

HELLO!

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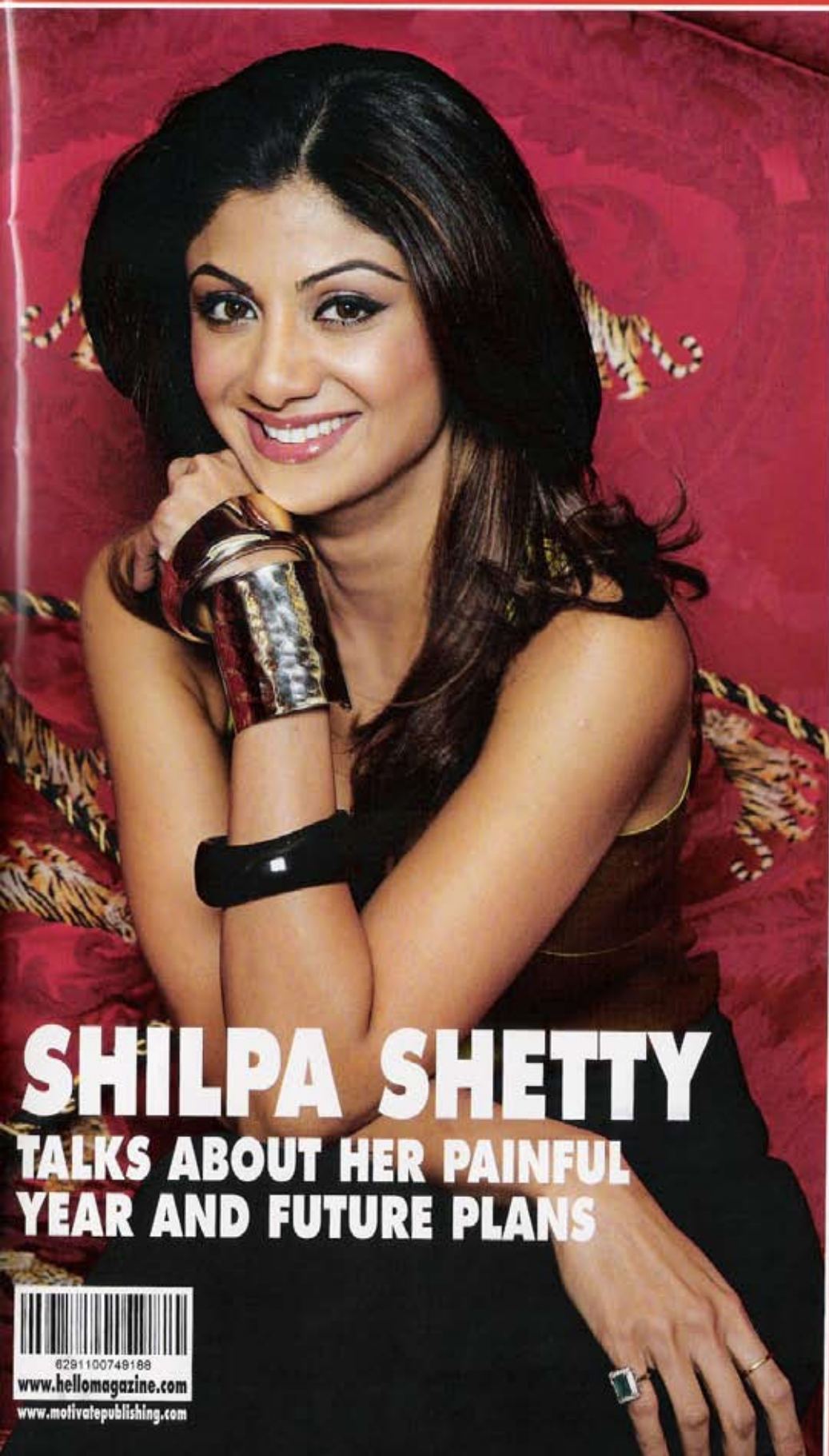
ANGELINA MAKES FAMILY A PRIORITY



**CHARITY CAMPAIGNER MATTHEW
MORGAN-JONES ON FATHERHOOD**



**DIANA ROSS
PERFORMS AT
DUBAI AIRSHOW GALA**



SHILPA SHETTY

TALKS ABOUT HER PAINFUL
YEAR AND FUTURE PLANS



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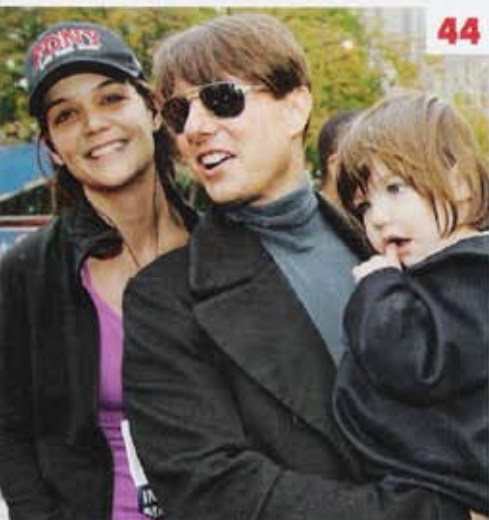
AND HER BELOVED MUM LOOK BACK AT THE BOLLYWOOD STAR'S ROLLER COASTER YEAR

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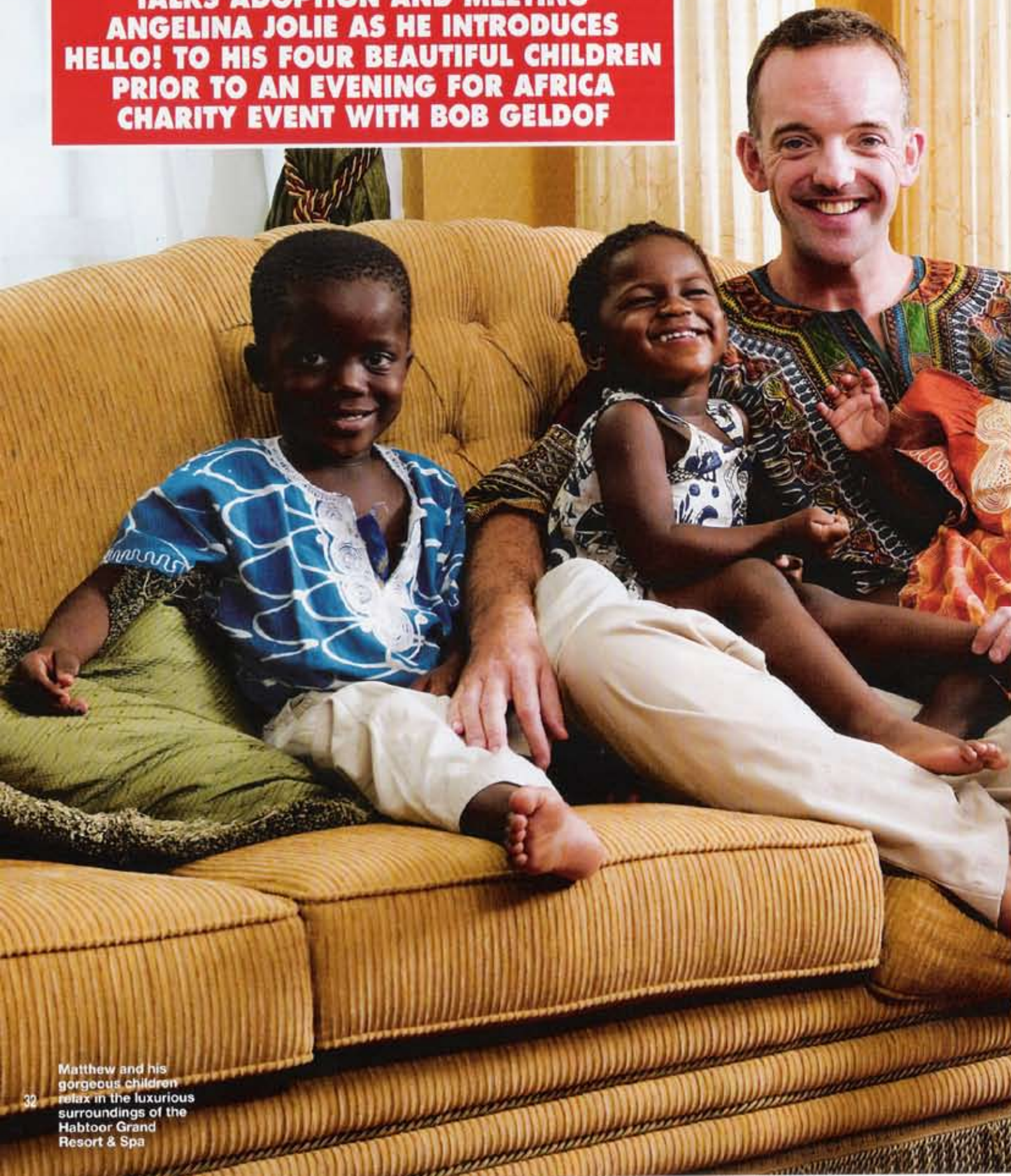


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DUBAI-BASED CHARITY DYNAMO
MATTHEW
MORGAN-JONES

**TALKS ADOPTION AND MEETING
ANGELINA JOLIE AS HE INTRODUCES
HELLO! TO HIS FOUR BEAUTIFUL CHILDREN
PRIOR TO AN EVENING FOR AFRICA
CHARITY EVENT WITH BOB GELDOLF**



Matthew and his gorgeous children relax in the luxurious surroundings of the Habtoor Grand Resort & Spa



'You can imagine with four kids five and under there are no dull moments in our household! They all have very individual and strong personalities'

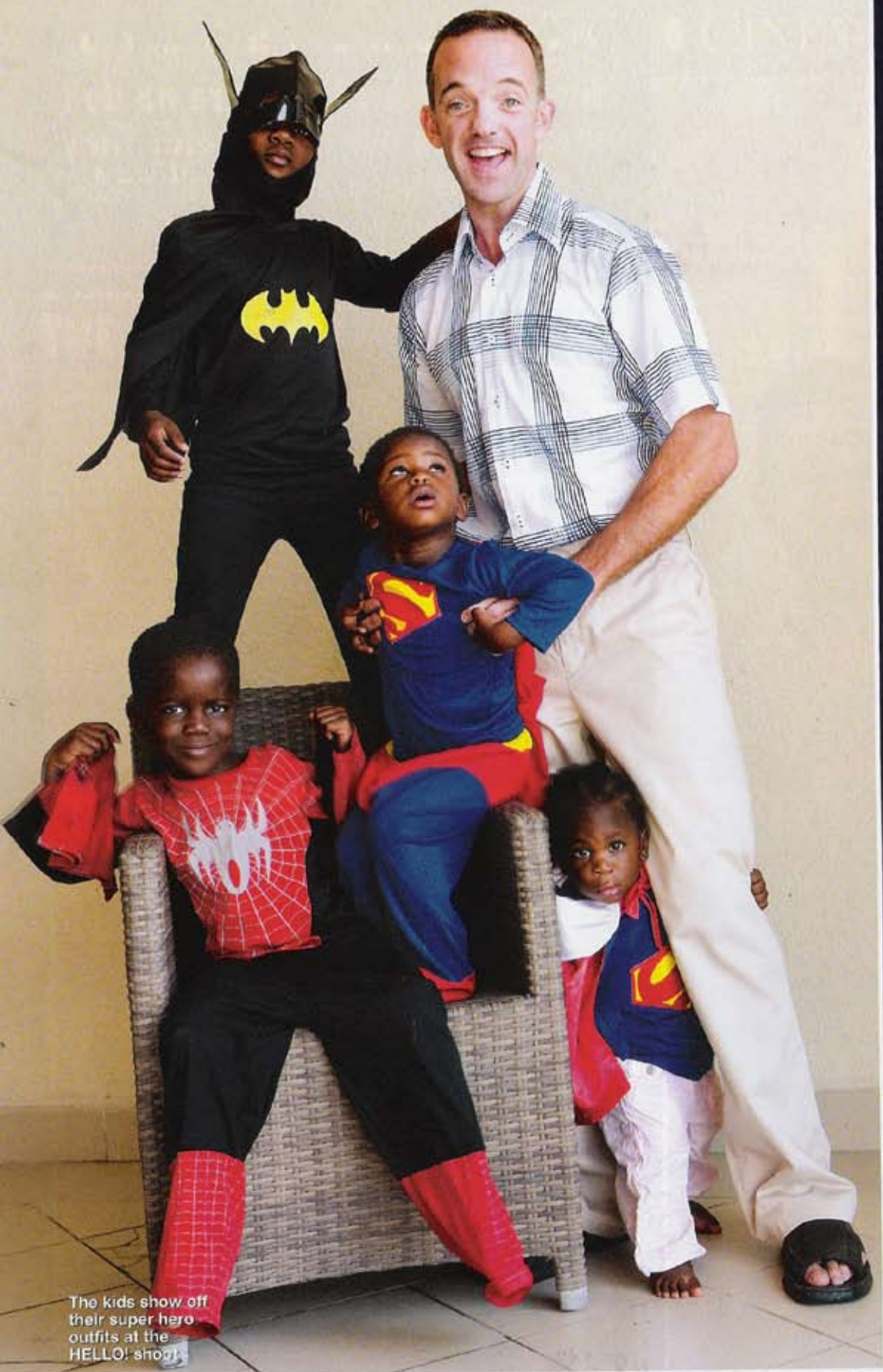
It's easy to spot Matthew, as I dash into Dubai's Habtoor Grand hotel for our morning meeting. Just look for the four chirpy toddlers clamouring for their beloved father's attention and you know you've found the Morgan-Jones clan. Adopting a child is a stressful experience, no matter what the circumstances, but for Matthew it was one that changed his life in more ways than he could have ever imagined. After travelling to the poverty-stricken African country of Sierra Leone in 2004 to adopt the first two of his four children, Matthew couldn't turn his back on the country and the problems that the staff from the All As One charity-run orphanage told him about. Life in Sierra Leone was, and is, bleak after a decade-long civil war that has devastated the country, and the children are often the ones who suffer most. All As One Children's Centre is an orphanage providing complete care to Sierra Leone's most vulnerable youngsters. The centre currently cares for 50-70 orphaned and abandoned children in the capital city of Freetown

within a safely gated compound with enough space for the children to feel safe running around and playing outdoors. Once Matthew saw what could be done and what more was needed, he decided that Dubai, one of the fastest growing cities in world with a reputation for giving generously to charity, would be a great place to raise funds and awareness, so he offered his services as All As One's UAE director. He has been fulfilling the role on a voluntary basis ever since. In a rare quiet moment, Matthew talks to HELLO! on the eve of his charity event, where Bob Geldof will arrive in town to support the event. He discusses work with the charity and its latest fund-raising event, as well as the joy his adopted children have brought to his life.

You've been with the charity All As One for nearly three years now, tell us how it got started and what made you so compelled to help?

"When I went to Sierra Leone to adopt my first two children, Dauda and Magla, I spent two months living there. The combination of ▶





The kids show off their super hero outfits at the HELLO! shoot

'I hate the fact that people like Angelina Jolie and Madonna are criticised for adopting children from different countries'

orphanage as he was Dauda's best friend so I returned to adopt him in November 2006, and at the same time met Mariama who was seriously ill and under weight after being born with a cleft lip and palette. I returned to adopt her in May 2007 and I've never looked back."

And how is your life now that you have these four new little people in it?
"It's crazy, but in a good way. You can imagine with four kids five and under there are no dull moments in our household! They all have very individual and strong personalities – you know when the Morgan-Jones tribe is in the room! I'm so proud that they are so full of life. I also truly believe that being born in a country in which one in four children die before the age of five, they really wouldn't be here today if they were meek and mild."

Tell us about their personalities.

"David is my philosopher and likes to reflect and make astute comments, usually at the breakfast table when you are trying to get everyone fed and off to school! Dauda is the charmer and has an infectious laugh that makes him very popular with the ladies. Magdalene is our leader, she knows her own mind and I'm sure will be running the country by the time she is 30. Little Mariama is the heart stopper; when she smiles her whole face lights up and one look from those eyes and she has you under her spell!"

It sounds like it's been a non-stop few years, how have you found the experience?

"I can't tell you what focus, and rewards, parenting my children has brought to my life. Each day brings with it so many challenges and delights. I've really forgotten what it was like pre-kids. They are so individual and have very different needs. I really try and spend time with them individually, although it is sometimes difficult juggling my full-time consultancy job, my family and my volunteer work for All As One. I've learnt the hard way that it's important to prioritise, when I tend to overload myself then the balance becomes all wrong and the quality time with the kids suffers. I have had to learn to say 'no'. The children have enriched my life in so many ways that I hope that I can do the same in theirs."

I understand you met Angelina Jolie in Sierra Leone when you were adopting Dauda and Magda, how did this come about?

"She was in town on one of her many charity missions and I saw her in a hotel. It took me ages to pluck up the courage to approach her but when I did, and she found out I was in town to adopt, she was so

becoming a parent, and then seeing first hand the conditions that other parents have to bring their children up in, was a life changing experience. It actually really scared me."

What were your thoughts when you came back to Dubai?

"I arrived back in Dubai with lots of ideas on how I could help, but I got so caught up in fatherhood that my plans never really came to fruition. It wasn't until I received an email from the founder of All As One, Deanna

Wallace, telling me that due to lack of funds – that the orphanage that has saved the lives of my children and hundreds of others – would have to close. I knew I had to help. This just seemed crazy. The country has no state-run orphanages and the social services rely on NGOs to provide these services. Basically without organisations like All As One children are left on the streets."

You have adopted four children from the country yourself, who now

live with you in Dubai, tell us a bit about them.

"I have four adorable children, David aged five and the oldest; Dauda aged also five and the tallest; Magdalene aged three and the oldest girl; and Mariama aged 16 months and the baby of the family. I adopted Dauda and Magda first in May/June 2005 and spent two months in the country getting to know them and completing the adoption procedure. Next came David. I had met him previously in the



Madonna and her son David who she adopted from Malawi, Africa

interested and we talked about our experiences. I'm really her greatest fan. I think it's wonderful that she is creating her family through adoption and has highlighted the plight of Africa by delivering her birth child in Africa. She has also adopted slightly older children, again a big positive in my eyes, as these are the children usually left behind. Adoption is not about being fashionable, it's about wanting to be a parent and knowing that you can provide a loving home to a child who desperately needs it."

How do you feel about the backlash against celebrities who adopt, like Angelina and Madonna, they have been quite heavily criticised in the media recently haven't they?

"I hate the fact that people like Angelina and Madonna are criticised for adopting children from different countries. We seem to have forgotten that without people like them, these kids wouldn't have families of their own. Obviously, in an ideal world, every child would be cared for by their birth parents, but that is not always possible. In the case of these two celebrities who have adopted, they have both done so much more. Madonna donated a considerable sum of money to the charity in Malawi that put her in touch with her son David, to make sure that the lives of the children who lived there were improved, while Angelina has donated more of her own time and money than any of us could imagine. They should be applauded, not abused, for what they are doing."

You are clearly making a difference to your children's lives (the kids

obviously adore their father). What difference have donations from Dubai made to the lives of the children still in Sierra Leone?

"Oh, a huge difference. Through the generosity of Dubai residents the All As One Centre has stayed open and taken in more kids. It has found permanent homes for some, extended the school to include a nursery and provided a school uniform that gives the kids a sense of pride. Even just the basic things that we take for granted, like ensuring the centre has electricity and water, have become possible when in the past they weren't. The centre also provides medical care, not only for the children in its care, but also for the local community, it also allows the children the chance to enjoy their childhoods and to just be kids. This is so important."

I understand that there are lots of future plans for the centre and the charity as a whole?

"We are now at a critical stage, as our vision is to build a new All As One village that would not only double the children we currently have in our care, but more importantly deal with the underlying issues that cause Sierra Leone to have an estimated 350,000 abandoned and orphaned children. The new village will have three children's homes allowing us to have over 150 children in our direct care. The reason why we have so many babies in our care is that one in seven mothers die in childbirth. This has to change."

What are the plans for the village?

"We want to make sure that we can provide maternity care and ensure that women can give birth under medical supervision to keep them alive so they

can mother and parent their own children. I think it's a crime that in Sierra Leone the maternity mortality rate is one in seven compared to one in 48,000 for somewhere like Ireland. Really, how insane is it that in today's world the difference between the highest and lowest is so great? We want to change that statistic and make sure that mothers stay alive!"

So what does the organisation do at a grassroots level, how are these children cared for?

"Our aim is to provide a loving home, education, medical care and a chance for a better future. We currently run an orphanage, school and medical clinic in Freetown, the country's capital city and have a dream to expand our work by building a new hospital, school and children's home in Grafton, Sierra Leone, just outside Freetown. With the expansion of our work we can reach many more children and families with our services."

And what about the situation in Sierra Leone, it is known to be extremely politically unstable, but are things improving?

"To be honest, things have not improved very much since the end of the civil war in 2002. The country still faces massive unemployment rates [up to 80 per cent has been reported], the worst infant mortality rate in the world [one in four children will die before the age of five - 28 per cent], one of the highest maternal mortality rates [one in seven women are at risk of dying due to child birth related causes] and a shortage of basic amenities such as electricity and running water. Inflation is rampant, even the cost of basic food is unaffordable to many people. We can

only do our bit and hope that this will encourage others to do theirs."

You're having a fund raising event this week, on 21st November at the Habtoor Grand, we know that Sir Bob Geldof is coming along to lend his support, what else is planned for the evening?

"It's really going to be an evening to remember! We can't thank Air Miles and Transgaurd the sponsors of the event enough, they have kindly pledged the proceeds from the event to All As One. It's amazing to think that Sir Bob Geldof, the international campaigner for African Development [and obviously a great singer too!] will be in Dubai helping us spread the need to help Africa. The party will start with pre-dinner cocktails and African sounds from Dubai Drums - they are excellent and really raised the roof at our African Ball last year, so it's great to have them back. We will then kick off with welcomes and I'll be giving an overview of AAO work, followed by dinner and music and then Sir Bob will be taking the floor and talking about his trips to Africa, and we are hoping he will finish off with a few songs! I'm still pinching myself at how lucky we are to have his support, he's a really great guy and an asset to our cause!"

Readers can help by sponsoring a child at a cost of Dh\$120 per month.

To find out more about the work of All As One please go to www.aaoDubai.org. All photography shot on location at the Habtoor Grand, Dubai.