

Project Goals: 1) renovate the water filtration system to provide clean, safe drinking and washing water for the children at the Alpha Children's Home 2) acquire a washer machine and build cabinetry for organization and 3) implement a sanitation/hygiene workshop to promote good health and hygiene habits.

Fundraising: In April 2014, several family and friends donated hygienic items, including but not limited to: toothpaste, toothbrushes, soap, hand sanitizer etc. Shaffer Library of Union College also raised and donated hygienic items, together with eighty-five dollars (\$85.00).

Project Details: This project from the very beginning to the end has been a journey of discovery and an uphill climb. In theory, the objectives seemed simplistic; however, in reality, while overseeing the project to bring it to fruition, I encountered obstacles from the beginning, *some* of which I had the foresight to expect and *most* of which I was completely startled. From the moment I arrived at the orphanage, the husband and wife duo that manages the organization tried to take over my project by introducing tasks that were not part of my initial proposal. After much quarreling and demands from them, I maintained my stance and respectfully reminded them of the contents of my proposal. After a day of consideration, they decided to allow me to proceed with my project. When I toured the orphanage, I was appalled to witness the unsanitary environment, both inside and outside. The condition outside was much more alarming than inside. For example, the wastewater drains were mostly uncovered and filled with mud water 15 inches deep. Areas of drainage that were enclosed were concealed with rotten pieces of wood that were not securely placed on the ground. In addition, waste products from the nearby septic tank were overflowing into the drains causing there to be a horrid smell. What I found to be most alarming and disturbing was seeing young boys playing barefoot near the exposed dirty drains. Immediately, I knew that providing a cleaner environment would make a significant difference for these children.

In my initial proposal, I had planned to stay at the orphanage but due to the unsanitary living conditions and hostile orphanage directors, I decided to organize a homestay with an aunt, who lives 1 ½ hours away from the orphanage. Although I had to travel back and forth to the project site daily, I chose to do so rather than staying at a hotel, because it was more cost effective. On the same night of my arrival, I received a disturbing phone call from the co-director of the orphanage who compelled me to reimburse them money for work they claimed they had done to the orphanage's infrastructure. I explained to him that I cannot "refund" money for tasks that I did not complete. To be candid, I felt pressured and believed that he wanted to take over the project and control how the funds were spent. It was also brought to my attention that they already had a well-functioning washer machine and that the orphanage had raised funds to purchase a new water tank, but those funds went towards repairing the electrical work in the bathroom. Given the new developments, I agreed that any money left over would go towards purchasing toilets for both bathrooms and a water tank. The next difficulty that I encountered was finding a new contractor since my original contractor was unavailable. Fortunately, I was able to find a new contractor but had to pay the contractor more than I had budgeted for. When the contractor examined the site, he informed me that the drains first needed to be replaced before moving forward with the water filtration task. Approximately 200+ feet of underground drainage pipes were replaced extending from the back of the orphanage, side and front. The drains were cleaned, filled with sand; new pipes were installed underground and concreted providing a safer and cleaner environment.

Further, three days into the project, my book bag containing personal items and the equivalent of 1600 US dollars project money was stolen in broad day light in front of the orphanage. Earlier that day, I went to the bank to withdraw money to buy materials, kept the funds in my bag inside the vehicle which was locked, then ran to the back of the orphanage for a few minutes to ask the contractor a question regarding the materials. When I returned after 5 minutes or so, I saw that the hinges to the rear window of the vehicle was broken. Immediately, I

searched the vehicle and nearby surroundings for my bag which I did not find. I then filed a police report and shut the project down for the day. I considered not continuing on with the project and coming home as I was shaken up and feared for my safety. However, after speaking with my school advisor, her support and encouragement steered me to stay and complete the project. Upon completion of the drainage, I carried out a hygiene workshop and distributed bags filled with hygienic items to each child at the orphanage. Later that day, the husband-wife team rudely and in a threatening manner expressed to me that they were not satisfied with the work done thus far and continued to insist for a "reimbursement" of funds. I strongly believe that these people wanted the money for themselves and for that reason (apart from safety concerns), I decided to take the advice of my advisor to find other orphanages nearby to work with and carry out similar projects. I worked with Camal International Home (home to 42 children) where the management and staff were kind, pleasant and the environment was sanitary. After consulting with the management of the Home to determine their need(s), I purchased a washing machine in addition to carrying out my hygiene workshop and donating an abundance of hygienic items. Finally, I had a handful of hygienic bags remaining which I distributed at the market to elderly beggars and children roaming.

Section 2: *Peace defined from my perspective*

I truly believe that cleanliness encourages goodness and that peace begins with a smile when people come together to work towards the benefit of a common cause. This experience has widened my view of the world beyond my expectations and has taught me many intricacies of communication, especially when interacting with hostile people and unfriendly situations. Despite the many challenges that I faced during my project, I am proud because despite the situation, I always had a smile on my face for those children and they always had a smile on their faces for me. I have come back home knowing that those smiles can run around and play in a yard that is not muddy, filled with garbage and foul; rather, I know that there is a clean and sanitary space for them to just be kids. I am proud because those kids now know (if they didn't know earlier) how to use a deodorant, have their own sets of toothbrush, soap, towels, but more importantly, they have a greater understanding of "how to" take care of one self. While my project did not unfold exactly how I had hoped, I truly believe that I made a difference for the children by providing them with a more sanitary environment and educating them about the importance of practicing healthy habits. A clean environment promotes peace and therefore I believe that it is most important for youngsters to grow up in a sanitary environment and develop good living habits. Better health and wellness will lead to development and growth for these children.

This experience was one of immense growth. I learned a lot about the world in the sense that the quality of life in other parts of the world is not the equivalent to life in the United States. I learned a lot about people in the sense that people come in many different shapes, forms, color, and temperament. I learned a lot about myself. During the time spent at my host's home, not having easy access to things of necessity (i.e. easy access to clean drinking water, being able to use an indoor toilet), has made me realize that there is so much to be done around this vast world that we live in. I feel truly blessed to be living in the United States and hope that one day I can provide some relief to people living in destitute parts of the world. In terms of character, I did not know how determined I can be nor did I know I had the confidence to stand up to hostile people and hold my own. I believe that this experience made me a stronger person and has inspired me to want to do more, given the opportunity. I regret that there was a time due to the hostile situation, that I considered leaving the project and coming back home. In retrospect, I am thankful that I realized and accepted the fact that life happens and that it is very important to know what you know and speak of it with conviction and clarity. Above all else, I learned first-hand that there is a great need around the world for peace. *Things may not always go as planned, but as long as you don't throw in the towel and give up, there is a chance to get good results!-Trishala Jailall*



Drainage Before (top)



Drainage (before, left picture, and after, the right picture)