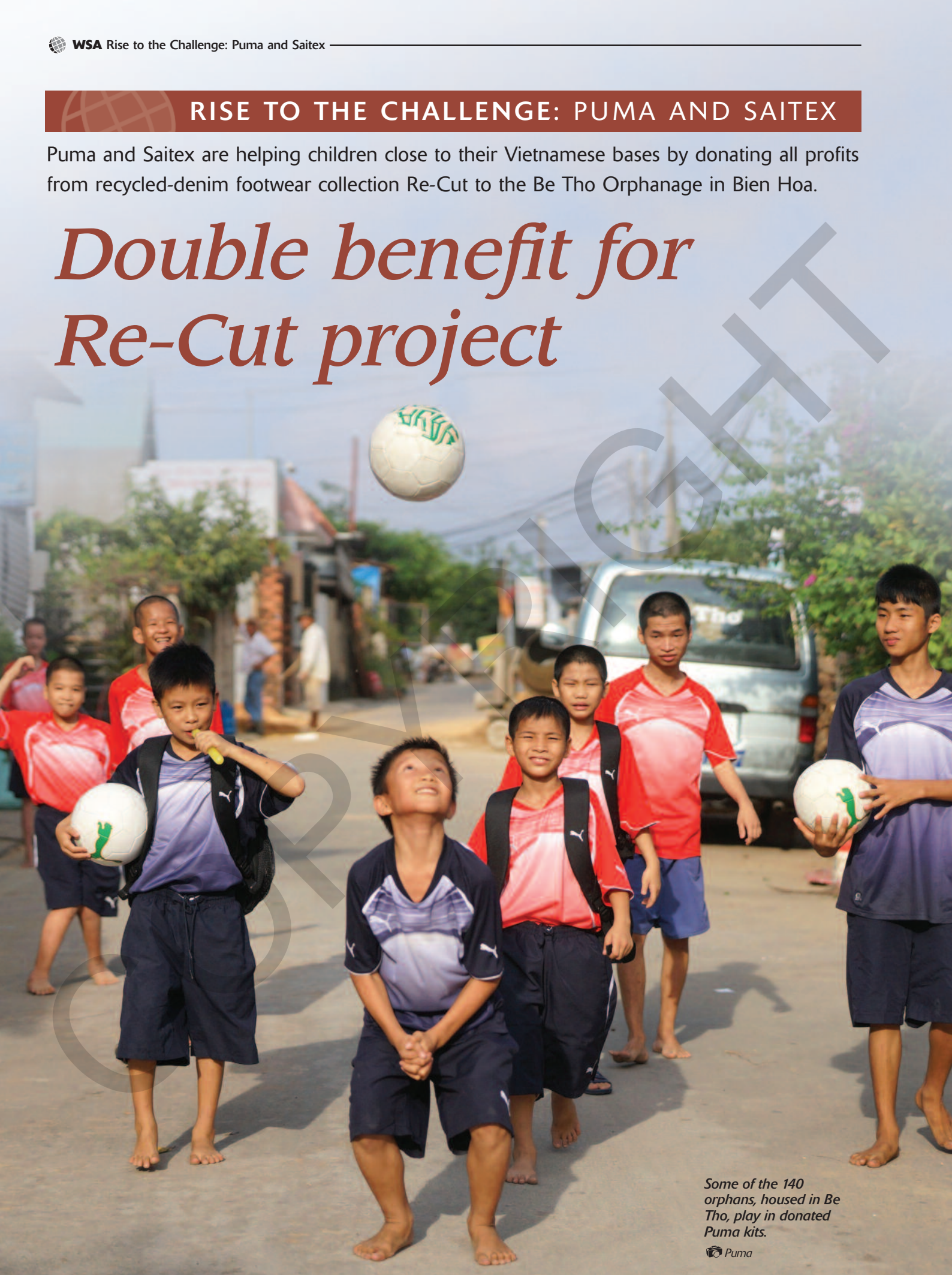
RISE TO THE CHALLENGE: PUMA AND SAITEX

Puma and Saitex are helping children close to their Vietnamese bases by donating all profits from recycled-denim footwear collection Re-Cut to the Be Tho Orphanage in Bien Hoa.

Double benefit for Re-Cut project



Some of the 140 orphans, housed in Be Tho, play in donated Puma kits.

Puma

COPYRIGHT

Puma describes Saitex as a good fit – the denim manufacturer has made significant progress in its environmental goals over the past two years and has become the only laundry globally to receive bluesign accreditation.

Its credentials attracted the German brand for its latest project: a footwear collection made from recycled denim.

"Both companies saw this as a great opportunity to both benefit the local community and create product from factory materials that would have otherwise have gone to waste," says a Puma spokesman.

Increasing orders of jeans from clients such as G-Star and Walmart meant Saitex almost doubled its workforce in 2012 to 4,000, outgrowing its factory and creating a need for a new, state-of the art facility. Located in Phong Phu, 30km from Vietnam's capital, Saitex's new sewing facility was built with environmentally sound features such as solar panels on the roof, skylights to reduce the need for lighting, vines on exterior walls to absorb heat and a rain collection system on the roof to provide extra water.

The company switched to a system of ozone washing for the denim which reduced its water consumption from 80 litres per pair to six litres per pair, amounting to savings of 270,000 cubic metres per year.

"No water is sent out of the factory," says managing director Sanjeev Bahl. "94% is recycled back into the processing; the remaining 6% is converted to sodium hydrochloride and donated to the central effluent treatment plant."

The effluent treatment plant and an electro coagulation system reduce chemical oxygen demand and biological oxygen demand in the water by 70% and suspended solids by 99%, says the company. Even the sludge leftover from the water recycling system is compressed and fired, and turned into bricks to build houses in a nearby community.

To make Puma's 'casual lifestyle' shoes, leftover panels – which are used to test the fabric's colour and shrinkage and might previously have ended up in landfill – are collected by Puma and delivered to one of its footwear manufacturers in the country. This fits in with the company's 'Reuse, remake, rethink' ethos that it has been promoting for the last few years, and of which the recycled trainer, InCycle Basket (see *WSA* July/August 2013) is part.

Benefitting children

"Not only is the Re-Cut project sustainable, it is also zero profit," says the spokesperson. "At the heart of the project is the Be Tho Orphanage."



Denim offcuts are diverted from landfill and used to create panels for the uppers.

Puma

Money raised from sales will be donated to the orphanage, close to the offices of Puma and Saitex and an important part of the community. It cares for around 140 children ranging from newborns to 16-year-olds.

The profits will help to fund recreational activities, meals and medical care: $500 will cover meals for one child for a year, which includes daily food items such as rice, bread, fruit and eggs as well as desserts for special events; $20 funds activities such as football, swimming, reading, dancing and painting for one child per year; while $1,000 covers health and dental check-ups and medicine.

"This means every pair of shoes sold will provide access to education, meals or medical care for the kids," says Puma. Before the money filters through, Puma delivered sports equipment to the orphanage: 130 backpacks, 100 t-shirts, 50 pairs of shorts and 25 footballs.

The new men's collection is available to purchase online and in select retail locations worldwide. "The Re-Cut Project footwear has only been in the marketplace a few weeks but engagement on our social media channels has been positive thus far," adds the spokesperson.

COPY