

Dear Friends,

Report on part of the work of emergency relief and humanitarian assistance for victims of Tsunami in the East Sri Lanka.

Almost three months have elapsed since the tragedy of Tsunami hit the countries around the Indian Ocean. Though the extent of the disaster has been unprecedented, the wave of support and sympathy towards the devastated victims from people around the world and especially the expatriate Sri-Lankans was equally unprecedented. I must specially thank our friends and old students of Catholic schools in Sri-Lanka who got alerted immediately and formed a network and sent financial aid and urgently needed supplies which came in within a week from U.K., which was later taken up by Canada, U.S.A., Australia and Europe. We are grateful to all of you especially to Prabha (Fabian), Dilip, Prof. Chitramohan and Dr. Bala Canagasabey for their initiative. When the Government's response to the disaster had been taking quite a long time, like supplying the emergency aid to the survivors, who not only lost their belongings but also their beloved family members and the houses in which they lived, the religious organisations and well wishers in the neighbourhood came forward to help out the unfortunate victims. It is at this stage that the Church also had to step in as it had done in the past among the victims of war and violence. A friend from U.K., who was curious enough asked me whether I could organise an orphanage to render care and service to Tsunami orphans! I replied that I had already thirteen orphanages in Trincomalee, Batticaloa and Kalmunai. To have a few more for Tsunami victims wouldn't pose a problem. He was taken aback and his response was "incredible!".

The situation had been somewhat similar in all the regions affected by the Tsunami but in different degrees. The Eastern Province, bordering the Coastal area suffered the worst- counting more than 50% dead from the whole country viz 20,000 men, women and children.

At the beginning it was chaotic but with local resources we launched out on feeding the 4,200 persons and with the help coming in we continued for about two months. During this period they were in churches, community halls and finally in schools and Government buildings, for census to be taken.

The EHED – (Eastern Human Economic Development) Centre is a social arm of the Church and partners of Caritas International through whom the major rehabilitation and reconstruction programs are organised. Similarly the Jaffna centre is known as HUDEC (Human Development Centre) and that of Mannar is called "Valvuthayam". Hence the contributions made by the private persons and friends went into the Tsunami Quake Disaster Relief Fund and we were able cut through red tapes and several bureaucratic delays and reach people directly as it was meant to be an emergency measure.

We were also called upon to join in extricating the bodies of the victims out of the debris, transporting them to the mortuary, burying or cremating them during the first critical days.

We have done whatever we could to all people going beyond race, caste or creed. This had been our accepted policy throughout. We had also forged unity not only with other NGO's and local organisations but also a special bond of unity with leaders of other faiths.

Having passed through the Phase 1 of emergency, the people are now being moved into (phase 2) temporary shelters, arrangements are being made to restart employment and livelihood, to help with trauma counseling along with provisions of water, sanitation etc.

The Temporary Shelter



Since the children have started attending schools after a delay of 2 months, their needs especially school uniforms, education materials etc are being supplied from various resources but not adequately covering the total number affected by Tsunami. The school principals have been requested to send the list of all children who are left out so far to EHED and help will be given through this special Tsunami fund. Already we have committed to help 2,000 children. We are convinced that satisfying children will bring peace and consolation to the families as well.

The 3rd phase and the long-term programs are going to be permanent shelters, sustainable livelihood, psychosocial support, infrastructure, rehabilitation etc. This process will take a couple of years and need to be undertaken in a major scale by major NGO's and the State.

However, our concern and solidarity with the affected people will continue to be in the fields of alleviation of poverty, education of children, support for widows, the aged etc in true Christian spirit.

Fund Management: "The Tsunami-Quake Disaster Relief Fund"

The above account absorbed funds from all parts of the world – thanks to the expatriates and the Christian communities. Some were meant to be used for general relief, others for specific purposes and yet others for designated localities. A board has been set up under the chairmanship of the Bishop. Guidelines have been given re purpose and procedure. Applications from persons, priests or religious will be recommended by the Vicar General. The Procurator (Bursar) in Batti and EHED director in Trinco will disburse the funds. The Secretary is also the convenor of the Board meetings, where the progress of the work will be evaluated and the accounts approved periodically.

I gratefully acknowledge the following receipt of funds into our above account:

<p>From BUDS GBP 18,653 From MIOT GBP 1,966 (through Prof.Chitramohan) From the South Asian Forum on mental Health, led by Prof.Chitramohan GBP 5,000.-</p>
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This adds up to a total of **GBP 25,619** from the UK Friends, besides some anonymous and personal donations.

How your help was utilised:



1. Sustaining the displaced and affected families numbering 1670 for one week, during the most critical period with food and essentials in the villages of Vakara, Savukadi in Batticaloa District; 600 families in Akkaraipattu, Thirukovil and Kalmunai in Ampara District 1200 families in Trincomalee District.



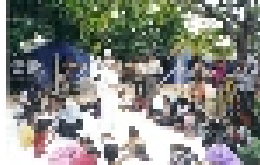
Providing Sanitary Facilities

2. Sanitation and clean water facilities (including toilets to three major refugee camps- which functioned in school buildings for almost two months (Jan and Feb.2005). This included urgent purchasing of water pumps, plumbing etc.



Distributing School Items to Students

3. From early March – the schools were vacated making room for children to begin their studies for the year. School uniforms, books, stationery etc were supplied to 1706 students who were in need.



Personnel engaged in Trauma Counseling

4. We had to begin training volunteers to help in Trauma counseling of the victims. With the help of local resource persons and a special help from Dr. Michael Finegan of CRS (Catholic Relief Services of USA) more than 300 persons including school teachers, young people, priests, religious etc were trained and sent to the field. They are now involved in helping out children and parents in schools and temporary shelters on a regular basis.

5. Help for families who lost bread-winners, orphans, those who lost their tools of trade, repairs of houses, transit accommodations etc are being done on a regular basis.

6. In addition we supported fully for two and a half months 4200 families in our schools in Batticaloa and Trincomalee in the absence of help coming from Government sources.

Minimum Cost of maintain a child in an orphanage is Rs.2000.00 or GBP11.- per month.
Minimum Cost of maintaining a family is Rs.6000.00 or GBP50.- per month.
Minimum Cost of a temporary shelter is – Rs.40,000.00 or GBP250.-
Minimum Cost of a fishing boat is (canoe) Rs.80,000.00 or GBP500.-
We are able to face the above challenge of a daunting task with your help and that of other friends and generous donors from Europe, Canada and USA and Australia.
The above rates are variable in course of time

God bless you and all your dear ones: a very happy Easter to all of you.

Bishop Kingsley Swampillai
Bishop of Trincomalee-Batticaloa.
29th March 2005