

EDV Case Study: La Main Tendre

Engaging with Partners for Long-Term Change

When EDV first visited La Main Tendre Orphanage in September 2010, the situation was dire. The house had sustained extensive damage in the earthquake, with a large concrete dome still resting precariously on damaged walls.

We immediately knew that we would not be able to meet the orphanage's needs all at once, but experience told us that involving volunteers in a large project can bring about massive long-term change. So, despite the challenges, we decided to get started.



The orphanage director surveying the damage to the orphanage

Problem: Earthquake destroyed the house, leaving children living outdoors without education, sanitation, or healthcare

Approach: Provide integrated services and rebuild infrastructure for orphanage directors

Service Areas:
Construction/Infrastructure, Health, Education

Finding a Way to Begin

Without sufficient funding to tackle the damaged house, we worked with the orphanage directors to find an area where we could begin. The directors requested that we help get the school age children back in school by building classrooms.

In October 2010, EDV's skilled volunteers built three transitional classrooms for the 35 school age children in the orphanage's care. The classrooms were designed to be multipurpose as both EDV and orphanage staff anticipated that the orphanage's needs would change dramatically in the coming months.

In the process of building the classrooms, EDV began showing the damaged house to NGO partners and friends, looking for a group which would be able to demolish and rebuild the damaged structure. News spread and the orphanage directors made contact with AAR Japan.

Coordinating Partners and Supporting the Orphanage

AAR Japan had the funds and ability to demolish the damaged structures and rebuild the house, but needed help supporting the children through the reconstruction process. The children and staff had already been living outdoors for more than a year and there was a real danger that the added disruption and stress of the

demolition and reconstruction would be very hard on both the children and staff.

One of the biggest areas of concern was the extra pressure that the demolition and reconstruction process would put on already strained sanitation facilities at the orphanage, leading to diarrhea and water-borne illness. With the construction site taking up valuable space, staff members were also forced to cook near the children. The charcoal smoke caused severe upper-respiratory infections for many children.

In response, EDV assigned a team of general volunteers and health professionals to make weekly visits to the orphanage, providing health care and fun activities for the children. This support kept the children healthy through a difficult period and helped the staff cope with the extra stress of the reconstruction process. At the same time, EDV began to plan for what the orphanage would need once the house reconstruction was completed in the summer of 2011.



Laying the bricks which completed the courtyard's drainage system

Investing in Infrastructure for a Positive Outcome

With housing for both children and staff in place, we turned our attention to pressing sanitation and infrastructure needs at the orphanage. The property's court-yard, where the children spent much of their time, had insufficient drainage and, as a consequence, was a muddy mess. Combined with poor sanitation, this left all the children at high risk of water-borne illness. The security wall was also precariously close to collapse, and the kitchen facilities were unsanitary and poorly laid out.

Beginning in the autumn of 2011 a team of skilled EDV volunteers began construction at the orphanage. With the continued support of the health team, who provided health care and education about the importance of sanitation, the construction team installed a drainage system, and rebuilt the bathrooms, showers, and security wall. They also focused on safe cooking with the construction of a kitchen and a chimney to keep smoke away from the children.

Today, as a direct result of volunteer labour and EDV's investment, the orphanage is able to house the children in their care in safe, sanitary conditions. They have the knowledge to prevent illness, and the infrastructure they need to safe-guard the children in their care.

You can learn more about EDV and La Main Tendre on our website: <http://www.edvolunteers.org/la-main-tendre-orphanage-and-school-phase-two>.