

USAID Helps Supply Haitian Orphanage in Need

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PORT-AU-PRINCE - An orphanage here in Haiti, which we will not name in order to protect the children living there, was already providing a home to more than 150 orphans prior to the devastating earthquake that struck Haiti on January 12th. Now the number of children has expanded to include those who have recently been orphaned or temporarily separated from their families due to the earthquake, and that number far exceeds the facility's capacity to care for them. Hearing of the need, the U.S. Agency for International Development's (USAID) Disaster Assistance Response Team (DART) recently donated tents, generators, sleeping bags and other assistance to the struggling orphanage.

The orphanage, which is working in partnership with the Haitian Government and UNICEF, has seen more than a 60% increase in children being brought to their facility since the earthquake. One of their key needs was shelter to house these new children. The large tents, which can house up to 100 children, are actually the tents the Los Angeles and Fairfax County Urban Search and Rescue Teams used while here in Haiti searching for survivors of the quake. Rather than bringing them back to the U.S. to be repacked and used for the next mission, everyone felt they could be better served here in Haiti to provide these children with a temporary home.

"The U.S. Government is dedicated to helping the people of Haiti in any way we can. We are here to save lives and alleviate suffering during this extremely difficult time," said Tim Callaghan, USAID DART team leader. "Having adopted children myself, being able to help these children in just a small way really has special meaning for me."

In addition to shelter, the institution also required additional latrines. USAID DART's water and sanitation experts are providing their expertise and guidance on the set up of new latrines, including the best location to ensure the health and safety of the children.

"This is just one example of the many ways in which U.S. Government agencies are collaborating to assist the Government of Haiti and UNICEF to support children affected by the recent earthquake," Gary Newton, the U.S. Government Special Advisor for Orphans and Vulnerable Children observed. "Many of the staff from these local organizations have, like these children, been deeply affected by the earthquake. It is humbling to see these organizations step up their assistance to children despite their own enormous losses."

With new shelter facilities, latrines, generators and sleeping bags, the orphanage is now better able to help the Haitian children who have been separated from their families because of the earthquake.