support, All As One is in a serious financial crisis. Unless it receives immediate funding to pay rent and staff salaries, and buy food, clothing, vitamins and drugs for the children, it will be forced to close down and the children will be turned onto the street.



SUN AND SAND: Dauda and Magda (left) play with their adopted dad Matthew on a Dubai beach yesterday

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New choice of drink

Minute
Maid
APPLE JUICE

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