

Operation Christmas Child

Operation Christmas Child – the world's largest Christmas charity shoebox appeal – has just launched the UK's first ever online shoebox project, giving time-strapped individuals the chance to make up a gift-filled shoebox via the charity's website and have it sent out to a child in need overseas.

The new interactive website, called 'Shoebox World', can be accessed now at www.operationchristmaschild.org.uk/shoeboxworld and is intended to be a fun, interactive site where it's easy to make up a personalised shoebox filled with gifts.

The website will allow visitors the chance to create their own virtual shoebox – choosing the wrapping paper, selecting which gifts they want to include, and adding their own message and photo. Once these virtual shoeboxes have been created online, volunteers in warehouses will fill actual shoeboxes with the selected gifts and the personalised photo and message, before preparing them to be shipped out to one of the 14 destination countries in Africa, Eastern Europe or Central Asia where shoeboxes are given to children in need.

"The reality for many of us in the UK today is that we are increasingly 'time poor', which can easily become an obstacle to doing something meaningful for someone less fortunate than ourselves'," says Simon Barrington, Executive Director of Samaritan's Purse – the relief and development charity which runs the annual shoebox appeal.

"A lot of people have the heart to do something meaningful for others at Christmas, but little time left to do it. With our new Shoebox World website, they can create their own personalised gift – a shoebox filled with goodies – and have it sent to a child overseas who needs it most. Giving to a child in need overseas has never been so easy, fun, and

personal!"

The online shoebox project is intended to complement the traditional wrapping, packing and sending of gift-filled shoeboxes which hundreds of thousands of children and adults from churches, schools, workplaces and community groups from around the UK get involved with each year. Last year's Operation Christmas Child appeal saw nearly 1.2 million shoeboxes sent out to children in 13 countries across Africa, Eastern Europe or Central Asia.

The online shoebox initiative is launched in the 20th anniversary year of Operation Christmas, which also sees the charity partner with the up-coming film, *The Chronicles of Narnia: The Voyage of the Dawn Treader*, as well as sending out an additional 15,000 shoeboxes to children affected by the earthquake in Haiti.