

Blankets bring warmth to Buseko's children

This winter, hundreds of children in the slums of Buseko, Zambia, will at last have blankets to keep them warm during the cold nights when temperatures can dip to 15°C.

They received the blankets through a joint effort involving SIA, SIA Cargo, SATS Cargo and South African Airways (SAA), recently.

It all started when "The Other Side" — a project aimed at bringing hope and a future to the slum-dwellers of Buseko — highlighted the hazards of winter for the children there.

Lying 20 kilometres outside Zambia's capital, Lusaka, Buseko is a sprawling mass of ramshackle shelters with no electricity, sanitation or potable water.

While most families do not have blankets and suffer the cold,

those who do — five sharing a mere blanket, for example — often awake to find their homes in flames. Ironically, the wood fires and embers meant to keep the families warm at night can accidentally set blankets alight.

An email from Mrs Leela Singaram-Champ, who runs The Other Side, moved Ground Services' Assistant Manager (Airport Safety & Procedures) Louis Cheng to propose that SIA consider donating some of the used blankets that were being discarded.

With the Company's approval, he got in touch with colleagues in South Africa who sought assistance from SAA to collaborate and forward the shipment from Johannesburg to Lusaka.

Said Louis: "All the parties con-



Mrs Singaram-Champ with a nun from the Missionaries of Charity, whose orphanage also received the blankets.

cerned were enthusiastic and helped to make it happen — Inflight Services, Aero Linen & Laundry Service, SATS Cargo, SIA Cargo, our South Africa colleagues, and SAA. The gift took wings when SIA Cargo agreed to sponsor the freight."

The shipment has now reached those in need, arriving in time for winter in the southern hemisphere.

Mrs Singaram-Champ was very happy to report that the blankets were distributed to many children — including those from neighbouring shantytowns — attending the free school set up by The Other Side.

Some of the blankets were distributed to children in two orphanages and patients in a hospital.

"Hopefully, with enough blankets, there will be less need to light wood fires to keep warm, and less risk of children being burnt, safeguarding the families' health, hearth and home," said Louis. ♦



Mrs Singaram-Champ distributing the blankets to children in Buseko.