

Haiti Earthquake

Already there when it counts



Update: Summer 2010
A Family Matters
Special Report



SOS Children's Villages
the world's largest orphan charity



Already there when it counts

It has now been five months since the devastating earthquake in Haiti, to which so many of our readers donated. Thousands of parents were killed during the quake, leaving their children alone and scared.

With your help, we have been able to offer shelter, love and support to hundreds of children who were orphaned or separated from their families. We have also provided thousands of families in the community with food, medicine and clothing.



The 7.3 magnitude earthquake struck ten miles west of Haiti's capital, Port-au-Prince, on January 12, killing more than 220,000 people and leaving at least one million homeless. Together with long-term political strife, a severely depressed economy and recent damage caused by strong hurricanes, this catastrophe exacerbated the already miserable situation for Haiti's children.

Earthquake facts:

- Struck on January 12, 2010 at 4:53pm
- At 7.3 on the Richter Scale, it was the strongest to hit the region since 1770
- 3 million people needed emergency aid
- Estimated that over 220,000 died and 1.2 million were displaced
- Structural and other damage estimated at \$14 billion.

Of course, when the earthquake struck, SOS Children was already there. We have been present in Haiti since 1978 and have two Children's Villages, in Santo (just outside Port-au-Prince) and Cap Haïtien, which were already home to more than 400 children. We also have two SOS Youth Homes; two SOS Schools; one SOS Vocational Training Centre and four Social Centres, from which Family Strengthening Programmes are run.



Before the Haiti earthquake, we were already caring for more than 400 children in two SOS Villages



The role of SOS Children in disasters

When disaster strikes, different charities take on different roles. Some provide emergency medical care, food and sanitation; others start rebuilding. Our main role is very clear: we are the ones who must look after the children, focusing on the youngest lone children first, and helping others as resources allow. This role requires speed and local staff with childcare expertise.

As with other crises, such as the 2005 Kashmir earthquake, (after which we were named custodians of all unaccompanied children by the Pakistani government), our well-established position means that we are depended upon by the whole community.

Why can SOS Children respond so effectively in times of crisis?

- SOS Children is already approved by local governments to care for children so we can be given immediate authority
- Thanks to the permanent SOS facilities, we are there in-situ and ready to help with resources at any time
- SOS Children staff are local and our outreach work in the community ensures we have access to local networks
- Each Children's Village has an emergency fund at their immediate disposal
- We are well-respected and trusted partners of major relief organisations such as UNICEF, Red Cross and WHO (World Health Organisation).



SOS Children's Villages Haiti





SOS Emergency Relief Programme

Giving children what they need

Following a catastrophe, it is essential to give lone and desperate children some of what they have lost: safety, security and familiarity. Children affected by the earthquake need shelter, food, safe drinking water, clothes and immediate protection from unscrupulous opportunists. They also need people who can give them stability and the reassurance that they will be looked after. They need care workers with years of experience who know immediately how to comfort traumatised children and restore a sense of security and belonging.

A volunteer clown with a large, bright red wig and a blue top hat with a rainbow band is performing for a group of children. The clown is wearing a white shirt with a large red flower and a yellow sash. The children are gathered around, looking at the clown with interest and joy. The setting appears to be an outdoor area with a wooden structure in the background.

A volunteer clown performs for children at the SOS Children's Village Santo



We recognise that the needs of a child whose family and home have been destroyed extend long beyond the immediate, so we have developed a well-proven three-phase plan for these situations:

- Mobilise existing resources to care for unaccompanied children and provide immediate aid for local communities
- Establish temporary shelters and aid programmes in conjunction with other NGOs (Non-Governmental Organisations)
- Rebuild homes, livelihoods and facilities in the long-term.

Getting help to where it is needed most

Following the earthquake, there was a lot of confusion and chaos in Port-au-Prince. People slept outside for fear of aftershocks; children and families were separated in the confusion; and for days people wandered the streets or sifted through rubble searching for loved ones. Many key governmental, social and educational buildings were completely destroyed.

The SOS National Office collapsed (thankfully staff inside were unhurt) and some of our colleagues lost their homes and relatives. This meant that our staff not only had to deal with their own personal loss, but support children who had experienced significant trauma.

Although the scale of devastation in Port-au-Prince hampered international relief efforts, SOS Children were

able to respond immediately. Thanks to the high quality construction of the houses in the SOS Children's Village Santo, it remained virtually undamaged. With our second

Village also undamaged, and several across the border in the Dominican Republic, staff were able to launch a large scale emergency relief programme within hours.

Who we're helping:

450 orphaned and lone children at our SOS Children's Village Santo

13,150 Family Strengthening Programme beneficiaries and families from the wider community

SOS staff that lost homes and family members.



A boy sits next to the remains of a destroyed school after the earthquake in Port-au-Prince



What we're doing in the SOS Children's Village Santo:

- Providing emergency shelter for 300 extra children, who have no parental care, in our SOS families and temporary shelters (opposite). SOS mothers are now caring for 15 to 20 children, rather than the usual seven to nine
- In conjunction with UNICEF, we are trying to reunite children with their families, a process which could take up to 12 months. So far, we have reunited 65 children with their families
- Providing SOS staff that lost their homes with temporary housing. We will support them during the reconstruction of their homes
- In partnership with the Dominican Government and the Red Cross, we have transformed the Village football ground into an emergency medical clinic used by those in the Village and the local community. Hundreds of children and adults have received medical assistance at this clinic
- A guest apartment in the Village has been converted into a small clinic where three nurses monitor the health of the children
- Tents on the Village site are being used as a base to care for children during the day with a focus on play activities. Many of the children have been directly confronted with destruction and death, so it is our goal to provide a little bit of 'normality' in a protected and safe environment
- Providing emotional and psychological support to the children. We have employed five psychologists to work with the children
- Additional teachers have been hired to work at the SOS School which re-opened in late April. The education sector was particularly hard-hit by the quake, with several thousand schools destroyed or damaged and around 530 teachers killed. So, along with the 550 children who attended the school before the earthquake, we have welcomed an additional 300 children
- We have employed 125 new local employees and volunteers including cooks, carers, psychologists, social workers and translators.

What happens when a child arrives at the Village?

When children arrive at the SOS Village, they are asked about their background and their current situation and their details are added to a national database operated by UNICEF. This process is very important because for many of the children, it is still not clear whether they have any surviving relatives who can take care of them. For some of the children, it is certain that they have no relatives left; the disaster has orphaned them completely. Some children however, are brought to the Village by their relatives, due to desperation and lack of resources. We will support these families and help them rebuild their lives so they can be reunited with their children.



A child arrives at SOS Children's Village Santo

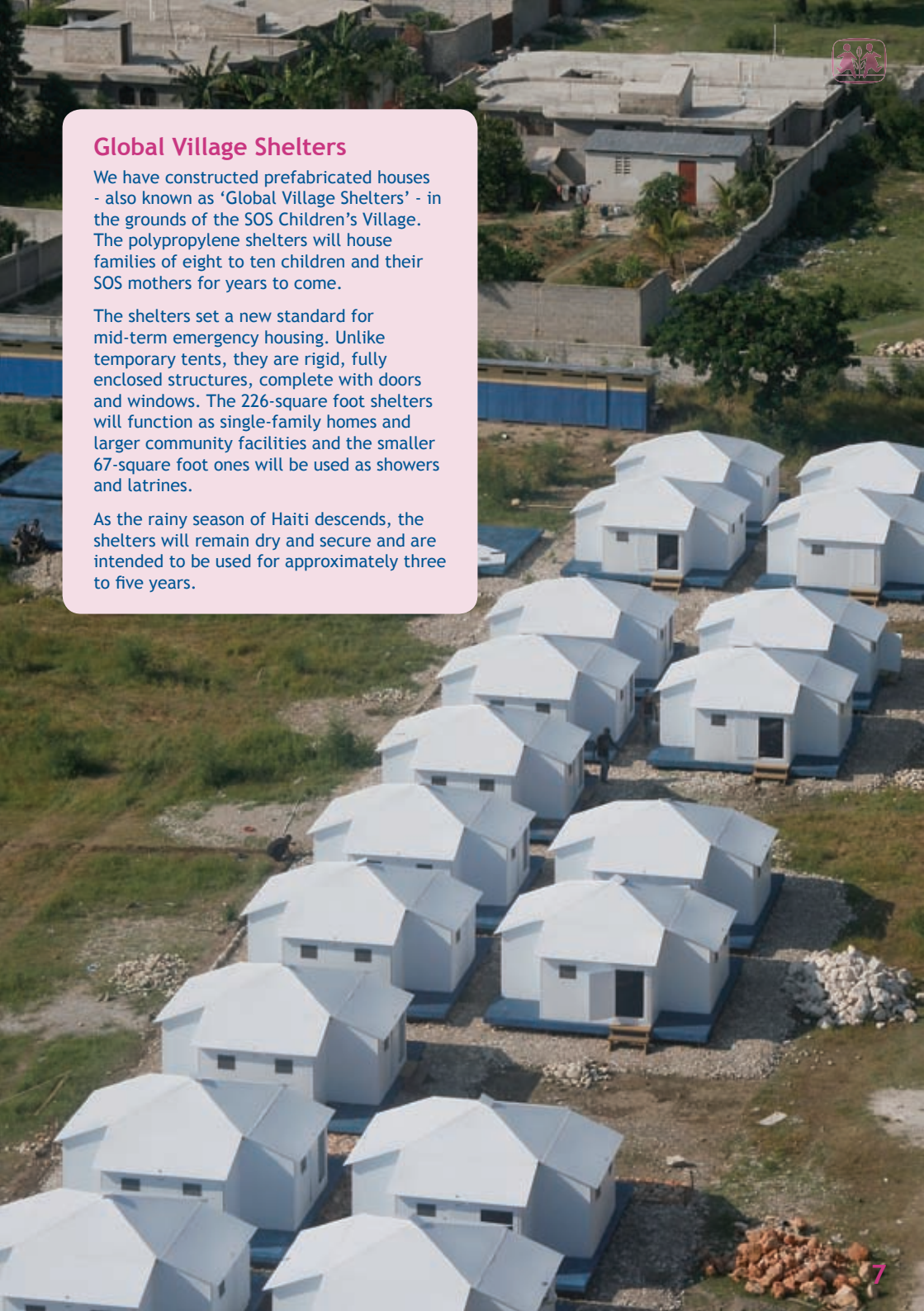


Global Village Shelters

We have constructed prefabricated houses - also known as 'Global Village Shelters' - in the grounds of the SOS Children's Village. The polypropylene shelters will house families of eight to ten children and their SOS mothers for years to come.

The shelters set a new standard for mid-term emergency housing. Unlike temporary tents, they are rigid, fully enclosed structures, complete with doors and windows. The 226-square foot shelters will function as single-family homes and larger community facilities and the smaller 67-square foot ones will be used as showers and latrines.

As the rainy season of Haiti descends, the shelters will remain dry and secure and are intended to be used for approximately three to five years.



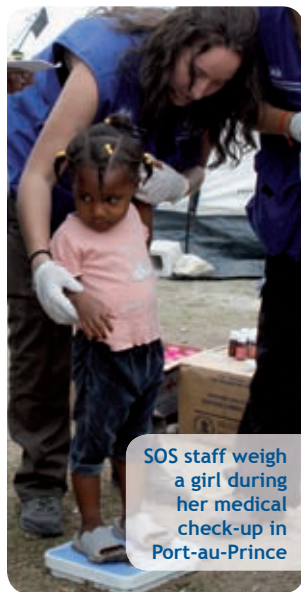


Adults and children queuing for food and medicine provided by SOS Children



What we're doing in the community:

- Tonnes of food, water, medicine, tents and fuel have been brought to Haiti, co-ordinated by SOS Children in Dominican Republic
- SOS staff visit orphanages and temporary sites every day to assess the needs and numbers of particularly vulnerable children. Community leaders have been asked to refer any unaccompanied children to us
- Providing food supplies, clothing and medicine to families participating in our Family Strengthening Programmes in addition to providing childcare for parents and relatives who need to rebuild their homes
- Working through 101 food distribution centres and 16 community centres to help 13,150 children and families every week
- Taking part in UN 'cluster meetings' as well as many partnerships and joint initiatives with other aid organisations and the local authorities.



SOS staff weigh a girl during her medical check-up in Port-au-Prince



SOS staff unload food at a distribution point in Port-au-Prince



A typical day at SOS Children's Village Santo

Anna works as a volunteer in the SOS Children's Village Santo. French by birth and resident for seven years in Santo Domingo in the Dominican Republic, she volunteered to help with our emergency relief programme. She speaks English, Spanish and French and is also a trained psychologist.

"We start early here - I usually get up about 5.30am when the sun is rising and it is still lovely and cool. After breakfast, our five Haitian psychologists arrive, who have been working with us since the disaster happened. At 9am we go and meet the children. Fortunately a few of the local psychologists speak Creole, which is absolutely essential.

The children are all very different: some hardly speak at all, and are very withdrawn, while others are desperate to talk to us. We try to work with the children through painting and talking. We get them to draw themselves and their family. We then assess the results later and document everything. This forms the future basis for our work with each individual child.

Lunch is served in the school at 12.30pm. After that, I travel into the city to visit orphanages and emergency shelters. We make appointments in advance with those in charge, letting them know we want to help unaccompanied children and

take them into our temporary care programme. It's always depressing, going into the emergency camps. Thankfully we can help, and people are grateful for someone coming and asking how the children are. Not a day goes past when a child isn't entrusted into our care. These are children who have no-one to care for them at present; they have ended up in the camps almost by accident, somehow or other. With us they find a safe, secure place until they can perhaps get back to their families again.

Back in the SOS Children's Village, the children are accommodated in SOS family houses or in temporary shelters in the Village grounds. The SOS mothers

are totally dedicated in the support they give.

The whole team meets up around 5pm, as there are always lots of organisational matters to sort out and discuss, from Village security to the food and other relief supplies we need.

It gets dark about 6pm, and then we sit down to our supper. After that, our last task of the day is to write up reports. Once they are done, I look forward to being able to call my husband in the Dominican Republic on Skype, if a computer is available and the connection works ..."

Read more interviews from Haiti on our website:
www.soschildren.org



Volunteers like Anna help children come to terms with their trauma



International adoption following a disaster: right or wrong?

Many people will have read in the news about the group of Americans who attempted to take 33 children back with them to the United States, believing them to be orphans. These children were subsequently entrusted into the care of SOS Children's Village Santo, where we were able to establish that most of the children had at least one living parent. At the Village, they received medical and psychosocial care and all 33 have now been reunited with their families.

In a crisis situation such as this, it is inevitable people will want to provide a child with those things they have seemingly lost: shelter, care, love and security. However, in reality, it will take many weeks and months before we can know how many children in Haiti were separated from their families.

In the meantime, SOS Children believes no child should be regarded as an 'orphan' until this can be confirmed by the local authorities. Unaccompanied and separated children must be viewed in the context of their parents, siblings, extended family and the

community and nation in which they have a future stake. Taking premature decisions on permanent care solutions can be very damaging.

Under certain circumstances, adoption can be appropriate for children who have lost their parents and have no extended family who are willing and able to care for them. However, we believe that children should grow up learning their native language within their own culture and faith. Only in circumstances where local possibilities have been exhausted and proper legal channels have been followed, should international adoption be considered.





Surviving against the odds

Many families were left shattered in the aftermath of the earthquake, and many children were left alone and fighting for their lives.

Yannick's story

One of the first children to arrive at the SOS Children's Village Santo was 12-year-old Yannick. Before the earthquake, Yannick and his mother lived alone in a small house. Sadly, his mother was disabled and couldn't walk properly, but they were very close and coped with everyday life. His father had left them when he was very young.

The last words Yannick's mother said to him were: *"Go outside and study for a little while."* Yannick says he reluctantly went outside because he didn't want to argue. He remembers that as soon as he was outside: *"the earth started to shake and there was a tremendous noise"*. Then, their house collapsed behind him, burying his mother who was unable to get out. Yannick was horrified and



Following the earthquake, hundreds of children have been left without parental care

ran out onto the street. His aunt found him, and they spent the first few days together, sleeping out on the street with hardly anything to eat. A few days later, after arriving at an emergency relief camp, Yannick was taken to live at the SOS Children's Village Santo.

Today, Yannick is very withdrawn and has bad nightmares. The psychologists at the SOS Children's Village are doing their best to help him and although he feels empty without his mother, Yannick knows he will be able to stay in safety with his new SOS family.



Yannick



Marevie's story

Little Marevie weighed only four kilograms when she was found in the lap of another child, by SOS worker Louis Klamroth. Marevie was very thin and barely conscious, so Louis rushed her to hospital. As an indication of her condition, it took doctors two hours to locate a vein to insert an intravenous drip. Hunting for her family, SOS workers discovered that Marevie was being cared for by her father's girlfriend. But with food extremely scarce, Marevie was not being fed; the girlfriend was only feeding her biological children, leaving Marevie severely malnourished.

Luckily, Marevie was found in time, and could start her recovery. Louis, meanwhile, received an unexpected surprise from the hospital doctor: *"This girl is your daughter now. We have put down your name as the father on the registration form - that means you're responsible for her"*. Louis and other SOS workers visited her regularly and checked on her condition.

There was great relief among staff when she was allowed to leave the hospital for the SOS Children's Village Santo. Still on the road to recovery, Marevie is showing a spark of life that would not have seemed possible when she was first found.



Marevie weighed just 4kgs when she was found by SOS



Today, Marevie is on the road to recovery

Emergency Relief Sponsorships

In Haiti, children who have lost their family need long-term help. If you would like to support them, why not consider taking out a longer term commitment such as an Emergency Relief Sponsorship. For £20 a month, this type of sponsorship allows you to support the costs of our Villages and Community Programmes where hundreds of lone children are being cared for until, in around a year, the long-term situation of each affected child is identified and they are able to be sponsored.

We guarantee that all sponsorship funds will be sent to Haiti without any deduction for UK administrative or fundraising costs.

If you would like to find out more about Emergency Relief Sponsorships, visit: www.soschildren.org or email us at info@soschildren.org

If you would like to sponsor a child elsewhere in the world, go online to:
www.soschildren.org



Rebuilding Haiti: our commitment

After acute emergency provision, which meets children's basic needs for two years, SOS Children is planning a comprehensive reconstruction programme which will last up to 12 years.

The main focus areas are:



Child protection & reunification:

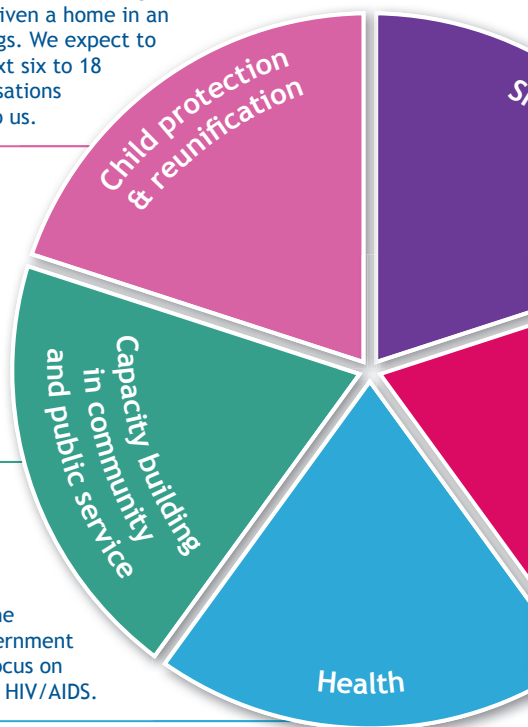
Our key focus will be the reunification of children with their biological families. Should that not be possible, they will be given a home in an SOS Children's Village or in other family care settings. We expect to receive a larger number of these children in the next six to 18 months, especially when other small private organisations leave, and the authorities hand over the children to us.

Capacity building in community and public service:

We will support and train governmental institutions involved in social affairs to build up their capacities to develop, implement and supervise child-related laws.

Health:

We have begun setting up small health centres in the community and will provide, together with the government and other specialised organisations, services that focus on maternal, infant and reproductive health as well as HIV/AIDS.





How you are helping the children of Haiti

Classic Response

On 3rd April, famous faces from the classical world joined forces to put on a very special 'Classic Response' concert for the SOS Haiti Appeal at the Royal Albert Hall. Featuring Paul Potts, Aled Jones, All Angels, Blake, Escala, Rhydian and the City of London Sinfonia, the evening was an enormous success. We would like to extend our thanks to

everyone who gave their time and talents to help raise more than £25,000 for the children of Haiti.

Sponsorships and donations

Since the earthquake, we have received many large donations and new child sponsorships. Thank you for helping us give more children a family for life.

Shelter:

We will provide private housing for families with children whose houses were destroyed. We will also ensure the provision of safe water and sanitation.

Shelter

Education

Education:

We will build pre-schools and primary schools together with the community and the Ministry of Education.



Angelina Jolie visits SOS Haiti

Angelina Jolie has been a loyal supporter of SOS Children's Villages for many years and as well as visiting earthquake-affected Haiti, has visited SOS Children projects in Chad and Jordan.

Speaking to CNN from Haiti, she said: *"As somebody who is an adoptive parent, I understand the urge to assist in that way but an emergency is not the time for new adoptions. I am personally going to assist organisations like SOS [Children] that raise orphans in-country. It's an extraordinary programme and they raise them for life. It's one of the best ways to help a child without removing a child from its home country."*



World news

With your support, we're helping children and their families survive conflict, disease and disaster all around the world. For all the latest news visit: www.soschildren.org

Chile earthquake

On 28 February, a massive earthquake struck central Chile. There were no fatalities at any of the 14 SOS Children's Villages, but at least two suffered structural damage. SOS Children's Villages in the greater area of Concepción has been providing temporary shelter for unaccompanied children and supporting those in the local community with food and medicine.



Famine in Niger

More than 7 million people could face moderate to severe food shortages due to erratic rains that have severely affected crop production in Niger. SOS Children has launched an emergency programme to support 10,000 of the most vulnerable children and their families. The programme will provide food and medical treatment and will run from March to September 2010. Niger is one of the poorest countries in the world and most of its inhabitants live in rural areas and depend heavily on agriculture.



Official opening of SOS Children's 500th Village

SOS Children's 500th Village in Cali, Colombia, was officially opened on 24 March. Built in one of the poorest neighbourhoods in Cali, the Village has 14 family houses for over 120 children who will now be able to enjoy the love and support of a caring SOS mother.

A new SOS Children's Village for Zambia

Chipata, in Zambia's Eastern Province, is home to 300,000 people. With an HIV prevalence rate of 26 per cent, approximately 70 per cent of households are caring for orphans on an average daily income of just 70 pence. To support Chipata's most vulnerable children, we have committed to open an SOS Children's Village, Nursery School, Medical Centre and Social Centre. Construction will begin this summer.

Family Matters Issue 1 2010

Some names have been changed to protect the privacy of the children and communities with which we work

Registered charity number: 1069204

We are in the process of updating our records. If you have an email address, let us know by contacting us at: update@soschildren.org