
Goodbye Tsunami

A vision to action

Sri Lanka's Best
Post - Tsunami Success Stories
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01 Gold IN THE DUST

They were moments filled with trepidation. Absolute trepidation. Pathma has abject fears of even recalling the events which led to it, barring talking extensively about it. She is in a state of trauma. That itself epitomises the fear psychosis of the events of December 26, 2004.

Her name is K B Pathma. Christhogu Baduge Pathma is her full name. Also with her were her husband Galappaththi Waduge Dayapala along with their elder twin boys and her younger daughter. Despite her being 41 years of age, she is the nerve centre of the family providing the fortitude to the husband and family. It was at Maradanawatte in the Kottegoda area on the Southern coastal belt that this family was eking out an existence, acutely conscious of the daunting challenges of life.

While Pathma's elder twins Saneera Madhushan and Sameera Nadeeshan were studying for their GCE Advanced Level examination in 2006 in the mathematics stream, daughter Jayani Madhurangi was in the seventh standard. It was not only for the sustenance of the family that their father was scaling the stormy seas as a fisherman, but also for supporting his 75 year old mother who was living in close proximity.

Pathma did not approve of her husband's untiring efforts solely in keeping the home fires burning and it was she also who put her shoulder to the wheel to supplement the income. This was also instrumental in balancing the expenses of the household. The Padma - Dayapala couple were not only instrumental in providing education for their three children, but they were successful in financing the tuition classes for the two sons as well. They were also planning the future of their only daughter as well. They would be aptly described as a traditional family in the Kottegoda area which would also mean that they were independent and not a social burden to the people in the area.

HOWEVER, the havoc that wrecked on the morning of December 26, 2004 defied not only human imagination but also simple logic. They were aware of the fact that the seas were rough that morning but none of them ever imagined that they would create a storm of this nature. It was meant to be an ordinary day and the citizens on the coastal belt were going about their business as usual. What the inhabitants of the area did not expect was their houses to be submerged with the sea was getting rougher and rougher.

It was not only to Pathma's house, but to the entire village that the carnage was instrumental in destroying. It was also at that fateful moment that her thoughts were flashing about her mother as well. Looking at that moment she could not even recognize her mother's house. The reason being the angry waves scaling over that house as well. It was then that she started running while carrying her mother away in escape while her own brother was battling the angry waves. It is indeed fortunate that she was away from the waves which was the fact that she is alive.

There were the sounds and the reverberations of people in the vicinity who were screaming and crying in anguish and despair.

With the passage of time the seas began to subside. While Pathma was wending her way to her house, what she saw was a mass of destruction. Her house had disappeared ! If there was a cause for satisfaction and joy in that fateful day, it was the fact that her brother had saved their mother. That was not only a day which shook Sri Lanka but the whole world. What was created over generations in terms of housing and property with valuable human lives were destroyed within minutes. It is with profound sorrow that Pathma says that 38 of her neighbours were swept away with the tsunami. Pathma cannot bear her mute grief when she recalls the loss of her children's books and other valuable property they lost a year ago.

A day later, December 27, 2004 did not dawn in the same manner of the previous day. It was not an ordinary day. It was a deep sense of insecurity into her future that enveloped Pathma while all she could hear from the neighbourhood were screeches and crying. It was a total wreck that she was surrounded with. Her world was totally destroyed. All personal belongings were also gone. She was left with her family and the surviving neighbours. It was within minutes that an economically independent household had razed to the ground. All their economic and other social aspirations had been dashed. This has been the unanimous sentiment among the inmates of not only in her village but everywhere else as well.

It was at that stage that numerous amounts of local and international agencies started arriving at her village with aid and other amenities for the revival of the hundreds of locations which were battered in the tsunami. While they were used to the clothes that were tailored for them and what they purchased, now they had to adopt themselves to what was handed over to them. There was no alternative. It was the tsunami monster which destroyed an otherwise moderately comfortable and secure life.

However, Pathma was firmly resolved to overcome the sudden change in her life in the aftermath of all the earning capacities and the economic opportunities in the wake of the tsunami aftermath. However, her resolution was paramount. That was her sole resolution. Her aspiration was an oasis within a desert.

She was one of the beneficiaries of the Sarvodaya Women's Movement, which continued to assist people like her on a continuous voluntary basis. She built a permanent relationship an everlasting friendship with the Sarvodaya Women's Movement.

By the end of around March 2005, Pathma and her neighbours who were residents of the Kottegoda area found a new home named Kottegoda, a new magnet. She also became the representative of the residents of the Kottegoda area in the new home. With the passage of time, all the darkness which enveloped her life and that with those of all the people who were rendered destitute as a result of the tsunami carnage began to gradually fade away with a result of the self employment and other empowerment programs which were devised by the Sarvodaya Women's Movement. With this she was able to not only regain her self confidence that she lost due to the tsunami but was able to draw satisfaction of empowering all the women who were economically deprived from her area.

The Sarvodaya Women's Movement, which commenced operations in 1987 could be described like this: It is an organization which was operating at a moderate level at the time that the tsunami carnage took place. There was a program which started with the tsunami for volunteers to go into the tsunami devastated areas with the essential food items for a start and a numerous other welfare items in relation to women. It is also a singular and decisive victory for the Sarvodaya Women's Movement that it was able to assist in the distribution of essentials for the displaced while also caring for them.

It is also poignant that the Movement has the services of a mere five staffers while it has over one thousand volunteers who have been instrumental in not only caring for the displaced but also in creating the much needed economic empowerment which they badly needed especially at a time like that, which was the worst carnage that this country has ever faced.

The initial program that was commenced was to ascertain how many women were affected by the tsunami in those areas and also to devise a methodology to create self opportunities for them.

It was then that the Sarvodaya Women's Movement commenced a program of empowering women at the grassroot levels by appointing two representatives each for the five tsunami devastated districts.

By this method, there were eight nominees for four villages the Batticaloa District while there were four nominees for two villages the Ampara district, 30 nominees for ten villages the Galle, Matara and Hambantota districts and four nominees in the two villages in the Kalmunai District which were instrumental in eighty nominees in forty villages in all districts.

It is indeed commendable that there are 225 villages in 28 districts which are actively performing the furtherance of the causes of women. It is a joint venture between the Sarvodaya and the AJJDC which are providing the financial support for these institutions.

It is also important that the advisory services that the Movement commenced were inside the refugee camps of the tsunami victims. It was then that the drawbacks of the women were recognized and the programs to empower them were devised.

It was also with the intention of empowering their futures and the creation of their future security that the participants also went there with an open mind. One of the cornerstones of the programs were that all effort was revolved round the mental empowerment of the participants. Their mindsets had to be changed and improved.

The staff of the Movement had also explained to them that the aim of the program, which commenced in 1987, was to empower women from its inception and that it reached a novel dimension with the advent of the tsunami. It had also been mentioned that the network of islandwide branch networks along with the credibility of the Sarvodaya brand name had also fortified the operations. A salient feature is that Sarvodaya intervened in an area which no other Non Governmental Organization dared to step in. That is in the area of women's health and sanitation. There was also a specialized formal program which was devised for women between the ages of 15 and 20 and also for school children of that age. It had also been a challenge for empowering women of that age.

One of the highlights of the program is that the women participants were reluctant to be continuously dependant on the foreign funding that was available for them and they were resolute in their aim to be economically independent. It was also a futile exercise to make them strive for themselves independently. For starters, they were also grabbing whatever opportunity that they were getting. So the Sarvodaya Women's Movement was instrumental in gradually phasing out that.

It was also with the same spirit that Pathma was instrumental in empowering not only herself but also her family. She was gradually forgetting the trauma and the lost aspirations and dreams that she was encapsulated in and undertook a leadership role in the management of the affairs of not only her life but also those of the people of her area. This also enabled her to rebuild her life but also those of the others in the village who were devastated by the tsunami. All this was due to the programmes of the Sarvodaya Women's Movement.

It was also a challenge for her to get the people of the area involved in the Sarvodaya Women's empowerment programmes. Another highlight was that the women who were devastated by the tsunami were also willing to take up what ever opportunity that was bestowed on them due to the limited opportunities that were

available due to their limitations and skills. Pathma was able to successively guide her village colleagues towards these empowerment programmes. Sarvodaya also wanted to make these tsunami victims self sufficient people. Their skills were identified and they were placed on the right track.

The programs which have been initiated by the Sarvodaya Women's Movement has been very popular among the tsunami devastated women, who have been successfully able to fortify their lives at least partially. Over 2500 families have been empowered in this manner, by their own merits and dedication, which is a cause for satisfaction. These 40 villages have also trained five volunteers each for the training others as well.

The Treasurer of the Sarvodaya Women's Movement Preethi Almeda commenting on the catalytic role of the movement in the context of the rebuilding the lives of the tsunami victims in the immediate aftermath of the tragedy, said: "This movement has provided amounts ranging from Rs.10,000 and Rs.25,000 to all these tsunami devastated women as start up capital for their self employment ventures. Arrangements have also been made for their purchasing equipment. Most of the machines which they earlier owned prior to the tsunami have been washed away. We have provided them with sewing machines, coir machines, and machines for grinding of condiments which enabled them to start a new life style.

Therefore, it is patently clear that the strategies of the Movement have been successful to the core. The advisory services have been laudable. Otherwise, they would have been desperate. The provision of the equipment has also been successful for their re-launch of their lifestyles. The Movement has given no less than 88 coir machines to the women at Kahawa itself.

It is with great resolution that Pathma has been functioning for the rebuilding her lifestyle and her community. Today, she makes string hoppers, balustrades and sweetmeats for

the community in the area. It is not only in the arena of economic empowerment that the Movement has been responsible. The Foundation which was instrumental in the enhancement of the educational process was successful in getting 90% of the children in the tsunami districts back to school. For the elders, there were eye clinics, medical clinics and nutrition programs. There was also legal advice which was provided for the victims to trace their lost documents. The Foundation was assisted by the Legal Division of Sarvodaya. There were also additional nutrition programs which were also fortified by programs which were related to home gardening.

These were some of the measures those were taken to restore civil lives and those include the restoration and conservation of the environment. There were 2500 plants which were handed over to houses. There were also a tree planting program which coincided with the World Environment Day.

Pathma and the Sarvodaya Women's Movement of the area participated at the product exhibition which was held at the Vihara Maha Devi Park on December 13 and 14, one year later in 2005.

The exhibition which was held at the Vihara Maha Devi Park under the name "Gemi Diriya" to exhibit and sell the products which had been manufactured by the tsunami victims has been overwhelming with the sales being valued at over Rs.10 million while export orders have been secured in German and Indian markets.

The Chairperson of the Moratuwa Sarvodaya Women's Movement Kusum Wijesinghe said that the empowerment of the tsunami women has now resulted in Sri Lankan products such as these are reaching the German and Indian markets. They include the dry fish from Kalmunai, curd from Matara, balustrades from Galle and the reed from Kalmunai. " We are also happy that we were able to enhance the inherent skills of all these people and we are confident that we are able to get more products in to the international market," she said.

It is on March 01, 2005 that the Sarvodaya Women's Foundation commenced the economic empowerment program which was for the women, children and all other adults who were affected by the tsunami. Within six months from that day, the program was successfully completed with most of the course work enlightening the lives of the suffering refugees. The Foundation was successfully able to interact and mingle with the people of the major communities - Sinhalese, Tamils and the Muslims in the Districts of Galle, Matara, Hambantota, Ampara, Batticaloa and Trincomalee.

A survey conducted by the Foundation revealed that 30% of the women in these districts had a direct influence in the family incomes. While there were 2,227 women who were empowered by the program, there were a further 300 for whom there were new avenues of income opportunities which were introduced. There was also the provision of new equipment and also training which empowered them further.

A year on from the date of the tsunami was a dramatic transformation of the lives of the tsunami people. One from abject poverty to a high degree of self confidence and esteem with assurances that life was going on. Sarvodaya lifted their spirits, which was indeed a dramatic victory from any social perspective. This was more noble than providing them with funds in excess of hundreds and thousands of rupees.

This is the voice of Pathma. She says: "We were totally helpless after the tsunami and we were seriously contemplating what to do afterwards to resurrect our lives. It was at that time that the Sarvodaya Women's Movement came to our rescue as we fortified our lives with that assistance. I understood the situation and came to grips with the reality that mourning and griping would not be of any assistance. We laboured to find a framework so that we could live independently and honourably.

She has also realized that she could not be provided with doles on a continuous basis. " We strived despite how painful it was. I also wish to state that all should stop crying and try to rise after wiping the tears' she noted.

There has been a dramatic transformation in Padma's psyche. She is attempting her utmost to uplift the lives of other people as well. The assistance that Sarvodaya has given her and her mates is immeasurable. That is obvious and paramount. These events should be a forerunner to an eventful future in their lives.

The project that the Sarvodaya Women's Movement targeted the women, children and the elders in the tsunami affected areas. The coverage areas have been the Districts of Amparai, Batticaloa, Galle, Matara and Trincomalee.

It is only Paanama that was saved from the tsunami while all other areas of the Ampara district were devastated. It was the Ampara district which first felt the pulse of the tsunami. It is at 8.27 am that the Ampara and Kalmunai areas were affected while the second area in the district to be devastated was Kathankudi which was at 8.30 am. These killer waves next affected the seas of Batticaloa. There were 10, 436 deaths in the Ampara District while there were 120 injured and 876 people who had disappeared. While there were 24,441 who were displaced, there were 24,000 houses and 40 schools which were also damaged. They belonged to the Ampara, Kalmunai and Akarraipattu electorates.

The project rationale was to assess and survey the needs of the target group in the light of 30% having lost livelihoods, 20% having vbeen compelled to give up education, unsatisfactory unhygienic conditions, the destruction of the environment, low nutrition levels the absence of legal documents, lack of basic facilities for school children and the absence of the medical reports of the edlers.

The project objectives were also to mobilise village groups to address tsunami psycho social issues and to build the livelihood support capability through the requisite advice training and expertise and technical advice for the women in the community.

Nearly 40,000 lives have been lost due to the tsunami. There are over thousands in refugee camps. There are thousands of people who have been assisted and in the process of being assisted in housing by non- governmental organizations.

It is based on a concept of Sarvodaya Leader Dr. A T Ariyaratne that they were able to procure self- employment opportunities.

Here are some grateful comments of some of the beneficiaries at the Moratuwa Sarvodaya Women's Movement.

Jeevaratnam Vanitha(24) of Kalanchikudi: My husband and children were at home and suddenly the sea was at our house. The cultivation of half an acre that we had as a model farm was completely destroyed.

P B Chamila(27) of Welhengoda, Ahangama: We were given the kitchen utensils. We were also provided training in sewing, patchwork and painting as well.

A K Priyanthi of Wawulegoda, Hikkaduwa: We were given the basic foundation to uplift our lives and we were given the fabric, the thread and sewing machines to make products and they were good enough to provide us with the markets as well. I have produced over Rs.200,000 worth of bed sheets, patch work and bags etc. It is indeed heartening to note that a large number of women in the tsunami districts have been empowered with self employment projects which have rejuvenated their lives and that is a cause of great satisfaction◆



02

RISING FROM THE Ashes

On the morning of Boxing Day 2004, the Catholics in the coastal belt embraced the warmth of Christmas they celebrated the previous day. They also made use of the long weekend that ensued due to unduvap Poya day which also coincided with Boxing Day. The devotees who wanted to observe sil also drew themselves to the temples early morning scheduled to fulfill their religious fervours. Some were attentively listening to programs on television, which were relaying live programs on Buddhism. The Independent Television Network(TIN) had selected the historic Aluthgama Kande Viharaya for its live Poya coverage. It was situated on a hillock amidst scenic beauty.

The telecast unfolded Buddhist practices associated with Unduvap Poya, the last of the twelve poya days for the year. Buddhists in the southern coast, like many others countrywide were looking for solace and serenity in their lives in a world craving for materialistic pleasures. The television crew that was reporting live programs suddenly were acutely conscious of the uneasiness and agitation of the people of the area and an unconfirmed story of a galloping high tide and the sea waves coming to the coastal areas.

Then the devotees were suddenly surrounded with who were appealing to them for their protection.

Then there was a live telecast to the nation on the melodrama that ensued, buttressed with the individual experiences of the people who were involved in it and the people who were rendered destitute. The effect of the tsunami was really felt in epic proportions as a majority of the villages which were devastated by the catastrophe were inhabitants of the Kalutara District.

Hot on the heels of the devastation, all village inmates fled with only the clothes they were wearing, abandoning all other personal belongings and their homes in the process. The Kalutara District has Colombo District on its northern frontier Galle District on its South, Ratnapura District to the East and the sea to its west. The Kalutara District has the divisions of Panadura, Bandaragama, Horana, Bulathsinhala, Mathugama, Kalutara and Beruwela. The Divisional Secretariats directly affected by the tsunami in the Kalutara District were: Panadura, Wadduwa, Pothupitiya, Pothupitiya, Kalutara, Payagla, Maggona, Waskaduwa, Kuda Waskaduwa and Beruwela. The Tsunami took away all the lives, properties, houses and homes which were built over a life time without sympathy.

It is indeed with profound sorrow that reports that the Kalutara District lost 256 lives, 155 disappearances, 400 injured persons, while 27,713 people were rendered destitute. They were housed in 16 refugee camps.

Economically, a total of 41, 252 hectares of rubber cultivation span the Kalutara District while a further 17,858 hectares of paddy, 12,754 hectares of coconut and 4036 hectares of tea has been cultivated. While rubber, paddy and coconut are the cornerstones of the livelihood of the people in the Kalutara District directly and indirectly, fisheries and tourism constitute the livelihoods of the people who were living in the devastated areas. It took some more split seconds to destroy not only people but their abodes which had been built over a life time. The people who succumbed to the carnage, who were yearning for security whether physical and/ or

emotional and sympathy were assisted by a grateful nation, who teemed in their numbers to rally round them. It was an unparalleled gesture that they rallied from every nook and cranny of the country in the form of food, clothing, shelter medicines and all other needs which are associated with a wreckage of such epic proportions. They were given all the moral and emotional support spending heaps of time and in an unparalleled human sacrifice.

With the passage of time, there was some light which emanated from the villages. It had to be a total reincarnation despite some of the homes and the other buildings being beyond redemption. Some one or institutions had to come to the rescue of all the destitute that had no funds in their reserves for rebuilding their homes, and investments in land and employment.

What was also laudable was that the determination and the fortitude of the victims to rebuild their lives were monumental and second to none in the world despite the defeat of the tsunami staring in their faces.

For 54 year old Nammuni Lucas Silva of Kuda Waskaduwa and his 46 year old wife Irene Somalatha, it was the Children and Women's Development Foundation of Waskaduwa which came to their rescue.

The principal challenge of this community based Organization(CBO) established in 1994 and which influenced the lifestyles of the people who are living in the area, was to resurrect the lives of the tsunami victims. The initial objective of the organization was to collect data of the victims so that it could proceed with the assistance they needed. After all, the organization by itself was familiar with their lifestyles and aspirations.

The Women and Child Development Foundation which is housed at 433, Sri Rathana Jothi Mawatha, Kuda Waskaduwa, Waskaduwa has fulfilled a series of successful programs for the welfare of the residents of the area before tsunami unleashed the

area. Some of those include: Cleaning wells of the residents and providing them with pure drinking water. Some of the other services included providing micro-credit for 625 tsunami victimized families, conducting mental health programs for those who are suffering from trauma, the provision of fishing gear and boats for those who have lost them, creation of nutrition programs for children under five years, provision of scholarships for school children and water supply and sanitation schemes.

Among the series of programs which they commenced for the uplifting of the lifestyles of the people in the tsunami devastated areas were the provision of drinking water and the supply of wells (sometimes tube wells as well as the individual cases were) the addition of nutrition programs, assistance for self employment, supply of boats and equipment for the recommencement of the fishing industry which bolstered the mindsets of the people. The Chairman of the Association Sunil Upananda said that it has been most successful in the provision of micro-credit and the allocation of self employment opportunities.

The creation of micro-credit and self employment opportunities has taken place on a small and medium scale. The program has aimed to provide loans in the denominations of Rs.5000, Rs.10,000, Rs.20,000 and Rs.25,000. The interest rates were concessionary and payable on a monthly and quarterly basis. A sum of Rs.5,000 is given in the first year and depending on the consistency of the payments, this allocation is increased to Rs. 10,000. Consistency is the hall mark when it is increased to Rs.20,000 and Rs.25,000.

This project has provided self employment opportunities to 625 families in the neighbouring villages of which over 100 families are from the Kuda Waskaduwa area. The total funds exceed Rs. 2 million and the repayments have been very consistent which is around 98% of the funds disbursed, the Chairman said.

A salient feature of these projects has been the establishment of a disaster management unit among the Youth Corps. It is due to this that the youth of this area has been empowered to tackle any disaster that could engulf the area with the passage of time and while they are engaged in their self employment opportunities through leadership and discipline. The team has around 25% of the population and these volunteers have provided yeoman service in the post tsunami disaster management of these areas such as Beruwela, Waskaduwa and Kalutara.

They have been provided with the requisite apparatus such as uniforms, caps, gloves, first aid and water. There have been various in-house programs which has also enhanced their team spirit, the Chairman said, and added that they are conscious and agile to any potential disasters in the future.

Lucas, commenting on the micro credit and self - employment facilities provided by the Women and Child Development Foundation, said: "They have been living in a small house which has been made out of wooden planks which they have lived throughout generations. It is in this house that my wife, two daughters and son have lived over the years. The eldest daughter Kumari Priyadharshini is employed in an apparel factory. The second daughter has gone abroad. The youngest son has sat for his GCE Ordinary Level and is in anticipation of a job. It is the ekel broom industry that has enabled us to sustain this family."

Lucas has been consistent in this industry almost on a daily basis and he stores the production. These products are distributed on a countrywide basis and they reach markets in Kalutara, Bandarawela, Ratnapura, Nuwara Eliya, Anuradhapura and Polonnaruwa. Lucas while spelling out that the worth of each production batch is around Rs.175,000, says that the proceeds of the sales after paying the lorry hires is about to break even while spelling out that the business is not at a loss.

The tsunami not only devastated our homes but our lives as well. We lost our coir. We lost our coconut shell pits and also our manufactured ekel brooms. We lost everything in this devastation, he spelt out in disdain. However, he acknowledged gratefully that he was lucky to be a beneficiary of this program and that by itself was strength to his soul.

The Lucas household was within the 100 metre range. There was a stream named the Managala Ela that meandered across his household to the sea. This facilitated the flow of rainwater to the sea. It was through the stream that the sea water gushed to his house on the day of the tsunami and he gestured to the top of a window of a neighbouring house which depicted the level of the water to which it had risen on that catastrophic day.

It was with a deep sense of reflection and choking with emotion that Lucas spelt out : "Days and weeks passed in our lives where we were left with only the clothes that we were wearing and we were consoled by the fact that the Government had pledged assistance to households that were located beyond the 100 meter boundary. However, what we needed was a source of livelihood to sustain ourselves and what we are accustomed to was the coir and the ekel broom industry for which we needed the raw materials. Even the coconut shell pits had been totally destroyed and it was then that it was rumoured that the Women and Child Development Foundation had devised a plan for the creation of self employment opportunities through a micro credit scheme. It was then that my family and the rest of the village joined hand in enlisting with the program. The Government also provided us with Rs.250,000. That was a tremendous mental relief and a huge load off our heads. We initially requested for Rs.5,000 and later applied for Rs.25,000 and now the hope is to ask for Rs.50,000. That was the way by which we improved our production. It is during the Sinhalese and Tamil New Year that our core products such as brooms and door mats will be in tremendous demand and it is with that hope that we are carrying on with our business.."

One of the principal livelihoods of these coastal areas which has been devastated has been the fisheries industry where 12 of the 14 coastal districts have been affected. The entire range of infrastructure and equipment has been also destroyed.

There was a total of 13,000 fishermen who lost their lives. There were 22,000 fishing boats which were also destroyed by the carnage. There were 8,250 engines which were damaged and 900 boats which were partially damaged.

There have been a total of 72,000 fisheries houses which have also been damaged. A total of 24,000 houses have been partially damaged. A large number of houses beyond the 100 metre limit have also been damaged. Over 96,000 houses belonging to fishermen have also been torn asunder. Among the infrastructure which has been destroyed have been the fishery harbours, anchors, ice factories, marketing centres and buildings.

K Sujith Wasantha is also a youth who has been engaged in the fishing industry. He and his family who have been living at Kuda Waskaduwa in Kalutara have escaped death miraculously. His father is K Premaratne Silva. Mother is W Swamalatha. His brother and sister are Sumith Prasanna and K Sujani Sanjeevani. It is a small house by the coast that the family has been living in. The house which was built on blocked stones was limited to the five walls.

Sujith, reminiscing that fateful day, said: "We had gone to sea and the boat was tied to a tree. I was fast asleep and I heard chaos outside the house. I woke and I was curious to determine what was happening. Then I saw the high tide moving to the shore. Our neighbours were running amok. Then, the string which was tied to the boat got unfastened. I ran to save it I was helpless. It was then that I realized that the tide was very strong.

I quickly ran home and hurried my family members and ran with them towards the railway line. Then another lethal wave came at lightening speed which submerged our house. We ran to the best of our ability towards Galle. Then we found all our household goods and possessions on the railway track.

All the possessions of the villagers were cluttered on the railway track. None of the boats which were owned by us were in the vicinity. None of the fishing equipment was visible in the carnage and that is what has caused all the consternation as that was the source of our livelihood, he despaired.

"My father has been fishing from the age of 18 and he is 52 years old. We have been fishing from other people's boats and all we owned were the nets and that was the source of our livelihoods." Sujith lamented.

Despite Sujith not owning a boat, he was a specialist in the repair of fishing nets and that was the reason he was a popular figure in the village and he commanded respect for his skill.

Sujith like all else in the neighbourhood was living on relief assistance and that was the manner in which they bided their time. They returned to their home which was not totally destroyed and they started to relive their lives. However, all the fishing equipment had been destroyed. However, all forms of assistance poured in from all directions. The fishermen who did not own boats also received assistance to purchase boats. He was not discouraged in his endeavour to rise above the ashes.

He was yearning for a funding opportunity to rebuild his life and it was also simultaneously at the same time that the Women and Children's Foundation came to his rescue with the self employment projects and concessionary funding which was instrumental in re-moulding his life. He aligned his family members also to the system. There was also no issues in relation to the collateral as they were fishermen spanning generations. The main criterion was mutual trust.

It was a loan of Rs.25,000 which was approved for Sujith's family from which he purchased the fishing nets. He is conscious of the will power and the daring he required to progress himself in the business, having repaid all the loans and buying further sets of nets.

Sujith is an exemplary source of inspiration to all youth. He deserves all the blessings of a nation ♦





03

A WAVE OF Hope

The time was almost 3 pm. She greeted us warmly with cups of hot steaming tea laid out on a tray. It was after we saw the pieces of jaggery on the tray that we guessed that the contents of the cups were tea. The response of a member of our group alerted all of us.

"Oh. I can't drink tea at this time".

It's true that you can't drink tea, but drink this also and see, was her reply.

That reply made us quite sure that the contents of the cups were not tea. We all had the pleasure of enjoying the beverage with the jaggery while being fully aware that it was not tea. It was a very tasty drink. We were guessing what it was when she asked us,

"Do you know what this is?" she queried.

"No, we don't know and we were about to ask."

This is called "Vishnukranthi" and this is available in these parts of the island, she said.

This is good. Is this all right for the human body?

Of course. I am an Ayurvedic doctor by profession and through generations. It is because this is really good that I have enlightened the people of these areas on its nutrient values and I have also prepared programs on the beneficial effects of these medicines.

Her words flowed like river waters meandering downstream. She is an Ayurvedic doctor by descent and she lives at Kaduwela. The location at which she met us was named Gonnoruwa in the Hambantota District where she had a program for the tsunami destitute. She is the team leader of an international NGO named Sri Lanka Solidarity in the Hambantota District. This program has also given her an opportunity to enhance her professional skills.

Sri Lanka Solidarity is a French International Organization which was formed to assist Tsunami disaster relief in Sri Lanka. One of the people who was instrumental in facilitating Sri Lanka Solidarity was Phillippe Fabry who along with some friends formed an emergency rescue team within the French Embassy in Sri Lanka to assist victims of the tsunami. He has been living in Sri Lanka since 1997 and has authored some books on Sri Lanka. His guide books on Jaffna and Anuradhapura, Biography of an island and also the recent book on Tovil was the publications done by his publication house.

Philippe's previous experience has been that of a Chief De Mission in an International Aid Organization in Pakistan, field operations in an Afghan refugee camp and together with his broad knowledge of Sri Lanka, has helped Sri Lanka Solidarity be recognized not only by French donors but also by the French Government. Sri Lanka Solidarity has undertaken housing projects in the Southern and Eastern Provinces.

There is also Lakshan Allan who manages the affairs of the organization in the south region. product of Wesley College, Colombo and is a resident of Kelaniya.

that Sri Lanka Solidarity has commenced is in the Hambantota District. This project in Hambantota, Koholankale in

Mayurapura is known as "Istouti", which in Sinhalese means: "Thank you."

This housing project is being constructed as an appreciation of the efforts of Sri Lankans who fought fearlessly to save the lives of the foreigners, mostly tourists during the tsunami carnage.

While we were having a discussion on the subject, a three wheeler arrived. The person who disembarked was a pleasant young man whose name was Sampath who was introduced by Lakshan.

"This is Sampath Epage, our site Engineer. He is the person who is responsible for the Engineering standards of this housing scheme"

It was our turn to be curious as to how an Engineer was travelling in a three wheeler scooter taxi and the reply to the question in this direction was as follows.

"The houses that we are building are for the people who have been displaced in the tsunami and we are not prepared to waste a single cent due to this. That is the reason why all of us travel about in this tri-shaw which is the only vehicle that we use in connection with our work here." What we want are not luxury vehicles to travel in but to create a habitat for these people to live comfortably and happily", he said.

That was truly incredible. It was an indelible impression of sacrifice of comforts for the common cause.

The Istouti Engineer Sampath Epage is a resident of Elpitiya. He is an Engineering Graduate of the University of Moratuwa and worked in the private sector. It was therefore with a wealth of experience that he decided to take on this challenge. The project is for 250 houses and the donors are: Ruhunu-Sabaragamu Disaster

Laique and Croix Rouge Belge. The project has been commenced on the initiative of the Diyawadana Nilame (the Chief Custodian of the Temple of the Tooth) Nilanga Dela Bandara. The donors are of the opinion that this is not merely a case of providing housing but also uplifting the lives of the victims.

The houses will also meet with Government standards. These houses are being constructed out of an environmentally friendly Terra brick now used in Colombo and suburbs. For comparison they are also building a house out of the traditional cement brick. The advantage of using this earth compressed soil brick is that the strength of the material will be stronger, the interior cooler, with a saving on cement, sand and construction time with low labour costs. Special design in these bricks facilitates easy plumbing and electrical wiring. These bricks will have only three bricks for one square foot. In this project each house will cost around 1 million rupees.

The person who leads the team of the local resource personnel is Vijitha Dias Abeyagunewardene. He is a frontline businessman and a product of Ananda College, Colombo.

The beneficiaries of these houses are those affected by the tsunami who lived in and around the Hambantota town.

The Hambantota district and town

has seen rapid economic growth. A few rivers meander across the district and the climate is arid. A section of the residents of the area depend on the salterns and the curd industry for a living. Those living in coastal areas, agriculture is also a thriving occupation in the hinterland.

It is with the same aggression that the tsunami devastated the district of Hambantota as it did the other areas of Sri Lanka, which has resulted in large portions of debris. A total of 4,500 lives were snatched within a few seconds. The disappeared have been

numbered as 963, while a majority of them are believed to be dead. The numbers of the dead are believed to have increased as that was also the day the Sunday Fair was held. There have been only 361 lives which have been saved with only injuries. The district also saw 3,334 families displaced. There are 574 families which have been housed at five refugee camps and some 17,168 others who have been housed among friends and relations. It is for these victims that the construction of the houses has begun in Koholankala. The Sri Lanka Solidarity's Istouti houses are constructed in this area. The sponsors of this are those organizations mentioned above.

This is not a mere housing project and all the environmental concerns have also been looked into. The environmental degradation is minimal. The beneficiaries will get houses which will be on 20 perches and will be 670 square feet in extent each. The natural vegetation has been retained to the maximum. The roofing is calicut tiles and the walls have been from Terra Bricks which has been constructed from sand, clay and cement which have been made under pressurized conditions. The houses have been constructed within a green belt and there is natural environmental shelter. The minimal use of wood is seen even in the construction of the roof. Timber used for doors and windows are from plantations and no jungle wood is used. There is also certain element of celebrity which will be added to the habitat with the cultivation of trees such as Pihimbiya, Kohomba and fruit trees Divul and Palu. It has also been made compulsory for all the houses to have a minimum of five specialized trees in their gardens and some of those include king coconut, orange, pomegranate and lime. The village has a cultural centre, Ayurveda centre, Pre school Market place playground, commercial centre and medical centre. A Fire Brigade is also in the pipeline. Some of the rest houses which have been constructed have also been similar to the Jambalayas of yore. The cost of one of these houses is

estimated at around a million Rupees. It is also noteworthy that there will be a radio station which has been agreed to be sponsored by Radio Sans Frontiers.

Lakshan also described the lifestyle that has been envisaged for the residents of the area which is named in accordance with environmental friendly guidelines. He said: "This is not just another housing project and it is our endeavor to get these people to live in an environmentally friendly habitat and a lifestyle which goes with it. This is not merely the development of physical resource but a lifestyle in a stable environment. We also hope to provide tap water while having collection centres for rain water. We hope to give them solar power while providing them with electricity."

Other environmental friendly economic programs also include the manufacture of compost. Chimneys of the houses as originally planned, will also be removed and roofs will be erected. If there are some chimneys, the people will also be encouraged to use firewood hearths thus the forests in the area will also be susceptible in the medium and long term. Therefore, there will be no smoke chimneys to avoid the environmental hazards. Thus, they will also be motivated to use gas stoves instead of firewood.

This is Sri Lanka's first planned village. They will be living in a pleasant habitat with fruits and flowers cultivated in their gardens. We were getting ready to leave as we met one of the beneficiaries.

His name is Tuan Hassan Annan. At the time of the tsunami devastation, he was thousands of miles away in the Kingdom of Kuwait. It was with the aim of providing his family with a higher quality of life that he worked as an expatriate in the Gulf region. He is 39 years and his mother SP Ayenona is 69 years old. His father is 73 year old Tuan Thalif Annan. His 46- year old elder brother Tuan Assan Annan was also there at the time of the tsunami. This

family which was resident in the Municipality houses had their house at Number 47.

It was with a deep sense of emotion that he said: "It was within the Municipal houses that we were living in and my father is a retired Forest Ranger. There were around 120 houses here and what was left were only around three. What were also left of them were only the foundations."

We had built our houses well as most of us were earning petro-dollars in the Middle East. We also had bedrooms with attached bathrooms and some of these houses have been air-conditioned as well. However, now only I am left

He was deeply touched and choking with emotion when he said that now only he was left, implying that his father, mother and brother had been swept away with the tsunami. The house too had been razed to the ground. There was no roof over his head on his return and there was no one to inquire after him when he returned.

He lives today in a cadjan hut with some of his friends. The need to rehabilitate their lives is also there and all support in this direction should also be there. "We must first have an initial place to stay and we could build up from there. Not like the luxury houses that we lived in.", he said.

"During the first half of 2005, Team leader Kusum said that she could provide us with housing facilities. We did not have motives as we were yearning for a house and that program has commenced which is a huge source of relief for all of us." He said.

He has lots of aspirations in life and the foundations that would lead to all that would be a house to live in. "I have bought a trishaw with the money that I saved overseas and the house which I will be Even now, his relations Mohamed Fameel and Rafaideen Rizamdeen live with him in a house which has been built with

wooden planks. All his aspirations will come true when he gets the house which is being constructed by Sri Lanka Solidarity.

We also met W. Jeyaratnam at the Municipal Sports Grounds who said that he too has commenced rebuilding his life after the devastation. He is 28 years old and he too had been living in his dwelling 4B at the housing scheme named Alokapura. He had been living with his mother and a cousin.

At the time of the devastation, Jeyaratnam was employed as a bus conductor on the Matara-Moneragala route. He says that he was able to save the lives of his family members as he was able to run fast! The fact that all his personal belongings were destroyed had been a terrible blow to him as he was reduced to an austere life. He says that it was after that he had to alter the course of his life.

"We were living in a camp which had safety problems for my mother and wife. When I was working in the Matara- Moneragala bus, there were days that I had to stay over and that was the reason why I had to leave the job as well. I bought a trishaw which provides for my daily expenses and I have to think far as I have a child as well", he said.

He said that brining up a child in a wooden planked house was difficult and that he too was looking forward to getting a house from Sri Lanka Solidarity which "will be the foundation on which the future of my life would be built", he said.

It is not only the provision of housing for the displaced that Sri Lanka Solidarity would be doing. It is also the uplifting of the livelihood of these victims and the empowerment of their lives with the provision of other facilities that the organization has striven for as well. It is in the areas of Beliatte and Waharakagoda in the Hambantota District that the organization has commenced a program of building boats. They built and donated 50 traditional sea crafts (Oruwa) manufactured at a cost of Rs. 92,000 each while

a motor boat is priced at Rs. 365,000 each and it has a 15 or 25 horse power engine. It is nineteen and a half feet in length. All these are given with nets and other required accessories. Another boat yard in operation in Ondachchimadam, Batticaloa with all female Technical team.

By the middle of 2006 SLS is planning to built 30 feet fully equipped multi day Boats both in the south and in the East.

By the middle of 2006 SLS is planning to built 30 feet fully equipped multi day Boats both in the south and in the East.

They have already handed over 35 boats and plan for a total of 150 boats. This project is sponsored by the French Association, REUNIR and LE25 ♦



04

VISIONS OF Earth

It was when the end of year 2004 was on the horizon, the fishing boat 'Hirushi Putha' began its fateful sea journey. Along with a few helpers, the small motor boat set sail at sunset, skippered by the 31 year old Samantha Kumara Fernando- a professional in the fishing industry. From the time he was born at Hiddoruwa in Kosgodra, the sea and the voyages at sea were an integral part of his life. He treasured his boat, the tool which helped him to earn his livelihood.

He was aware of the fact that he would have to spend a number of days on board. It was his practice usually to spend around a week or a fortnight with his colleagues at sea. On his return he would have about a week of leisure.

It was with the intention of spending the usual two weeks at sea that he set sail on December 24, 2004 as well. Then, he knew he would be able to catch a large haul of fish. Even Christmas Day was spent usually like any other day at sea. They cast the nets on that day as usual. On the 26th there was a radio message which announced that the sea had flooded into the country. Samantha and his colleagues did not take it seriously as this was something that was unheard of to all of them.

he message had come from the Trincomalee area. Naturally they were under the impression that there would not be any damage to the Southern coastal belt which was their hometown.

He was full of curiosity when he was listening to all the news broadcasts which announced the details of the tragedy. It was the Sinhalese service of the BBC which was also relaying reports about the destruction of the western and southern coastal belts. They also heard that thousands of people had died in the tragedy. It was then that Samantha and the crew aboard the Hirushi Putha began to panic.

Samantha radioed Beruwela and was informed that none of his family members were in danger. Even so, he wanted to sail back home as fast as he could. Then to his horror, he discovered that the boat engine would not start! It was when all attempts to restart the engine failed that they all realized that they were stranded in the middle of the sea.

They knew that they had to wait patiently until someone came to their rescue. In the meantime they had to survive on the food they had with them on board. Even after a few days at sea, there seemed to be no solution in sight despite all the radio messages that were transmitted from the boat. The food stocks were also gradually dwindling. They realized that the vessel had been drifting towards Maldives but their hearts were restless, wondering what fate had befallen their loved ones back home.

By the time the help arrived, it was during the wee hours of January 14. On their return journey they saw the debris on the southern coast. It was then that they realized that the devastation was far more severe than they ever expected.

As soon as they landed on shore, Samantha who had been frantic about the whereabouts of his family and friends began to inquire after them. His wife, 31 year old Amara Perera Gunaratne was pregnant again, after their one year old

child. He was informed that she and his parents had been relegated to refugee camps.

"My whole house had been destroyed. All the goods that my wife brought from overseas when she was in the Middle East, was also destroyed. I felt that all our sweat and tears had been of no use. I was totally disillusioned. It was at that stage that the volunteers from Leo Hope arrived. It was through their gesture of goodwill that we were able to survive and come up to what we are today", says Samantha.

Samantha was living in the Balapitiya Electorate of the Galle District at Hiddoruwa Gnana Wimala Mawatha. His residence was at 17A of the Kosgoda Grama Sevaka Division which was on the coast. There were around 500 families which were displaced. 69 lives were lost and 3000 people were sent to camps which were outside the area.

The tsunami destitute were swarmed with problems. Most of their loved ones had gone missing. There were also some whose dead bodies could not be found even to perform the final funeral rites. All that signified stability in the minds of the devastated villagers were gone and they had no hope or idea as to how they could face the future. What was left in their minds was a flash of destruction and the unpleasant memories of the tragedy.

The people who were so hopeless and helpless were gathered into refugee camps. The displaced in the Gnana Wimala Mawatha were placed at the Galge Senasana Aranya, Miriswatte Temple, Ganegodella Temple, Hegalle Abhinavarama Temple. All their earnings and the savings had been washed away with the tsunami waves. They had lost all their household belongings, their clothes, the books and toys of the children and what was there within their households. What was left was only the clothes that they were wearing. What could be heard were their sighs and the sobs. They pondered on the future with morbid fear. There was only a question mark as to what the future held for them.

The usually active inhabitants of Kosgoda were destroyed within split seconds. They had been fearless in the past. They had faced all challenges with fortitude. It should also be recalled that they faced the 1953 Harthal without any fear. But the tsunami waves had dealt them such a devastating blow and had left their lives torn to shreds. Their daunting challenge was how to restart their lives in many ways, especially economically.

There were a large number of private sector institutions which were also destroyed along with the houses at Gnanawimala Mawatha. Among these was a holiday bungalow constructed in 1999, belonging to the Managing Director of Leo Burnett.

Leo Burnett is one of the frontline advertising agencies in Sri Lanka. They rank among the first five among 150 advertising agencies in Sri Lanka.

Leo Burnett Worldwide operates a global network of over 200 operating units across 81 markets, including 92 full service advertising agencies. The Sri Lanka office commenced operations on June 1, 1999 and has since become a force to be reckoned with in the Sri Lankan communications industry.

The field of advertising and media is a very challenging one. It is also very competitive. It is not all the advertisement that is in the print or electronic media that is appealing to all. An advertisement should be simple which should capture the attention of the audiences to which they are meant for. This is a professional field which is advancing every moment all the time. The new techniques which come into the market should be innovative, creative and be consumer friendly. These were the strong foundations on which the Leo Burnett core was built on.

The foundations that Leo Burnett was built upon were strong and that has been the cornerstone of the success in Sri Lanka which could be also attributed for their going from strength to strength.

The corporate entity's human and physical strength had grown from year to year and the monumental success within such a short period of time.

The agency's staff strength and their performance in the country's communication industry have grown from year to year and the agency has become a monumental success within a short period of time.

The first print advertisement by Leo Burnett Sri Lanka was published in a Sunday newspaper on August 1, 1999. The next year it won two awards at the Sri Lanka Institute of Marketing Awards ceremony. From then onwards, it has won 33 Gold Medals and an overall Medal's tally of 100. There are over 60 staff members in the Colombo office and five part time consultants. There are a large number of state and private sector institutions among its esteemed clients.

The Leo Burnett staff arrived in Kosgoda to determine the damage to their MD's holiday bungalow and to check on the staffers who were employed to look after the house. The Burnetters were shocked by the sight that greeted them. The complete devastation of the usually tranquil village moved them into spontaneous action. The need to do something to help the villagers was translated into rescue operation of a different kind.

Somapala Silva, who was one of the victims of the tsunami on that day, said that Leo Burnett was one of the few institutions which came to their rescue.

"They initially began with the supply of foodstuffs for all the people of the area on a fortnightly basis which also included milk food for the children. Until they provided us with our homes on September 27, 2005 they looked after our every need" he said.

With Somapala were his 54 year old wife and his 36 year old son. Their grandchildren Gaya Madhushan(15), Chanika Madhushani(10), and Charnika Harshani(8), were also with them. Somapala didn't have a permanent job. His son was fishing at

sea or any other form of vocation which enabled the family to survive. It was a clay house which sheltered all of them. All their belongings including the house was destroyed by the tsunami. All of them were in a refugee camp inside a temple in the immediate aftermath of the tsunami and then they were in a private wooden planked house which was provided by a private sector company.

Somapala, who was living in a temporary shelter, heard the first piece of good news on 11th March 2005. That was the day it was confirmed that Leo Burnett was building a house for him compensating for his own house lost in the tsunami.

During this time a sense of trust and a channel of two way communication were formed with the Leo Burnett team and him. This relationship only grew stronger as the months went by.

Now what you see is a dramatic transformation. Today he is the owner of a modern house which has enabled him to provide a comfortable life for his wife, and their second daughter Naveesha Aravinda who is now eight months old.

The damage by the tsunami in the entire Galle District was unprecedented. There were 4,193 people who were displaced and a further 569 disappeared. A total number of 313 victims sustained injuries but managed to save their lives. There were 6,958 displaced people in the district. And a total of 7,500 houses were totally destroyed while a further 5,966 houses were partially damaged. The Leo Burnett team was involved in this rehabilitation project in the Kosgoda area in the Galle District.

The Leo Hope Trust which was established for this project with financial assistance from both foreign and local supporters commenced the building of the houses in March 2005. Leo Hope ensured the title deeds were clear and went through the normal procedures of building; such as obtaining clearance from all local authorities before construction began. There were 71 families which

were looked after by this project while 69 houses have already been built. Somapala was one of the 320 beneficiaries. Of them 93 were children.

Children are the future of a nation. It was the children who suffered most in the wake of the tsunami. It was not only their books and homes which were destroyed but their schools as well. Furthermore, the tsunami took with it thousands of parents.

The education of the children needed to be provided. Their innate and inherent talents also needed to be developed. It was also important for extra curricular activities to be introduced to take away the trauma of the tsunami from their young minds. It was in the best interests of the country that their education had to be harnessed to improve the overall social landscape of the country and the nation. It was also shown that such a program should be devised for not only for the 93 kids at Gnanawimala Mawatha but for all these children who suffered with the arrival of the tsunami in Sri Lanka.

A playground for the area was another aspiration of the Leo team. The need for providing swings, climbing frames, see saws and other play equipment was also identified to be essential in the recovery process of the children. It was by building and handing over a play ground for the children of Kosgoda that Leo Burnett was listed as one of the corporate institutions which provided sports equipment and infrastructure for tsunami victims. This exercise began with the search of an apt piece of land for the purpose. The ideal land in the vicinity belonged to the temple of the area. When the intentions of the Leo Hope project were made known, the Chief Priest of the temple most generously gifted the land for the playground to be constructed. This exemplified a true act of altruism

The tsunami has taken many lives. Nenawathi says with profound sorrow that she has lost her brother in the killer waves. She completed the last funeral rites after finding his body in the Uragaha mortuary while she stayed with one of her

sisters and subsequently moved to a temporary shelter. It was thanks to the Leo Burnett team that she was gifted with a house which she could now say is her own. "This is a real dream," she enthuses.

David Silva, who was also a tsunami victim, adopted a different lifestyle prior to the catastrophe. He derived his earnings from cattle farming. He had seven bulls and four cows. He also had a cart. His wife is 33 year old Nandawathi Silva. Their sons are Sarath(16), Priyantha(12) Buddhika(10) and Sanduni(3). Despite their leading an average lifestyle, the tsunami had inflicted tremendous hardships on this family of four children. David was economically dependent on the cattle and the cart which were totally destroyed. They were faced with the worst tragedy of their lives.

They first came to the refugee camp at the second mile post near the Uranman Handiya. Then they went to a temporary shelter. There was no economic livelihood. It was the Leo Burnett team who sustained them. First he was given a tractor. He was also given a donation of Rs. 200,000 to rebuild his house. David's wife says that every morning, he never forgets to bless the Leo Burnett team after worshipping the Buddha.

The first priority of the Leo Burnett team was to attend to the immediate needs of the devastated community. Then the priority changed to providing homes for the community. The houses that were completed were complete in every sense of the word. They were not just built to a set plan. The opinions of the owners were sought regarding their individual preference where the roofing, flooring and the plan of the house were concerned. As long as they fitted into the basic plan and the predetermined cost, all their individual preferences were accommodated. In fact even the painting of the houses was done according to their choice of colours. All amenities such as water on tap and electricity were also supplied to every home.

The six families that were affected who were within the 100 metre buffer zone were not forgotten by the Leo Hope project. e 70 perches of land located further inland were bought and the six families were given their new homes creating a new community.

P. Linser(65) of Gdawimala Mawatha was also a tsunami victim. His house was partially destroyed. His wife Jayawathi Mendis(60), son Sunil(35), daughter-in-law Ramya Mendis(30), grandson Suneth Priyantha (8) and grand daughter Sudeshika Rasanjali(6) are the other members of the immediate family. The Leo team also assisted them in the rebuilding of their house.

The coordinator of the housing project was 26- year old Yagamuni Rajiva De Zoysa. Rajiva's mother is 63 year old Ruslin Nona Silva. He has two brothers. 23 year old Chaminda Zoysa is his younger brother while 29- year old Kumudu Sanjeewa is the elder. Rajiva was also the caretaker of the holiday bungalow. That was why the coordination of the process was easier for him. He says that this was a great merit to be associated with the project. He is immensely satisfied that he was in a position to help the villagers of his home town.

Building homes is not the only service that the Leo team has done in the area. Self employment generation actively also came within the scope of their work. They provided five fishing boats and equipment such as the fishing nets in Association with The Sri Lanka Irish Trust Fund.

Whatever the protection and resistance offered against the destructive Tsunami waves was thankfully to the sand dunes and the mangroves which enabled certain areas to be cushioned by the impact of the killer tsunami waves. The beaches those surround the areas of Kosgoda and Balapitiya are flat land with only a minimal elevation difference between the beaches and the sea. Therefore the Leo Hope project coordinators were acutely conscious of this fact during their rebuilding process. This led them to initiate the Vtakeiya planting programme.

While educating the villagers of the importance of preserving the natural vegetation of the area, the Leo Hope team took the lead in replanting Vetakeiya plants along the coast of the Hiddoruwa village and encouraged the villagers to join them in the project. For this purpose hundreds of Vetakeiya plants were distributed free amongst the villagers.

While providing housing and other amenities was the ultimate target of the Leo Hope team, the economic empowerment of the people was the other. This was coupled with other identified goals- education of the environment, helping in the normalization of the children and the encouragement of appreciating basic human values within the basic framework of the community.

The team started by providing meals and dry rations to the victims of the area in the immediate aftermath of tsunami on 26th December 2004. It had also provided housing and other facilities by 27th September 2005. This is indeed special as a private sector company has voluntarily provided housing for the tsunami victims. The holiday home that was the primary reason for all this activity still lies desolate as an embodiment of the destruction which took place two years ago. However, what could be seen all around are the smiles of contented people. They have restarted their lives living once again. The children are going to school. One of the major cornerstones of this success is that the feeling of despondency which prevailed within the community has been removed.

Then there was Ashoka who was near the holiday home carrying a child. He said: "We are eternally grateful to the people of Leo Hope and we remember them always with gratitude.

We are able to live our lives today due to their support" Behind him was a hoarding which said, "We are now going. The project is now over - Leo Hope." But Leo Hope will live on, every day in the hearts of everyone touched by it. ♦





05

Dreams OF REALITY

Moratuwa is one of the most densely populated cities in Sri Lanka. It has been renowned for manufacture of furniture. It is also with the same sentiment that the age old adage was spelt out that trees unknown to each other, also meet at Moratuwa!! While the wood work and the carpentry industries work well at the Moratuwa town, it is also a major livelihood for a majority of the Moratuwa city's inmates.

Moratuwa also stakes it claims for a series of hallmarks. Principal of them is the coastline of which Mt. Lavinia, Ratmalana, Angulana, Lunawa, Moratuwa, Korallawella, Egoda Uyana are the cities through which the Colombo- Matara railway line runs as well. It is also in this coastal line that there are a large number of middle class houses and semi scale business enterprises as well.

The Lunawa lagoon is also a special part of the Moratuwa town. It spans around 40 hectares between the Galle Road and the beach. It is around 2000 metres in length and 150 metres in breadth. Around four decades ago, it has been accepted as a Low Country wetland eco- system as well.

It is also in this backdrop that this background has been acclaimed for its immense contribution to the tourism and fisheries

industries while also serving as a buffer zone. There is also a perception that those who bathe at the estuary where the Moratuwa River falls on to the sea have certain illnesses cured as well.

It was also in the decade beginning in the 1970s that the lagoon started deteriorating. It is due to the city of Moratuwa being rapidly being industrialized and in the process of industrial effluents being discharged that the lagoon started deteriorating.

There are around 18,000 houses bordering the lagoon in which over 100,000 live. There is also a special Coast Conservation Department program which aims to uplift the lives of the people there as well.

Another special creation of nature is the Bolgoda Lake which borders the cities of Moratuwa, Panadura and Piliyandala as it meanders to Bandaragama as well. It is due to this that the domestic and environmental tourism have also developed. It is also due to this that there have been a large number of tourist resorts have developed while there have been a large number of tourists and environmentalists who come to see migratory birds, go fishing and boat rides for recreation.

There is also a massive diversity of religions and ethnic diversity as well. It is also the educational and religious centres which have also brought about the present fame of the city of Moratuwa.

Christmas was always a hive of celebration at Moratuwa. The year 2004 was also the same at predominantly Christian and Catholic areas such as Dehiwela, Mt. Lavinia, Ratmalana, Egoda Uyana, Rawathawatte where all the people in the coastal belt enjoyed their Christmas that year in a backdrop of peace and prosperity, oblivious to what was in store of them in a day. What most did not realize was that it was the last Christmas celebration for some.

The people of Moratuwa also were added to the list of the scores of the tsunami victims. While there were only 79 deaths reported in the Colombo district which was the least among all the districts, what was conspicuous was the loss and damage to private and state property. The angry sea waves took away the personal and official property, housing, business establishments without any discrimination. They too question among themselves as to why the sea was so harsh and cruel to them on that day in what was otherwise seen as a very calm and tranquil sea.

Henricus Fernando is a businessman from Moratuwa. He is a social worker as well. He is a member of the Lions Club 306A1 and rose through the ranks of office within this international club to be its Chairman. He was performing a series of functions which were adding value to the lives of the inhabitants of the Moratuwa area at the time that the tsunami shattered his area as well. The major challenge that he was faced with was the resurrection of the lives, the lifestyles of the people of the Moratuwa area after the advent of the tsunami. He is a true leader in the improvement and the influencing of the lives of the people.

The tsunami was a catastrophe which devastated the lives of the people in the Asian region which originated from an earthquake 1238 kilometers which resulted in a high tide of epic proportions. This was given worldwide publicity through the international media, which was being telecast, broadcast and published worldwide as millions of Christians were yet celebrating their Christmas in other parts of the world. While the carnage took place just five days prior to the New Year of 2005, there was a wave of international sympathy on Sri Lanka as well.

There was no end to the incoming calls that Henricus was receiving on his telephone. The first was his daughter. He said: "Thaththi, aren't you in trouble? To which he replied: "I am not in danger, but there are a large number of people who are in danger."

Another telephone call from a nephew. "Uncle Henry, I hope all is all right with you. To which is response was: "The situation is very serious here where there are a large number of people who are dead. The houses and property has been destroyed while there are also a large number of people who have been displaced."

There were a large number of conversations which were exchanged within the next few days on the events which were unfolded during the Boxing Day tsunami. There was the exchange of information among the relations and the immediate kith and kin of the affected by this monumental danger. There were the telephones which were also ringing entailing inquiries as to what sorts of assistance could be provided for the destitute. This was indeed a very decisive call.

This telephone call was from the United States, thousands and thousands of miles away. The caller was one of Henry's relations- Father Alexis Fernando who is the head of a Catholic Church there.

He said: "There is an extensive television coverage of the events which have been happening in Colombo and there are a large number of telephone calls which I have been receiving from the people here as they are aware of the fact that I am from Sri Lanka. They are willing to help and I can collect all the funds and bring to Sri Lanka. I am also sorry for this mass destruction and we could get together to assist the poor victims. I will be coming to Sri Lanka anyway and we could do something.."

That was the end of the telephone conversation. These words were reverberating in the minds of Henricus and he too thought that there could be some modes of assistance to the victims that he too could be a part of, he told himself.

Henricus too did not realize that this was a part of a major transformation which was in the pipeline. He perceived that life

was all about facing unseen and unexpected challenges. The Moratuwa Pradeshiya Sabha had 6172 persons who were displaced by the tsunami who were in 20 refugee centres. There were also ten additional centres in the Moratuwa area which were in Piliyandala and Panadura which housed 1500 refugees. Thus there were the shortcomings and the needs of the people in those camps, especially the needs and wants of children.

He commenced a system of collection of essentials for these people which were distributed among the people. They were food, clothes, garments and clothes, blood transfusions for those in need of these supplies, spectacles, wheel chairs, children's' parks, scholarships, health camps among a host of others. There were large gifts of equipment for self employment projects, provision of kitchen utensils etc.

Father Alexis Fernando arrived in Sri Lanka as scheduled. He had brought over the million Sri Lankan Rupees that he had pledged over the telephone before. He saw for himself from his naked eye on arrival in Sri Lanka what he had seen over the television screen there. Henricus who joined the priest at the end of the tour said: "It will be good of you can provide the assistance for some of the housing. He said that they could provide two houses to which the priest said that he will provide assistance for more than two houses which was the commencement of the building of houses for eight houses of the Lions Club sponsored contribution to the people of Moratuwa.

This was the manner in which the Lions Club housing project was commenced and that too fewer than two stages. The Phase I had eight houses which was on a four storeyed complex. There were also the services of a Chartered Architect and a former Chairman of the Lions Club that Henricus received during the course of the project and whose guidance was sought and implemented.

The President and Members of the Lions Club of Moratuwa decided to construct a housing complex for Tsunami affected families of Moratuwa and made necessary arrangements to find a suitable

land to construct these houses. The President of the Lions Club of Moratuwa, Lion Henricus Fernando was successful in getting a bare land on the Lunawa Government Hospital premises through the Urban Development Authority.

The Memorandum of Understanding was signed between the Ministry of Urban Development Authority and Water Supply and Lions Club of Moratuwa on 3 March 2005. This was the brainchild of Lion Henricus and he was instrumental in finding donors from Sri Lanka, United States of America and the United Kingdom. The Lion President found the first donor a Moratuwa citizen, who is a Catholic Priest Rev. Fr. Alexis Fernando presently a citizen of United States of America, who lavishly donated rupees one Million towards this Moratuwa Tsunami housing project.

Through this Catholic Priest Lion President Henricus Fernando received another Sri Lankan donor family from California USA who donated rupees one and half million towards this Lions Tsunami housing project.

With these monies the Moratuwa Lions laid the foundation stone with Rev. Fr. Alexis Fernando and some of the members of the Lions Club of Moratuwa who were present at this simple ceremony on 15 March 2005. After clearing all obstacles the Club started to put up the building on 5 May 2005.

To swell the funds, past President Lion Christie Fernando extended his services to this worthwhile cause of building houses of Moratuwa Tsunami victims by contacting his friends in Wales in the United Kingdom in collecting funds. Some friends of Henricus who formerly residents of Moratuwa presently residing in Wales in the United Kingdom personally visited Sri Lanka and assisted in handing over collections received from the Sri Lankan Association in Wales in the United Kingdom, to the tune of rupees one million and three hundred thousand. Further the Lion President received another handsome donation of rupees one

million from His Lordship the Rt. Rev. Dr. Vianney Fernando Bishop of Kandy Diocese and also from Rev. Fr. George Sigamani of SETIK. The President received another donation from The Danish Friends of Denmark. The Indian Society of South Wales, Mr Stefan Szymanska from UK and Lion's Past Governor contributed to the project.

The Architectural design and supervision was done by a Chartered Architect and Past President of Lions Club of Moratuwa Lions Tsunami Housing Complex has been completed within a period of six months.

This four-storied building with eight apartments is complete with Water, Electricity and Drainage. Each is comprised of two Bedrooms, a Living area, a small Verandah and a Kitchen, and has an attached Bathroom and a Toilet. A separate chute is constructed to collect the garbage in this housing complex. Each of these units has a Floor area of 625 sq.ft. A very valuable donation has been arranged by the Leo Club of Moratuwa.

To donate a Bed with Mattress, a Mosquito Net, a complete Dressing Table with a Mirror and a kerosene Cooker, to all eight recipients of this Moratuwa Tsunami Housing Complex.

A similar Housing Complex Phase-II of eight units at the same premises will commence before the end of this year and will be completed within five months, bringing the total number of houses for Moratuwa Tsunami victims to sixteen units, where the total expenditure will amount to a total of Rupees Nineteen Million.

The ceremonial opening of phase I of eight apartments was held on 26 November 2005 under the distinguished patronage of District Governor Lions International District 306A1.

One of the residents of the upper floors is Sumith Stanley Martinus who is also another beneficiary. His wife is Devika Fernando. His three children are Dimeesha, Sanduni and Viraj. The house that they were living at Egoda Uyana had been

completely shattered by the tsunami. It was by a miracle that their lives were saved. He said: "We are indeed grateful to the Lions Club of Moratuwa for having given us some housing and especially in the light of 145 families in the Vijitha Mawatha at Egoda Uyana and 189 families at Borupana Salusalawatte are yet without any housing after the devastation ."

All these recipients are living in housing gifted to them. They maintain their houses very effectively and that is something that Henricus is very satisfied with. He has a sense of fulfillment each time he sees those houses and he believes that the happiness of the recipients is also his happiness.

Henricus is also satisfied that the Lions Club of Moratuwa was successfully able to complete this project and provide housing to the eight families devoid of discrimination in terms of class, race and a host of others. This, he says, was the most challenging project that the Club had undertaken in recent times. This is also the first of the projects that the Club had undertaken.

It is also moot to note that at the end of a year after the tsunami, there were only 930 houses which had been completed and handed over out of 49,233 which had been targeted. There were 5998 houses which have been destroyed by the tsunami in the Colombo district. It was decided to construct 1993 houses under the first phase. There were 2765 houses which were destroyed in the Moratuwa Divisional Secretariat area alone. It was also reported that 791 of these were under the stage of reconstruction. The housing scheme of 96 houses at Hilda's Lane at Dehiwela is almost nearing completion and it is a matter of time that they will be handed over to the recipients. There are 192 houses at the Food Commissioner's Department which is based on eight storeyed buildings which are also nearing completion. It is also proposed that there would be 192 houses within the Moratuwa Pradeshiya Sabha premises at Lunawa which will be sponsored by Red Cross.

Officials also say that there are more houses under construction in the Modera and the Mattakkuliya areas.

The Lions Club of Moratuwa has also handed over a set of houses which have been built in the premises of the Lunawa Hospital premises. The second phase of this project will also be completed soon.

All the blessings and the wishes of these projects go to Henry Fernando. He was the pioneer of these projects. He has managed to successfully complete them which has been instrumental in the reshaping and the enlightening of the lifestyles of all these people which also includes the educational facilities of the children of these victims as well ♦



07

Benefits

BEYOND BOUNDARIES

It is a pleasure to travel on the A-2 (Colombo-Katara road), which is Sri Lanka's most widely used coastal highway., the traveler can observe some of the most attractive spots in the island on this scenic stretch.

A person starting his journey from Colombo will come across the historic sacred town of Kalutara and the Southern Capital of Galle. Passing Galle he will encounter Weligama, which is noted for both its aesthetic value and historical importance. In the third Century BC a sapling of the Sacred Bo-Tree was planted in the premises of what is now the Agrabodhi Raja Maha Vihara in Weligama, according to the ancient Chronicle Mahawansa. The Vihara has been built during the reign of King Agrabodhi (AD 667-683) who ruled Ruhuna. The fresh water pond at Weligama has been cited in the ancient literary works such as Parevi Sandeshaya, Mayura Sandeshaya, Kokila Sandeshaya and Thisara Sandeshaya, is however no more, as a result of sea erosion.

In ancient times, the Weligama fisheries harbour was known as a port for imports and exports. Among the items exported from here were cinnamon and other spices. Its importance lies in the fact that it is a natural harbour.

Located about five km off the Weligama-Akuressa highway was the historic Nuga tree of Denipitiya, which was cited in the poetry of Gajaman Nona, the well-known Poetess of Ruhuna. Despite public protests the tree was felled in February 2002 by the local authority, which gave various reasons for doing so. However a section of the tree survived.

Found in the vicinity of Weligama are historic Buddhist temples such as Gangarama, Rajakulawadana Raja Maha Vihara and Kushtarajagala. The Kapparatota Mosque is another religious landmark and a symbol of Sinhala-Muslim amity in the area.

Weligama became an independent administrative zone in 1939. The extent of the Weligama town is 2.6 square miles and the number of voters is 13,288. In 1981, the population within the Weligama Urban Council limits was 17,722 and it increased to 21,698 by 2001. Of this number 10,609 are males and 11,099 are females. The expansion of the urban population was 4,094 persons per kilometer.

The beautiful Count De Mauny's islet - also known as Galdoowa - off the coast of Weligama town is a major tourist attraction for both foreigners and locals. The castle - like magnificent mansion on the islet can be seen from the mainland. The building has unique architectural features and the specially constructed entrance to the premises is the cynosure of all eyes. The mansion's first owner was a Frenchman Count De Mauny and the islet was named after him.

Near the coastal highway facing Count De Mauny's islet is the awe-inspiring statue of a great man erected in memory of a great Philanthropist Mudaliyar David Martin Samaraweera. Born on March 10, 1855, he performed a laudable service for the development of Weligama and to uplift the living conditions of the people of the area. Among his accomplishments are Buddhist

temples such as Samaraweeramaya and schools like Siddhartha Vidyalaya. He gave the lands for these buildings and undertook their construction. Mudaliyar Samaraweera passed away on February 2, 1943.

Among his descendants who have served Weligama is his great grandson Sujith Jayawickreme, who was born in 1956 - the year in which a major socio-political transformation occurred in Sri Lanka. He, the past student of St. Thomas College Mount Lavinia is a philanthropist and a proprietary planter, who entered the field of planting when he was only 17 years old. He served as a Superintendent under the J.E.D.B. for over ten years. Having also served in a number of other state establishments, he has engaged full time in his own estate since 1988. He met his future wife Susanne, a German journalist - then working for a leading German newspaper - when she was holidaying in Kapparatota. They married in 1994 and Susanne settled down in Weligama. Susanne continues as freelance journalist, writing to several German and English language newspapers, also those in Sri Lanka.

In order to streamline their social service activity, Sujith and Susanne established the Jayawickreme Foundation in 2001. The Jayawickreme Foundation began its welfare work by helping poor rural families. At a time when all kinds of dubious organizations calling themselves were mushrooming in the country, the Jayawickreme Foundation commenced work as a charity. It has expanded its sphere from Welipitiya Divisional Secretarial Division to Weligama Divisional Secretarial Division and continues to assist poverty-stricken families.

The Foundation initiated a rural banking system, which today successfully caters to over 1,000 poor people. The Jayawickreme Foundation built 28 houses for poor families since 2002 and earlier in 2002 the Foundation began free evening English language classes for children of Charley Mount estate villages, Weligama. Today more than 270 children are attending free of charge classes in the

Jayawickreme Foundation Education Centre in Denipitiya. The Foundation has also donated many Sunday school uniforms to more than 10 Sunday schools.

In 2004, Sujith and Susanne planned to celebrate Christmas at the Yala Safari Hotel, where they had been celebrating Christmas on December 24-25 every year since 1994, the year they married. It was part of their annual programme. So as usual they went to Yala Safari the manager of which, Upali Weerasinghe, had become a friend of theirs over the years. Most tourists who visited Yala National Park stayed overnight at this well-known hotel in the park, which faced the sea. Towards the end of December, this hotel is usually packed with tourists. But upon visiting the hotel in December 2004 Sujith and Susanne were surprised to find that unlike in the past there were no special items added to the place to mark Christmas - not even a Christmas tree. When they asked Manager Weerasinghe for the reason his reply was that he did not feel like having anything special for Christmas that year. The couple was even more disappointed when the manager said that he could not provide them with any accommodation since the hotel was full.

There was no alternative for Sujith and Susanne but to leave the place after wishing all those who were there a merry Christmas. It was the first time in 10 years that the couple did not have the opportunity of celebrating the event at Yala Safari. The two of them however promised to return to the hotel in March 2005.

So Sujith and Susanne spent December 24-25, 2004 at a Tissamaharama hotel and prepared to return home the following day - Dec. 26 - around 8.00 a.m. While Susanne was packing the bags Sujith went to cashier's counter to settle the bills, when his attention was drawn to the nearby TV set that was showing an international cricket encounter in which Sri Lanka was participating. Delaying the payment of bills for a few minutes, he sat there to watch the match. While seated there he noticed that a safari jeep

that had gone to the Yala National Park returning to the rest house at break-neck speed. When the vehicle came to a halt, Sujith found that the driver was so terrified that he was finding it difficult to speak. At last he was able to explain what happened.

"Sir, we were at Yala when a gigantic wave came from the sea. Everything was destroyed. Only the water tank of Yala Safari remains. We turned our vehicles back and drove so fast that we do not know the speed at which we returned until we stopped here. Everyone there is dead. Sir, I cannot understand what happened."

Realizing that sea waves had caused a massive disaster, Sujith prepared to leave immediately after settling the bills. Meanwhile he came to know that the sea had devastated the entire southern coast. Although the couple first thought of rushing back to their hometown of Weligama, they could not bring themselves to do so when they remembered the number of local and foreign guests to whom they had wished a merry Christmas at Yala Safari. So they went instead to the Debarawewa government hospital where they found the bodies of a large number of victims, children, adults and even some of their friends, and also came across survivors who were being medically treated. Immediately Sujith and Susanne went about helping them and providing required items. They also informed about the foreign victims to the German Embassy, which in turn could convey the message to the relevant foreign missions. Having spent the whole of December 26 at Tissamaharama, the two of them set off for Weligama, the following day.

Since the coastal highway via Hambantota - Tangalle was blocked they were compelled to travel via Thanamalwila - Sooriyawewa while realizing that the two of them had been unexpectedly saved twice from a tragic end, perhaps because they had done no wrong to others but helped them. The first instance of this miraculous escape was that no accommodation was available for them at the Yala Safari Hotel. The second was that they had

decided to stay back at Tissamaharama to help victims instead of rushing back to Weligama along the coast on the morning of December 26th.

After reaching Weligama on December 27th Sujith and Susanne saw the destruction caused to life and property in their hometown. There was neither telecommunication nor power supply. Sujith highly commended the emergency services that the Sri Lanka Air Force and other units of the armed forces performed in their hour of disaster.

Since the National Disaster Management Centre was only collecting and distributing day-to-day needs of the surviving tsunami victims, it had not worked out any specific assistance programme. Hence the Centre was directing individuals and organizations that were ready to assist to the nearest Divisional Secretaries.

The whole of Weligama had turned into a funeral house, since it was the second worst tsunami-hit area in the Matara District. The number of dead in the village of Pelena, Weligama was 133. Nineteen of them were Pelena North Grama Niladhari Division, 71 from Pelena South GN Division and 43 from Pelena West GN Division. In addition to Pelena, loss of many lives and destruction to property were reported from other areas. Although 25 camps were set up for those whom the tsunami had rendered homeless, initially they had not even clothes to wear.

In view of this the Jayawickreme Foundation decided to take immediate relief measures to restore normalcy to the area as far as possible. The first step was the quick distribution of food items the Jayawickreme Foundation purchased from nearby grocery shops. Around the same time the Foundation was able to distribute clothing to the surviving victims with the generous contributions that Sujith and Susan's friends in the garment industry made.

As a long-term measure the Jayawickreme Foundation also took steps under the guidance of the Weligama Divisional Secretary

to provide houses for those who were rendered homeless. By now 19 Tsunami houses have been completed in the Weligama AGA Division. Many more are expected.

Fifty-five-year-old Wengappuli Arachchige Dionel, is one of the recipients who were provided with houses by the Jayawickreme Foundation. He is now residing with his family in his new home at No.49/18A, Gangarama Road, Pelena. Living with him are his wife Somawathie(45) and daughters Sandamali Nadeeka(25), Chathurika Nadeeshani(23), Wasanthi Chaturani(19) and Chethika Shasendrani (11) who is a year six student at the Dharmapala Model Junior School.

They are still fearful when recalling their miraculous escape from the tsunami. On that fateful day Dionel had gone to Weligama town leaving his wife Somawathie and daughters at home. When the tidal waves struck, the mother and daughters had embraced each other and ran to safety in the nick of time. It was their luck that they all stayed together. But they could not save their house, furniture or anything else in it. Their next move was to rush to Weligama town to look for Dionel who had saved his life by climbing the hill near the Weligama railway station. The emotional scene, when his wife and daughters found him cannot be described in words. Their only possessions were the clothes they wore. They spent that night at the displaced people's camp at the Welihinda Temple and later spent several days at camps at the Denipitiya and the Polwatte Junior schools.

All they were thinking at the time was building a new home. But Dionel did not have any land of his own to do so. Then a young woman in their village who was employed abroad purchased a block of land for them with her money. It is on this six-perch block the family is now residing. Dionel built the foundation of the new house with state assistance but had no cash to go any further. It is then that the Jayawickreme Foundation came to his assistance. He remembers with gratitude Sujith and Susanne and the

Venerable Pelvehera Susima who coordinated the work on building his new home, which has a space of over 500 square feet. It is now a complete house, which has also been supplied

Although Dionel has been a mason he is now seldom engaged in it as a result of an eye surgery he underwent. It is his daughters who are now engaged in helping the family. His elder daughter, Sandamali Nadeeka currently employed in a garment factory, shoulders a major part of this responsibility.

Many were those who lost their lives or their loved ones in the tsunami.

Among those who faced this tragedy is a fisherman, Lokuliyana Shirley Sanath Mendis(30) of 71B, Gangarama Road, Pelena, Weligama. His wife is Nalika Sudarshini(28) and their two children are Nimesh(6) and Lasith(2). The tsunami claimed the lives of seven of Shirley's close relatives who were living in their ancestral home. They were his parents - father Ariyadasa Mendis(73), mother Anulawathie de Silva(62) - elder brother Ajith (38), younger sister Chamila Jayanthi(28), Ajith's son Lahiru, Shirley's elder sister Shirani Damayanthi's son Priyankara and Chamila Jayanthi's one-year-old daughter Piyumi Tharaka.

At the time the tidal waves hit Weligama, Shirani Damayanthi was about to give birth to her second child. When she began experiencing labour pains at home on Dec. 26th morning her husband went to meet the doctor and thereafter fetch a vehicle to rush her to hospital. As the tsunami struck she was swept out of a window of her house. This however saved her life and that of the baby in the womb but her son, Priyankara, was not so fortunate. Damayanthi's husband escaped death because he had gone to meet the doctor. On the same day she gave birth to her second child (a boy) who was named after the son who died in the tsunami. Shirley believes that it was the newborn child's luck that his mother's life was saved after being swept out of the window.

The unbelievable tragedy of losing a number of relatives in one single moment had left Shirley utterly shocked and dazed. It was at this moment that the Venerable Pelvehera Susima had come to his help and obtained the Jayawickreme Foundation's assistance in building a new home for Shirley's family. But to build a house a secure block of land was necessary. However he managed to solve the problem by getting a part of the land that belonged to his parents. So with the foundation's help they were able to complete the house and move into their new home by February 4, 2006.

According to his wife Nalika, although at times, Shirley earned a considerable income from fishing, the idea of building a new house had never occurred to them, until the tsunami struck. It had remained a dream, until Sujith Jayawickreme came to their assistance and encouraged them to start their lives afresh. It is the Jayawickreme Foundation that has provided them with a complete house.

The Jayawickreme Foundation came forward not only to provide houses but also to give a helping hand to people to make a living. The Leela Lace Institute located at No. 169, Paranakade, Weligama, is one such example. The owner of this establishment (registered No. 3699) is Christombu Baduge Leelaseeli(60) who learnt lace making from her parents. It is now 30 years since she began Leela Lace Institute, which is popular among both local and foreign tourists. The institute's two main activities are teaching lace making and selling finished products. Leelaseeli's work earned her the 2003 Viskam Ransilu Award presented by the National Crafts Council. She and her husband P.H. Sangadasa (63) - a retired excise inspector - were the parents of three children. The eldest is a son Jagath Priyadarshana(33). The two daughters are Nadeeka Priyadarshani(30) and Sriyanjani Priyadarshani(28).

Their house and workshop faced the sea, which was nothing strange to Leelaseeli and her employees. On the morning of December 26, Leelaseeli, her husband Sangadasa, other family members and employees were at the Leela Lace Institute.

Although Sangadasa was invited to breakfast he was not feeling hungry at the time.

Suddenly they saw the sea waves rising. incessantly. But at first it caused them no alarm since turbulence in the sea was a familiar sight to them. But everything changed the next moment. The waves rose to a height of 12 feet, twisting trees and were fast heading towards them. They had no time to run for safety and were caught in the waves. According to Leelaseeli, her husband fell headlong. She saved herself by clinging on to a grill above a window of their house. When the water receded, she found that everything was lost. Not only her home and workshop but also 11 other houses were destroyed. When they found her husband, he was dead.

A total of 183 people in the Paranakade area had died in the tsunami. At least one person in each household was dead. In a house neighbouring Leela Institute, all six occupants had died. Leelaseeli was at loss in deciding her future. It was then that Jayawickrema Foundation came to her assistance and gave the necessary financial backing to re-start her lace making business. Assisting in her work today are two women - Shiromi(33) and Dayawathie(50).

Since December 26, 2004 was Poya day Buddhist temples were crowded with devotees. At Gangarama, Pelena, there were many people observing 'ata sil'(the eight precepts).

The first Chief Incumbent of the **Gangaramaya, which was built in 1823**, was the Venerable Ilwatte Piyarathana. His successor was all dedicated to Buddhist revival in the area and the Gangarama became a hive of religious activity over the years. Among the resident bhikkus in this temple were the Venerable Wattakkoda Aththarama (who wrote many books on the philosophy of Abhidamma in Buddhism) and the Venerable Pelene Wajiragnana who did an immense service to the Buddha Sasana in Sri Lanka. In later years, the well-known Venerable Madihe

Pannaseeha and the Ven. Weligama Gnanarathana received their higher ordination at this temple.

On that fateful day there were seven bhikkus in the temple , including the Chief Incumbent, the Ven. Pelvehera Susima, two novice monks and two bhikkus who had come from other temples. They had participated in a pirith ceremony in a house in the area. While the devotees were having their morning meal, they noticed that the Polathu river that flows past the temple, changing its course. The next moment a huge column of water swept into the temple premises, drowning the devotees - epitomizing life's impermanency as preached by the Buddha.

The force of incoming lashing water also shattered the 12 feet high-wall in the temple premises with a deafening sound. The waves swept back a motor vehicle that was frantically trying to leave the place, making the car float towards the Gangarama.

Meanwhile, the temple's Chief Incumbent, Ven. Pelvehera Susima was making valiant effort to save the drowning devotees. He recalls with joy how he succeeded in rescuing some of them by pushing them towards high ground near the temple 's stupa as the waters of the Polathu River continued to rise. In the process the bhikku too was nearly drowned but managed to survive by reaching dry land near the Polwatte temple before he left for the Welihinda Temple to arrange relief for the surviving victims.

Upon returning to Gangaramaya it was a great shock for the Ven. Susima to see that a large number of ola leaf books had been lost in the tsunami. Of the 60 books that were in the temple only 21 now remain. It was irreparable loss.

The buildings in the temple's vicinity too were damaged and fresh plans had to be drawn up to rebuild the place. It was then that the Jayawickrema Foundation came to assist the Gangaramaya where steps were taken to build a kindergarten and Sunday School

for 550 children community hall in the shortest possible time. This awe inspiring three-story building is 77 feet long and 34 feet wide. Under the leadership of Sujith and Susanne and under the guidance of the Ven. Susima, they were able to accomplish many a noble task in the immediate aftermath of the tsunami.

The disaster had dashed the hopes of youth in the area. Depressed over the loss of their loved ones some of the young people had become vulnerable to undesirable temptations. To deal with this problem, the Jayawickreme Foundation worked out a special programme for young men and women in Weligama to direct them towards sports activities. In this connection sports goods were provided to 30 youth clubs affiliated to the Weligama Yawwana Samaja Pradeshiya Bala Mandalaya.

Among those who benefited under this programme is Kasun Pushpaka(20) of Thalaramba, Kamburugamuwa whose family was rendered homeless as a result of the tsunami. Although more than one year has passed since the disaster, his parents are still living in a camp for the tsunami displaced at Thambilhenawatte. A past pupil of Sri Indusdaara Vidyalaya, Thalaramba, he is now making use of these sports items to engage in sports activity, every evening. Joining him are his parents, Sister Bhashini Pushpika(8) and other young people in the area.

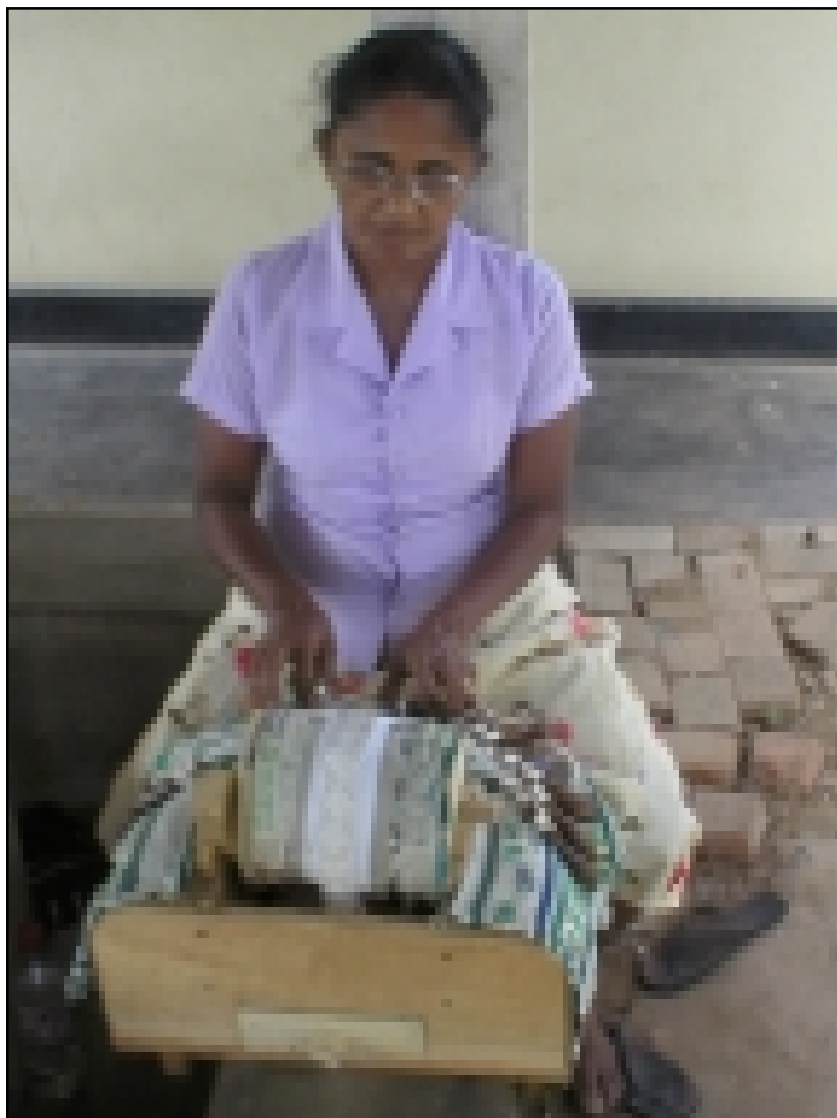
Another beneficiary is Hewa Paththinige Shammi (22), who is the President of the Negena Tharu, Youth Club in Thalaramba. Shammi, who has studied up to GCE A-levels in commerce, is now giving leadership in sports activities to young people in Kahatagahawatte, Thalaramba. Gemunu Sanjaya(20), Ruwin Rajith(16), Rumesh Samarajeewa(19) and Ravindra Nishantha(26) are among the youth who engage in bodybuilding exercises at her residence. Altogether over 20 young people participate in these exercises daily.

Menaka Priyadarshana(28) of Madurudoowa, Bandaramulla in Mirissa is the President of Yawwana Pradeshiya Balamandalaya and Chief Organizer of the Nawoda Youth Club. He gives leadership to 30 youth clubs and directs young people to various activities under the guidance of the Weligama Youth Services Officer.

These activities have been made possible by the Jayawickreme Foundation's donation of sports kits worth more than two million Rupees to all youth clubs in the Tsunami affected areas. Each kit comprises five body building instruments and bats and balls required for cricket, football and volleyball.

Among the services the Jayawickreme Foundation provided are the provision of mechanized boats to fishermen and the establishment of a free of charge multi religious day care centre for 40 old people in Pelena. The government has given the foundation a 1.2 acre-land for the construction of houses for Tsunami displaced families.

The Jayawickreme Foundation's vision is hope and goal is helping the needy.The Foundation's performance in Weligama testifies to this fact ♦



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In studying Sri Lanka's individual geographical zones, the island's coastal area draws special attention. Starting with a width of about 32 kilometres in the North this coastal belt narrows down to a width of 3 kilometres in the South. Its Western border is the Indian Ocean.

This area has been a decisive factor in the country's historical evolution because of its geographical features that turned the coastal region into a major international commercial centre since ancient times. Chinese, Arab, Greek and Roman ships were among the vessels that called at the ports along the coast. The zone's economic development through many centuries was largely the outcome of fisheries and maritime trading.

The 1,000 kilometres-long coastal belt surrounding Sri Lanka protrudes to the ocean at some points and turns inland at other places, which are called lagoons, where the sea and rivers meet. One of the largest of these is at Batticaloa. The name originates from Madakalapu in Sinhala and Mattakalapu in Tamil (lagoon of mud).

Since all of Sri Lanka's rivers flow into the sea from the coastal zone they have contributed to an agricultural life-style in the nearby districts. Almost all paddy lands in Batticaloa are irrigated with water from rivers flowing towards the lagoons. It is the main paddy growing-district in the dry zone and covers a

cultivated area of 104,456 acres, according to 1977 cultivation survey. On a priority basis this district ranks fourth in the island's entire paddy growing areas. The Old Dutch Fort in Batticaloa is a reminder of her colonial past. The country's Maritime Provinces, which the Portuguese controlled from 1505 until the Dutch defeated them in 1639, and occupied Batticaloa, Trincomalee and Colombo. In 1796 the British East India Company drove out the Dutch and seized the coastal areas.

About three decades ago there was almost no one who had not heard of Batticaloa's singing fish. On full moon days, fish singing under the Kalladi Bridge was a well-known feature in the area and it helped to boost tourism in the district. Among its unique attractions is Pasikuddah Bay with its clear blue waters and where the coast is dotted with a number of tourist guesthouses. The place was known in many parts of the world before civil war broke out here. Batticaloa's other landmarks were the Valachchenai paper mills and the ancient Buddhist Temple, Sri Mangalaramaya. This 500 year-old place of worship reflects ethnic harmony in the area. The district was also known for locally woven sarongs, popular among men all over the country.

It was in the East that the tsunami of December 26, 2004 claimed most of its victims. Even before this catastrophe, the people there had faced many a natural calamity. Violent seas were nothing strange to them.

In 1845 the Eastern Province experienced a cyclone - the first recorded natural disaster in the area. On March 10, 1907 a second cyclone hit the province, destroying many lives and property. The most heavily damaged was the Kalmunai harbour where many vessels had been anchored. The winds had swept away the roofs of the Kalmunai hospital and rest house.

The Government Agent, Batticaloa informed the Colonial Governor that coconut landowners were among those who suffered the heaviest financial losses since the winds had uprooted 371,053 coconut trees. According to the GA a total of 64 people, 1,436 buffaloes and 175 goats had lost their lives. The number of palmyrah, cashew and other trees destroyed was 40,114 while the number of houses, Hindu temples and churches destroyed was 1,842. The total loss was estimated at Rs. 4 million.

On January 10, 1921 another cyclone heavily damaged a ship off the Kalkudah coast. The winds destroyed crops and every house in the area, which experienced 28 inches of rainfall simultaneously.

The cyclone of 1964 claimed the lives of 2000 and rendered 10,000 homeless. Two hundred fishing boats moved out to sea from the East coast the previous night were lost along with their crews. In the North, floods inundated Delft Island from where 200 bodies of victims were recovered. Almost all infrastructures - houses, road networks and telecommunications - were destroyed. The cyclone demolished 5,000 houses in Jaffna, 3,000 in Mannar and 2900 in Padaviya making it a total of 10,900 homes destroyed.

The most recent cyclone was in 1978. The Sinhala daily Dawasa of November 24, 1978 reported it under the front-page banner-headline, 'Sea flows inland.' The winds having originated in the Bay of Bengal first hit Batticaloa and swept across the North Central Province and entered the Arabian Sea from the coast of Mannar on November 23-24. One day's simultaneous rainfall in the NCP was 417 millimetres, according to the Meteorological Department. The cyclone caused 915 deaths. In Batticaloa the majority of victims had drowned in the seawaters that swept inland.

When tidal waves hit the coast on December 26, 2004, the people of Batticaloa were unaware that it was a tsunami. They would have perhaps wondered why the sea was flowing inland with no sign of a cyclone, not knowing that fate had made fools of

them again. The residents of Kaththankudi experienced the climax of the tidal waves on December 26 at 8.30 a.m. By 8.40 a.m. the waves were inundating a wide stretch of the coast at Batticaloa. The highest number of tsunami victims was in the North and East. The lives lost in Trincomalee Batticaloa and Ampara Districts in the East numbered 14,307. In Batticaloa alone 2,794 people died. The number that disappeared was 1,081. The injured numbered 1,622 while 37,964 families were rendered homeless. The number of houses completely destroyed was 14,484 while those partially damaged was 5,651. Kaththankudi – a Muslim majority area – bore the brunt of the tsunami, which claimed the lives of 107 people there. The number of families displaced was 4,723.

The Eastern Province's population is 1,460,879 of which 515,707 are in Batticaloa. Of the total number people in the East 74.4 percent are Tamil, 25.4 percent Muslim and 0.1 percent Sinhala. Fifteen percent of the country's total land area belongs to the East, which represents seven percent of the island's total population. Its main sources of livelihood are agriculture, animal farming and fishing. The Batticaloa District, which has been divided into 14 Secretarial Divisions for administrative purposes, comprises one municipal council, one urban council and 346 grama niladari divisions.

When foreign aid began flowing into the country in the immediate aftermath of the tsunami, 614 non-governmental organizations went into action in the affected areas with their charitable and altruistic assistance. Ninety-six of these were international NGOs. Among them was the French organization ACTED (The French Acronym stands for Agency for Technical Cooperation and Development) which was formed in 1993. With experience gained in crisis-ridden Afghanistan, Kosovo, Nicaragua and Haiti among other countries, ACTED made a positive contribution to post-tsunami relief operations in Sri Lanka, India and Indonesia. Its regional coordinating office is in New Delhi from where this NGO monitors operations in Sri Lanka and the rest of Asia.

For rehabilitation activity here ACTED has obtained the services of 100 international workers and over 2000 locals to fulfill the organization's objective of raising people's living and their hopes for a secure and peaceful world. ACTED members first arrived in Sri Lanka in January 2005 and commenced work in the Batticaloa District, which the organization considered among the worst affected area in the country.

The estimated cost of rebuilding infrastructure highways, railways, telecommunications, water and power supply, hospitals, schools etc. in the island's tsunami-hit areas is U.S. \$1.8 billion. In allocating funds for this purpose at local government and district levels, the government was compelled to allocate the major part for reconstruction work in the North and East. Accordingly 58 percent of the funds meant for spending on health, education, housing, sanitation, fisheries, tourism, highways and railways were directed to the North and North and East. Thirteen percent of this amount was allocated to Batticaloa where the Urban Development Authority planned to spend Rs. 28 million on rebuilding the municipal area and the other eight towns.

The World Bank gave an interest-free loan of \$75 million to assist the Sri Lanka Government in its programmes to rehabilitate displaced victims of the tsunami and the 20-year civil war.

After conducting a pre-rehabilitation survey ACTED divided its sphere of activity into five areas – (1) removal of tsunami-debris and rehabilitation of roads using paid labour (2) building shelters (3) water supply and sanitation (4) hygiene promotion and psychosocial support (5) livelihood through the recovery of the fishery sector in selected villages. For these purposes ACTED undertook a deep analysis of the context relying as much as possible on national capacities including NGOs, CBOs, and working in close cooperation with government coordination bodies.

ACTED was the organization that led others in building a mechanism within a short space of time to help tsunami victims to earn a living. The organization utilized their services to clean up the environment and rebuild the infrastructure in the disaster-stricken areas - a process, which was first introduced in Batticaloa. Under this scheme 131 teams of 12 members teams worked in 37 grama sevaka divisions in the district's eight Secretarial Divisions over a 10 months period, and changing the list of beneficiaries every 20 days in order to widen the impact at community level. Thirty percent of those found employment as a result were women. In total, 80 km of roads were rehabilitated in the Kaluwanchikudy including 30 km gravelled by ACTED in cooperation with other aid agencies. The construction of 5.3 kilometres of earth drainage not only employed 1,055 beneficiaries, but also prevented floods for 880 families living in transitional shelters in five villages in Vakarai to earn a living. Benefiting to over 5,000 people in the district of Batticaloa and Trincomalee, these Cash for Work schemes represented a transition between extreme vulnerability and long-term economic recovery. The rehabilitation of road facilitated access to health centres and schools, and many displaced people could return to their home. The drainage prevented the flooding in villages and resettlement sites.

Among the surviving tsunami victims in the East is Sathyaseelam Rupachandran(43) who is a member of the first team that engaged in road clearing operations in Onthachimadam. The tidal waves destroyed his home but his family survived. They were in despair when ACTED came to their assistance and lent the family a helping hand. Rupachandran worked 90 days earning Rs.350 per day. His team cleaned roads, wells, school buildings, hospitals and Hindu temples. Roads were rebuilt and drains were constructed and their village was brought back to what it was before the tsunami.

Sixty percent of the villagers in Onthachimadam were jewellery manufacturers, 20 percent engaged

in fishing, 10 percent in trading and the rest were employed in the state and private sectors. Most male children stop attending schools halfway through and stay back to help their parents in jewellery making fisheries and agriculture. But girls continue their studies and complete their schooling. After their families lost their regular sources of income in the tsunami their parents had to depend on the debris clearing and rebuilding operations to earn a living.

Patrick Balasingham(59) of Onthachimadam is a retired bank employee who had served in almost all areas in the country. After the tsunami, he joined ACTED to help surviving tsunami victims. Serving as ACTED's Monitoring and Evaluation Officer he plays a leading role in serving the affected people of the area. According to him 131 teams worked 81,302 days if we cumulate their work over 10 months, and met villagers' needs. They had cleaned 3,375 five houses, 5,866 blocks of land, 123 blocks of public land, 52 public buildings, 39 schools, three fisheries market buildings and four hospitals. In Kaluwanchikudy 110 kilometres of roadway were rebuilt and five kilometres of three new roads were built after flattening the debris before using rollers to level and fill the ground. A large drainage system was constructed to drain the water along an 850-metre stretch in Kandalady and 750-metre stretch in Vaharai in order to minimize threats of floods in the future.

One of the person who does the groundwork in these operations was ACTED Officer David. A 24-year-old Frenchman, he recalls with pleasure the warm reception Sri Lankans accorded him when ACTED members arrived in the island.(He also coordinates the activities of French NGOs) He also put in place a platform of information for French NGOs in Sri Lanka.

According to ILO(International Labour Organization) statistics about 300,000 persons lost their means of livelihood in the tsunami. The ILO has recommended that priority should be given to these people under the rehabilitation and reconstruction schemes.

It is this context that ACTED's work has to be appreciated. Not only did it pave the way for displaced persons to earn an income but also gave new life the affected area through the construction of new roads.

An example is the Forut+ACTED road. Had such a road way existed in Onthachimadam prior to the tsunami the lives of 60 villagers who perished would perhaps have survived since the roadway would have an escape route for them. The shrub jungle beyond the beach prevented the victims from quickly reaching the main road, when they saw the tidal waves rushing at them. The new 2.5 kilometre-long road is an alternative route the old gravel road that ran parallel to the sea. Those who died had tried in vain to run for safety along this road.

Kandappan Velmurugal resides on the site construction work and says that he learnt many lessons from the tsunami. According to him, the Forut+ACTED road has not only made it easier to bring aid to the village but also largely reduced the villagers' fear of not being able to run for safety in the event of another threat from the sea. They have now resettled in the places where they lived earlier.

In accordance with the United Nations

In accordance with the United Nations emphasis on the need to develop the environment and surroundings before resettling the survivors of a disaster, temporary houses were quickly built for 150 displaced families who were initially sent to temporary camps. The tsunami destroyed a total of 84,000 houses. By the end of one year after the disaster NGOs and other organizations had built 55,000 temporary houses. ACTED too participated directly in this venture and built 374 houses using locally available raw material and reusable material. Each such wooden framed-house is 21.6 square meters and is built on a rock stone foundation with cadjan leaf walls. This structure offers a good temperature most of the day due to an eased ventilation. The floor

is cemented and the tiled roof is constructed with strong timber. Each household has a latrine and a well.

In fact, these houses are not really temporary shelters but semi-permanent shelters. Among the beneficiaries of this scheme is Nethseelagam Malini(30) who lives with her brother Raj Kumar(25) and several children all of whom had earlier found shelter in the Kali Hindu Temple in the immediate aftermath of the tsunami. Raj Kumar, a professional jewellery maker who lost all his equipment in the disaster.

ACTED initiated a number of programmes to rebuild the lives of people in the Batticaloa District and paved the way for sustained development of the area. The organization supplied the fisher community, who survived the tsunami at Onthachimadam, with boats, nets and other facilities, and also carried out seabed clearing activities. Those engaged in selling fish were supplied with bicycles, boxes to carry fish, scales and knives. The recipients were 306 persons in 12 villages of Kalawanchikudam.

Under this assistance plan, nearly 360 fisher families benefited. In addition to such assistance new fishing techniques were introduced to fishermen and they have been taught environmental protection, oceanic science, bio-diversity engine maintenance and modern fishing industry.

Kanagaratnam Manikyawasagam(53) is among the fishermen who benefited from this scheme. A resident of New School Lane, Onthachimadam and Manikyawasagam's house was totally destroyed in the tsunami, although he, his wife and children escaped death. All the fishing boats on the beach too were swept into the sea. ACTED gave him a new boat worth over Rs.400,000 to continue fishing in shallow waters. Each such vessels 30 families like that of Manikyawasagam, who is assisted by other fishermen.

ACTED has also provided the fisher community with urgently needed cold storage facilities in a section of the recreation center for fishermen. The organization also took up the challenge of clearing waste on the beach and debris in the seabed that were damaging coral reefs, fishing vessels and nets. This environmental pollution became a serious obstacle to restoring normalcy to the area. Assigned to this task was a 10-member team of expert divers from Matara who divided themselves into groups before diving to clear the seabed of debris. According to Mayilwaganam Rajeshwaram who was in charge of this project, his team was able to clear an area of 2-3 km kilometres in the seabed after several months. The waste and debris were initially dumped on the beach and later some of them such as bricks, logs and cement blocks were used for road construction. The rest were disposed of. Today, the Onthachimadam beach is completely clean.

The tsunami also destroyed 340 hectares of vegetable crop, 18,627 coconut trees, 13,430 hectares of fruit cultivation in the Batticaloa District, 6,447 cashew trees and 10.5 hectares of betel cultivation. The tidal waves also killed 2,449 herd of cattle and 3,034 goats. The total value of agricultural crops destroyed in the Eastern Province was nearly Rs.157 million. Of this amount the loss caused to Batticaloa District was almost Rs.60 million. Altogether livestock worth around Rs.98 million were lost in the East. Batticaloa's loss was nearly Rs. 45 million. The total damage that the district suffered in the areas of agriculture and livestock was estimated at to Rs.104 million. A scientific survey on this loss has revealed that the district needs at least Rs. 106 million to recover from these losses.

Among this NGO's other priorities were the improvement of sanitation and the supply of clean water to families since the tsunami polluted a large number of wells in the Batticaloa District, depriving residents of drinking water and water for bathing. ACTED took up this challenge at a decisive moment and restored 1,343 wells thus benefiting 1,600 families. The organization also sank 35 tube wells,

built 2,294 new latrines and distributed 2,042 hygiene kits among people in three villages.

ACTED also launched a programme to educate people on health habits and utilized the services of rural volunteers for the purpose. On the first stage a 30-member team selected from three villages was trained in identifying physical and mental health problems, facilitating dialogue among mothers, social service and first aid before deploying them in the affected areas. Later the team's membership grew to 43. In addition 90 women were selected to follow several 3 days courses in sanitation, prevention of diseases, provision of clean drinking water and nutrition methods. The organization hopes to continue this training process to educate people in building team spirit, to identify leaders, train them in personnel management and help them to identify natural disasters and to improve communication and handle other issues linked to disaster management. ACTED has provided the necessary technical assistance to rebuild agriculture and guided residents in manufacturing and using natural fertilizer. The area's main crops are onions, cowpea, vegetables and cashew.

The leader of the team deployed to train people in sanitation was Indra Samarawickrema. A native of Matara, she is married to Patrick and the couple is engaged in helping the needy. They printed leaflets and booklets on good health habits for the young and had them distributed among children in the area. The team selected bright children to carry this task forward. Basic knowledge such as boiling water before drinking, protecting food items from flies, properly cleaning vessels used for cooking, preparing clean food, washing hands well before eating and keeping latrines well cleaned, washing hands well with soap after using the toilet, proper disposal of waste and garbage, protection from mosquitoes and keeping the premises of one's home clean were among the contents of the booklets which the team distributed in house-to-house visits. The people there were generally not in

the habit of using latrines, according to Patrick. He said that the new latrines comprised concrete tanks in which waste matter was collected whereas most residents were used to pit latrines that polluted ground water. But it had taken a great deal of effort for the team to convince people the importance of using concrete tanks, by which it would be possible for urban council bowzers to remove and dispose of the waste matter.

ACTED printed 33,000 copies the relevant booklet, part of which was distributed along with 7,700 boxes of crayons among school children. Other NGOs and also District health authorities assisted ACTED in this venture.

Also distributed throughout Onthachimadam were 20,900 packs of Aquatabs - a water-purifying chemical. A single tablet of this can purify between eight to 10 litres of water. Under this programme, ACTED also took steps to enlighten public health inspectors too. They were given extensive training and provided with the necessary equipment.

Punyamurthi Jeewitha(18) who lost her mother, brother and sister in the tsunami, still lives in the Onthachimadam camp. She and her father who survived identified the bodies at the Kalawanchikudy hospital morgue. Despite the irreparable loss she suffered Jeewitha is an active volunteer in the ACTED health project and thanks the organization for teaching the villagers good health habits. She visits homes twice a week and checks their cleanliness.

She is happy to note that all are following the instructions properly. She stresses the importance of continuing this since ACTED would not be there forever.

David however said that no payments were made to the volunteers since they were working for the benefit of their own villages and towns. They should be dedicated to caring for their people, according to him. ACTED provided necessary training so that the volunteers find funds by themselves, considering this as a more sustainable solution than paying volunteers for a short-term project.

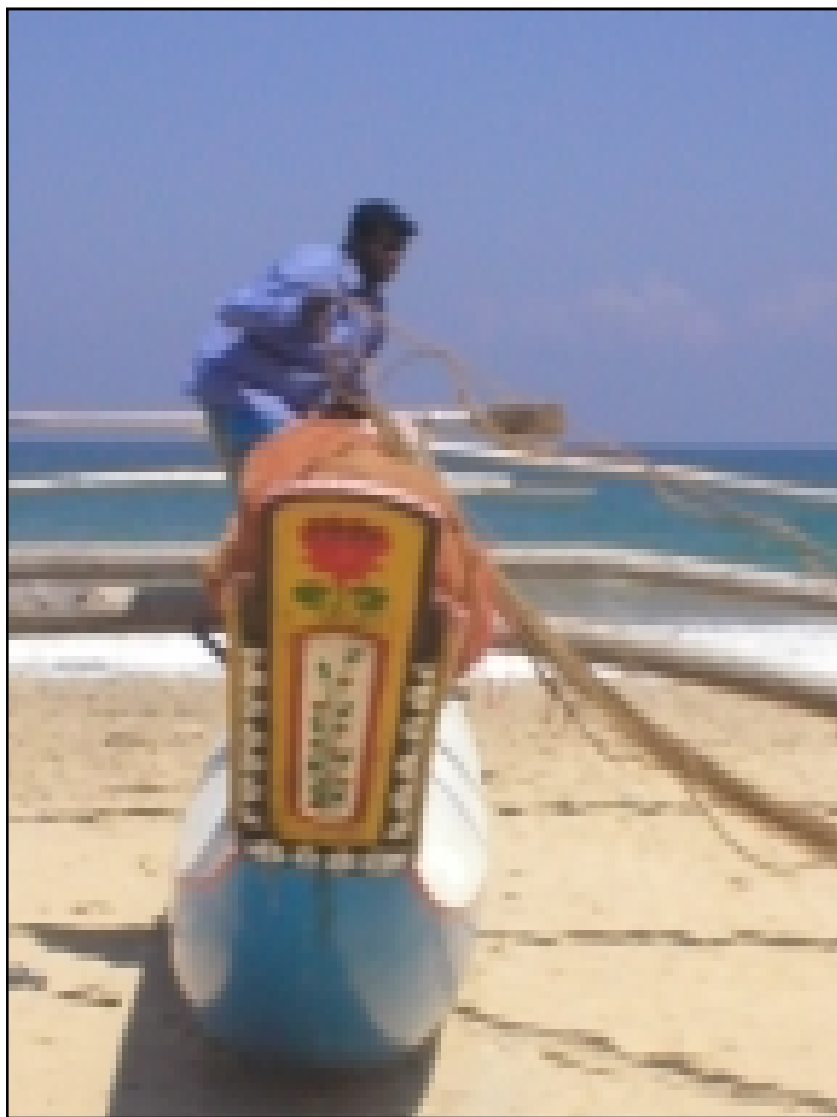
ACTED also focused on meeting the physical and psychological needs of children following their traumatic experience in the tsunami. Playing with children, singing and reciting poetry with them, story telling, drawing and painting, playacting and organizing various other forms of entertainment were some of these.

ACTED's office in Batticaloa coordinates its tsunami relief activities and in charge of the project is Celine, a much experienced young French woman who arrived in Sri Lanka in August 2005. Assisting her is Alexis who supervises the distribution of goods, administration and logistics, and Stefanie, in charge of the monitoring and evaluation of ACTED's past and current projects.

It is significant that ACTED has not confined its operations to tsunami relief assistance, rehabilitation of survivors and reconstruction activity but has also extended its projects to uplift the lives of war-affected people in the un-cleared area of Vaharai.

According to the World Bank's Sri Lanka Director special programmes under the Tsunami relief project is needed for consolidating peace and rehabilitate people in conflict-ridden areas. ACTED is already engaged in the task. David further says that his organization would soon hold discussions in this connection in Trincomalee and Colombo where people would direct towards inter-exchange programmes to build bridges of ACTED Sri Lanka strives to mainstream its approach to both tsunami and conflict affected areas through the development of synergies between these communities in terms of social development and economic reintegration.

David stresses that ACTED is constantly working in partnership with the government and NGO coordination bodies. His organization is also willing to reach out most vulnerable populations. David says that ACTED has pledged to work for sustainability and therefore towards a brighter future for Sri Lanka ♦



09

FACE TO FACE

The year 1945 was momentous in world history. That was the year when World War II finally was over. Millions of people paid a heavy toll. After the raging conflict, people all over the world and especially in Europe and Asia were heaving a sigh of relief as they were about to begin a new leases of life.

The two nations which were decisively battered by this were the United Kingdom and Germany. Rehabilitation processes were therefore initiated in these countries. Like all other countries, Germany also had its revolutionary social changes. Villages were being rebuilt and the displaced citizens were returning. There was a new awakening.

It was also that year that a wind of change had blown in the city of Tuebingen. It was in this backdrop that a German named Dietrich Stotz also had a lucky birth. He was part of a four-member family. As a young man, Dietrich he qualified as an Agricultural Economist as Economics was his passion.

When he commenced the 27th year of his life, he took two major decisions: one was to get married and the other one was to join the German Technical Cooperation (GTZ), a development agency implementing activities on behalf of the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ). He started his professional career in Kenya in 1974.

GTZ is an institution which spreads over 120 countries with a focus in 60 countries. It is an organization which interacts as a state institution of the Federal Republic of Germany with many other Governments and other private sector organizations. Its core business is the provision of technical cooperation for governments of developing countries.

Dietrich served GTZ in Africa, mainly in Kenya and Malawi. Later he returned to his home country to serve GTZ for seven years as a Project Planning Officer.

It was at that stage that his attention turned to Asia and he served with passion in Asian countries such as Cambodia, Nepal, Laos and Pakistan. He first did not have the opportunity to serve in Sri Lanka. In Nepal, he became the Head of GTZ's Rural Development Programme, assisting in rural housing.

Dietrich started working in Sri Lanka in September 2004. It was during his Christmas holidays in Germany that he watched television and saw traumatic tsunami disaster visuals on the island republic. He left all his personal interests in Germany with Sri Lanka in mind. He arrived in Sri Lanka and rushed to Batticaloa. Then, in collaboration with the Ministry of Nation Building and Development, he had to engage towards a different development program for the tsunami-affected eastern province from the original schedule he had in mind.

First, the GTZ team assessed the damage in the entire Batticaloa District which was the most destructed area in the entirety of Sri Lanka. There were over 60,000 affected families of which 30,000 were displaced. The tsunami waves not only displaced them but also destroyed their livelihoods.

Over 4,000 people were killed or disappeared. Of the displaced in the whole island, over 20% of them were from Batticaloa District. These include 12,000 people who lost fishing

boats. Of the total dead in Sri Lanka from the tsunami, the Batticaloa District accounted for 13%. Residents of the Batticaloa District were in an state of utmost despondency.

The immediate priority for the GTZ was to provide essential commodities for over 5,000 families in Batticaloa such as food items and bedding. With the aim of supplying all the displaced with the essentials, GTZ coordinated the operations with state and private sector organizations and NGOs.

Despite not being directly involved in all sectors, the role of GTZ was monumental. The state of the natural wells was so bad that the provision of drinking water to residents was almost impossible. GTZ came to the rescue of the Batticaloa District residents by providing state sector organizations with 35 water pumps. This was a decisive step for the environment in Batticaloa District in the immediate aftermath of the tsunami.

Another segment of the GTZ assistance to people in Batticaloa was the provision of 35 motorcycles which were used by state and private sector organizations to coordinate operations in the area. Tractors and trailers, generators and motor boats were also supplied.

It was then that long term planning for the District which the GTZ team had envisaged and that Dietrich's experience in house building was sought after.

21,101 houses in Batticaloa were damaged while 3,407 of them were within the 200 meter buffer zone. 11,713 houses outside the 200 meter zone were completely destroyed. Additionally, 5981 houses were semi-damaged. The planning of the housing project then became a real challenge.

Dietrich's international experiences in the arena of rural housing were of tremendous value in this bridge-building exercise. It was started with resettlement programs in three areas of Batticaloa. Dietrich's team planned for a three year program starting

in July 2005 till December 2008: the Food Security and Conflict Transformation (FSCT) project.

There was unprecedented demand for raw materials for housing projects as the number of damaged houses was considerably high. The demand for sand, bricks, timber, tiles and others soared and exceeded the supply of these vital materials. These had to be found at all costs and as fast as possible while there was a compelling need to find storage space for all these raw materials.

The next step was to find the requisite resource personnel for arduous task. A major drawback was the huge deficiency in masons, carpenters and other skilled workers. GTZ, in collaboration with the Sri Lankan Government, decided to establish three vocational training centres.

GTZ's strategy was to train people to facilitate implementation of its project while also providing employment in the district. The training was free and several people were recruited through three centres at Vakarai, Ondachchimadam and Valachannai. The people who got priority were the tsunami displaced.

Trainees has to perform a six month training period while also being required to sit for a written examination. They were given the opportunity to earn an income during that period as well. They could either serve as contractors or as semi-permanent employees.

The aim of GTZ FSCT project was not the mere recruitment of masons and carpenters. What Dietrich had in mind was to incorporate women as well.

There was an allocation of 20% of the available positions to women, which reflected efforts to reach gender equality. This was also seen as a way to enhance family incomes on a sustainable basis. Women

were provided with an allowance for the first month and they would be drawing a regular income from the first month itself.

The Valachchanai Training Centre is a venue where a large number of young men and women received training and earned an income. 21 year-old Ajanthini was one of them. Born in the city of Karuwankerni area, she was living in the Kalmunai area where her brother's house was destroyed by the tsunami.

Selvaraj Gnanawathi is a 44 year-old housewife. She is a mother of two and was living in Mannar prior to the tsunami. She came to Batticaloa so that her husband would earn better income. There is also 21- year old Kamnathipillai Nesanma who lives in the village of Palayadithoni and attended Sandilivilli College. She passed the GCE O Level and also narrowly escaped from the tsunami killer waves.

Sharmila Devi is also a trained woman from the Centre and is a resident of Karuwankerni area. All these are part of the large number of people trained through GTZ's workshop.

They were trained from September 2005 and were employed on a contractual basis as carpenters from January 2006. They were trained in woodwork and have been supplying the wooden structure for doors and windows. They were paid a sum of Rs. 11,700 each by February 10 and a further Rs. 8,000 each by February 21. There were able to earn Rs. 24,000 for the month of February 2006. It was through GTZ that all these youths were able to get training and employment in the immediate aftermath of the tsunami.

They are extremely content with their earnings and they are now planning for their future. Each of the batches comprises 25 masons and 25 carpenters.

Among the trainees is 21-year old Selvaraj Selvarani who has studied at Ramakrishana College and is a resident of Morankotanchenai. There is also 26 years old Arasarathina who is of the same area and is a student of Vivekananda Balika Vidyalaya of Kalladi. She is also living with one of her aunts and her house has also been heavily damaged by the tsunami. There is 19 year-old Udayanandani who passed the GCE O/Level and was trained at the centre. For their training, they were provided with all the tools and equipment from the centre. The training that they received has given a new impetus to the economic activities in the area itself. There is also a young bevy of girls who have specialized in the sawing of timber. They are being trained by two experienced trainers.

The trainees have been completing a number of wooden products which have been stored for the benefit of future projects. The venue at the training centre is akin to a small factory.

There are also the people who have been trained in the manufacturing of bricks and cement blocks. All assistance was provided so that they could live independently and with dignity. Their earnings could rise to around Rs. 1,000 per day, which is considerable in the areas of Vakarai, Lakavanchikuddi, Ondachchimadam. They were awarded certificates for their skills training which will enable them to procure foreign employment as well.

The GTZ training centre was established with the aim of providing training to the youth of the area not only to add value to the employment generated and enhance living standards of tsunami affected people in the area but also to get the requisite trained manpower from the area itself which can be used for projects. GTZ also aims to train a total of 2,000 masons and carpenters from the area. One of the aims of the program is to add value to their creativity. This means that there are already 200 such highly trained people from these centres. Gender equity and human values are

also promoted during these trainings. This breeds new semi-skilled professionals who are born in that area as well. The next step and the challenge that Dr. Dietrich faced was the supply of the demand of the raw materials which were badly needed for the construction projects. All these tsunami devastated areas were badly in need of these raw materials which were wanted by the state and private sector institutions which were building houses for the tsunami ravaged residents of the areas. GTZ also took up the challenge of supplying the raw materials on a continuous basis as well.

The German Government-owned agency, in collaboration with the Sri Lankan Government, selected two areas for the settlement of the tsunami displaced and stores were erected for the storage of raw materials. One of these was at the Paddiyaddichenai in the Kalkudah Divisional Secretariat which supplies all cement blocks for projects while also supplying the necessary sand, bricks, cement and timber.

One of the main challenges that FSCT project team faced was the absence of required standards for the completion of tsunami housing despite the need to accelerate implementation of the projects. The absence of qualified and experienced town and country planners in Batticaloa District made GTZ management look towards Colombo. GTZ planners were successfully able to procure the resource personnel from the National Housing Development Authority.

There were a series of shortcomings in tsunami areas and all residents of the areas had to be handled with extreme care.

They could be easily upset as they were emotionally vulnerable. It is in this backdrop that GTZ had to involve the participation of planners in projects and which had to be handled with great care. These were some of the features which were instrumental in GTZ successfully completing projects.

GTZ's FSCT project aimed to complete 1,000 houses of which 200 were new for the displaced and for the remainder 780. This was made possible with the participation of those displaced in the villages of Kalkudah. Ondachchimadam and Vakarai.

Thambapillai Gunasunderam of Central Road Kalkudah is one of the beneficiaries of these houses. He is a father of five: three sons and two daughters. Jo Anna is the name of his wife. There were over 200 houses in his area, including his house, which were totally devastated. He lost his sister, brother in law and 17 of his relations in the tsunami.

That was the reason why Gunasunderam had to reluctantly go to a refugee camp. GTZ, in collaboration with the Sri Lankan Government, supported him to purchase cement to rebuild his house. Today he is content living in the rebuilt house, which even has electricity. "I never dreamt of living in such a house ever in my life. We were totally shattered about our future after the tsunami devastation", he said. "Before the tsunami, we were living in a small cadjan hut. Then our hut was taken away by the killer waves and we fell from the frying pan to the fire. Fortunately, the Government started giving us aid and launched the re-building of all houses destroyed by the tsunami. GTZ provided support in the construction of these houses. We are now very happy to live in this house."

GTZ team did not stop there as it assisted Gunasunderam's 23 year-old son Sugandan to be trained at the Vocational Training Centre. He is the bread winner of the family. There is also 56 year old Arunasalam Sivagnanam who has built his house like Gunasunderam.

In addition to all contributions to the social development of the eastern province such as the upgrading of the human resources component, GTZ was magnanimous in the building of a 130 houses village in the District, situated in Paddiyaddichennai, Koralaipattu

Divisional Secretariat in the Kalkudah Grama Sevaka Division. It is in this division that the world famous Passikuddah beach is. It is to this beach that tourists from all over the world used to come and visit. It is due to the tsunami carnage that there are little or no visitors to this once loved beach today. The maximum number of deaths due to the tsunami (512) is to be found in Koralaipattu Division. On the first anniversary of the tsunami on December 26, 2005 the unveiling of a commemorative plaque was organized in the division.

The village of Paddiyaddichenai in the Koralaipattu Divisional Secretariat is being built with the aim to foster sustainability. Infrastructure includes drainage and sewerage systems as well electric facilities and telephones.

There is a great drive in getting the residents of these areas involved in rowing trees and in home gardening. There has been free distribution of coconut plants in the area in order to boost local production.

One store in the area supplies concrete blocks, sand, cement and all the construction utilities while the tiles are brought from Entomb. There is also a Marketing Centre which promotes products which have been manufactured and produced by trainees from the Vocational Training Centre. "This is also an investment for the future of these trainees", Dr. Dietrich Stotz says passionately.

The homes which has been provided in the Paddiyaddichenai area have been for a range of residents who come from all walks of life and among them is Kandaswamy Chandrika who has had a strange experience while saving herself from the tsunami. She is 39 years of age and her house was situated by the roadside at Kalkudah. With her was a 69 year old mother Pulamar and her father was an employee of the Valachchennai National Paper Company factory.

Chandrika is a mother of five children and her eldest is Ranjani who is 21 years old. Then there is her 20 year-old son Radhish who is followed by 16 year-old Rajinth. It was Chandrika's

responsibility to provide for all the needs of her children. She nourishes great dreams for all her offspring. The fourth is 15 year old daughter Rajipriya and the youngest is 14 year old son Rajendra. In order to support her family, like many people in Sri Lanka, she worked to the Middle East 12 years ago.

It was in the quest of the fulfillment of her dreams that Chandrika returned to the island on December 24, 2004 with gifts she was bringing from her 12 year old stint in the Middle East. It was misfortune that Chandrika faced on that morning like thousands of residents of coastal Sri Lanka. Her house was within the 100 meter zone and she did not have the time nor the inclination to think of what destiny would befall her on that fateful morning. Within seconds, all her gifts and belongings were ploughed back into the sea.

Choking with emotion, she said: "It was at tremendous personal sacrifice for me to bring all these goods for my children and I could not even see what I had brought. I had great expectations with the savings that I had made and I am heart broken, she wept. This is my personal property and it was destroyed within seconds and I have no hope for the future. Now I am afraid when I see the sea and I want to live as far as possible from the sea," she says.

However, she also has great expectations with the new house that she received through the Government. It spans 3,535 square meters and there is also a separate area spanning 3,920 square feet which has been reserved for community activities.

GTZ activities also encompass the development of public and private infrastructure. One of the achievements of GTZ's project was the completion of a water supply and drainage system spanning 14 kilometres in the Vakarai area. In addition, nine buildings for community development and a building for socio- economic

training were constructed. GTZ also gave priority to skills development.

Another focus was the creation of right environments for employment generation and for economic independence. Tremendous assistance was provided for the fisheries industry as well as for the jewellery industry for which equipment was provided free of charge. Directions were also provided for the manufacture of concrete blocks and multi purpose wood working machinery.

Nithyanandan of Valachchanai is also one of the beneficiaries of the GTZ-assisted project. He is 23 years old. With his friend Aruna, with whom he has worked as carpenters, he bought machinery in March 2006. It was through the training provided by GTZ that they were able to purchase the machinery without having to apply for bank loans. He is now well off and economically independent.

GTZ-supported projects are joint ventures between the Governments of Sri Lanka and Germany.

One of the main areas that most conservationists and planners tend to ignore is the environment and it is this factor which tends to get neglected in many development projects. Thus, one of the important components of GTZ's FSCT project was also the conservation of the environment.

The strategy used by GTZ was to get the involvement of the people of the areas concerned in consultation with the state agencies engaged in environment conservation. The people of the area were requested to undertake cultivation of around 3,000 plants of one hectare each. Grant aid was provided for the digging of wells to sustain these plants. The plant nursery spans 167 acres and it is anticipated that there will be sufficient plants for all areas within the next four years. It is the responsibility of these social organizations to ensure that all plants are safe and grow properly according to the required sizes. One of the cornerstones of the

success of these projects is that all the organizations which were dealing with the projects got close to the people and were a tremendous influence on them.

There was a large number of foreigners who came to the rescue of Sri Lanka and some for these programs and projects came to the Batticaloa District as well. The majority of residents in the coastal belt were traumatized and it was with the greatest attention and care that their lives were restored. However, most NGOs and other foreign initiatives involved with projects for restoration of the physical infrastructure produced well mapped plans for the benefit of not only the residents but their environments as well.

It was with the aim of long term sustainable development that Dr. Dietrich Stotz and his team had resurrected the lives of Batticaloa residents. One of the main responsibilities of the institution was to ensure that psychosocial support was provided to those affected by the tidal waves.

Dr. Dietrich and his wife who planned strategies for the rebuilding of the Batticaloa District in a sustainable manner would also not forget the associates and the colleagues with whom they worked. The fact that Brigitte was close to the female volunteers was also a tremendous source of strength to Dr. Dietrich. They had planned to stay in the Batticaloa District for a long time to ensure that the projects that they were working on would get their expertise. Batticaloa dwellers especially valued the couple's experience and commitment.

Historical records prove that the Batticaloa town had caught considerable international attention even from the time of the Portuguese and the Dutch. During these days, Batticaloa harbour was used for entrepot trading. This was the period during which trading of all the commodities was done by the Kings of yore and

it was for that reason why the foreign rulers of that time were interested in capturing Batticaloa port which they did in 1639. Within a year from that date, they decided to abandon their interests in the port of Batticaloa when they realized they were unable to grow cinnamon, which was a prime export commodity in the Batticaloa region, and as they received continuous threats from the Ceylonese Kings.

Historical evidence also reveals that the Batticaloa port was of interest to the upcountry rulers of Sri Lanka also at that time. King Rajasinghe had also sent a letter on January 5, 1665 to the Dutch rulers that he too wanted some security personnel for his personal use as well. He did not stop at that as he also requested the Dutch to send a few ships to the Eastern ports. According to historians, with this strategy, the King wanted to stop his enemies from fleeing the country at that time. There were various battles between the Kings and the Dutch at that time and his aim was to minimize it. There was a love-hate relationship between the Kings of yore and the Dutch rulers.

It was in the year 1668 that the Commander of the Dutch Forces Ruthas launched an attack and conquered the Batticaloa port. The aim was to conquer the trading facility in the port. Two of their principle exports were cinnamon and arecenut. There had been sweeping attempts by the Dutch who were trying their utmost to capture the Batticaloa port for its premium position in trading. To assist that were the Muslim traders who did door to door purchase for the Dutch.

At night, Batticaloa town looked deserted. An aura of beauty enveloped the city from the Fort to the lagoon. It was at that time when residents were finally heaving a sigh of relief about the historical vagaries that the tsunami struck them. This by itself had a series of severe effects on residents. The Passikudah beach has no visitors any more. The jewellery manufacturers of Ondachchimadam are helpless. The residents of the Vakarai area

which have been the victims of both the armed forces and the LTTE are totally helpless.

Dr. Dietrich and his wife Brigitte are very close to the people of Batticaloa. Their aim is to ensure that they take away the trauma and the tears. It is their aim to make sure that the people of Batticaloa live independently and honourably. Their son lives in Australia. Their daughter Steffie works in Lufthansa Airline. She is a resident of Germany.

While their son is in Australia and their daughter is in Germany, Dietrich and Brigitte are providing mental strength and courage so the tsunami devastated people in Sri Lanka can uplift their lives. It is sure that Batticaloa residents are smiling at the efforts that the German couple made in their best interests and benevolence◆





10

A new day:

A NEW BEGINNING

Chilean Poet Pablo Neruda has left an indelible impression and a stamp of class in Latin American poetry. It was during his visit to Sri Lanka in his capacity as the representative of his Government that he fell in love with the beaches of Sri Lanka. It was the splendour and the grandeur of the beaches which evolved his poetry. It was titled as the beaches of Ceylan and there would not have been any other foreigner who was in love with the beaches of Sri Lanka in the manner in which he expressed it in his poetry. The beaches of Sri Lanka were enriched by this Nobel Prize laureate. It was on December 26, 2004 that all these footprints were snatched away by the tsunami. The lives of 800,000 Sri Lankans were turned up side down by the devastation and the carnage. It was also within split second which the property and lives were snatched and only the vestiges were remaining. The lives were washed away to the sea.

The port city of Hambantota was also one of the subjects of the carnage in a very decisive manner and in accordance with the same manner as it is steeped in history. The District of Hambantota which spans across a landmass of 2609 square kilometers and a beach stretch of 30 kilometers has a large number of reasons to be associated with history. The District has seven salterns and is an integral part of the national salt production. There are also the inputs of the district into the national tourism and fisheries

industries. There are nineteen rivers, of which the Walawe Ganga is the most important. The 13 irrigation tanks in the district form the cornerstone in providing the water to the districts cultivation and agricultural activities.

The district has been a major catalyst for tourism given that a majority of the pilgrims and devotees who visit Kataragama have to pass the Hambantota District. The Yala sanctuary and game reserve is also popular among the tourists. It was due to these factors that there were no shortages of the tourists to the District. There is also the Sithulpauwa Raja Maha Viharaya to which 12,000 Arahants arrived during the reign of King Dutugemunu in the eras of yore.

The Hambantota District has a population of 525,370. The population density is 291 per square kilometer. There are 11 Divisional Secretariats in the District of which the ones which were devastated by the District are: Hambantota, Tissamaharamaya, Ambalantota and Tangalle. Within the district, there are 592 Grama Sevaka Divisions and each of them span 4.4 square kilometres each. It is this District which has the third lowest per capita income in Sri Lanka and which also has the maximum poverty among the coastal districts in the island.

On the morning of the December 26, 2004, the only flooding of the sea that the people of Hambantota had heard was that which happened during the reign of King Kavantissa in times of yore. It is also salient to mention that incident in the context of the Hambantota District is that King Kelanitissa put his daughter into a boat to stop the floods and it was at Kirinda in the Tissamaharama Divisional Secretariat in the Hambantota District that the boat and the journey stopped. So did the floods.

The Hambantota District was also a part of the carnage and it was at 9.10 am on that dreadful day that the tsunami arrived in the Hambantota District. There were a large number of people who were swept away by the tsunami. There were 78,968 people in 16,994 families who were affected and there were 3067 that lost

their lives in the carnage. There were 361 people who were critically injured while there were 963 people whose details could not be traced. There were 486 temporary refugee camps in the district as there were 2303 houses which were totally damaged while a further 1744 were partially damaged. The most severe damage happened at Tangalle, Hambantota Ambalantota and Tissamaharamaya areas.

The inhabitants of the Hambantota District who actively contribute to the national economy in terms of physical and human resources had only their lives left while all their assets and their personal belongings were swept to the sea within minutes of the devastation. The people who were affected most were those the people who were living in abject poverty and it was the cooperation of the rest of the country that they were able to uplift their lives from a very precarious situation.

Prior to the tsunami carnage, the farmers and the fisherman made a stupendous contribution towards the national economy. There were hectares of paddy land in the district prior to the tsunami under cultivation which accounted for 8.9% of the land extent under paddy production. The annual paddy production of the district was 145,000 tonnes and the total land that was destroyed by the tsunami was 343 hectares of paddy land, 36 hectares of other crops while 623 families who were in cultivation died. While the fisheries industry was also an integral livelihood of the district, there were 34,470 tones of fish produced from the district. There were 5,385 fishing families in the district while the total number of people who were fishing in the district amounted to 7001.

There were a large number of local and foreign donor concerns which came to the rescue of the people in the Hambantota District which accelerated the restoration programs. While there were 15 state sector institutions, there were four regional development institutions and 15 foreign Non Governmental Institutions which came to the rescue of the tsunami victims who

were associated with the rejuvenation of the tsunami affected Hambantota District residents.

One of these organizations that got involved in the post tsunami rehabilitation is Navajeevana, which commenced in 1987 with a mere three people and has been assisting in the transformation of a large number of people in the District since today. The Chief propellant and founder of the project is Mrs Kumarini Wickramasuriya. Navajeevana is an organization which focuses on people with disabilities (PWD) - whatever their disability is - and their families aiming at the improvement of their quality of lives. The services of Navajeevana include speech and language therapy, hearing assessments, hearing aid delivery, Pre-school classes for children with sensory and learning disabilities, physiotherapy, epilepsy clinics as well as vocational training programmes. Apart from these institution based services, Navajeevana established a solid Community based rehabilitation (CBR) program: Field officers and more than 200 volunteers from the villages provide basic health care to PWDs, awareness raising and prevention of disability, basic physiotherapy training for families of disabled people, counselling and (early) identification of disabilities as well as referral services. Furthermore, Navajeevana organises regular eye, speech and physiotherapy clinics in the most rural areas of the province as without these many would find it impossible to receive treatment, support and advice.

Among the foreign benefactors who have been assisting Navajeevana over the years is the Christoffel Blind Mission (CBM) - one of the main donors of Navajeevana since 1988. It is a German based NGO, which is working in the field of disability and development in more than 100 countries worldwide. Navajeevana's staff comprises 60 dedicated team members, such as for instance Mr. H. R. Suranga who has been trained in Cambodia in the production of artificial limbs. The team is also supported on a regular basis by Indian specialists. Through its community volunteers Navajeevana extends its services to the areas of Tangalle, Katuwana, Angunukolapelleessa, Beliatte, Walasmulla and

Okawela. Since to date, over 6,000 people have been assisted by Navajeevana through intervention and support. Navajeevana follows an explicitly participatory approach, which is based on intensive communication with people with disabilities and their families as well as their social environment to ensure that the support provided meets the actual need of the clients and remains sustainable. Hence, the scope of Navajeevana's support goes substantially beyond medical intervention and rehabilitation and extends to the uplifting of the social and economic situation of people with disabilities and their families through income generation and livelihood programs.

In the immediate aftermath of the tsunami, Navajeevana extended its regular services towards emergency relief activities and the whole team with the overwhelming support of private sector employees got involved in the supply of cooked meals, textiles, medicines for elders, toys for the children and other essentials as well as the provision of transport facilities to the tsunami affected areas. Furthermore, Navajeevana started in cooperation with the community of Kudawella and other NGOs with the cleaning of the debris, the cleaning up of the devastated areas, basic restoration and sanitation programs.

A further challenge in these days was also the assessment of the damage and the compilation of reliable data on a regional level. Reports and figures on the extent of the devastation were compiled at the Divisional Secretariat Tangalle and the tsunami-affected villages were matched with organizations that pledged support.

In the aftermath of the tsunami, there was a large flow of foreign aid and there were countless international organizations, which came to the rescue of the residents of the Hambantota District who were battered by the tsunami carnage. The initial priority was to restore the infrastructure of the damaged areas. It was estimated that the total reconstruction cost of the whole nation was US\$ 2.2 billion.

There was the allocation of resources in medium and long terms. The Government was to allocate 45% of the funds for the Eastern Province, 19% for the North and 26% for the South of the island. Rs. 330 billion was allocated for the rehabilitation and development of Galle, Matara, Kosgoda, Hikkaduwa, Weligama and Tangalle, the latter was planned as a major restructuring program under the Urban Development Authority (UDA). The plan also included the construction and operation of the Colombo port and also the development of the tourism infrastructure which was going to be juxtaposed with it. The development of the Hambantota town actually began in 1910 under the leadership of the eminent British Civil servant and author Leonard Woolfe. If the plans that he proposed at that time were used, then the effects of the tsunami actually would have been minimized.

One of the many severely tsunami affected fisher villages in the Hambantota District under the Divisional Secretariat of Tangalle was Kudawella. The community of Kudawella had already a longstanding affiliation with Navajeevana since Navajeevana volunteers have been working in the village since many years.

At the request of the local government authorities and the community leaders, Navajeevana took on the task of rehabilitation and reconstruction of the fisher village of Kudawella. On January 18, 2005, an MOU between the District Secretary Hambantota and Navajeevana was executed. Navajeevana submitted immediately a proposal for its post tsunami activities in Kudawella to its main donor, the Christoffel Blind Mission (CBM) in Germany: Director and founder of Navajeevana, Mrs Kumarini Wickramasuriya says: "The fact that CBM assured us full support in our post tsunami activities right from the outset is a matter of great satisfaction. We submitted our project proposal on the post tsunami project in Kudawella and the report within the first four days after the tsunami to CBM and they have supported us since to the fullest." Considering the dimension and challenges faced by taking on the task of rehabilitating the community of Kudawella, Navajeevana Development Alternatives (NDA) was initiated by Navajeevana as a

sub project and the implementing arm of Navajeevana for its post tsunami project in Kudawella.

The main activities of NDA were defined as follows: Firstly, the rehabilitation and development of the physical environment (including reconstruction and repair as well as resettlement) Second, the economic rehabilitation and development of the community. Thirdly, the social rehabilitation and development of the community. The activities of the NDA aimed at the (immediate) rehabilitation of the directly tsunami affected families/people without losing sight of the overall development of the whole community of Kudawella.

Hence, activities were to be designed and implemented in such way that equal service delivery and benefit particularly in the medium and long term interventions of NDA will help avoiding the creation of a societal barrier between tsunami affected and non affected community members.

One of the guiding principles of NDA was the mainstreaming of disability throughout all project activities: The NDA project tailored its activities in such way that people with disabilities (PWDs) which represent one of the most vulnerable groups particularly in such a post crisis situation and their families are included at all project stages and that their particular needs and demands are met/incorporated throughout the whole process of physical, economic and social rehabilitation. In such way, the unique chance of mainstreaming disability into the post tsunami rehabilitation efforts will be taken to work towards a more barrier free environment, greater visibility of PWDs and attitudinal changes of society, PWDs and their families.

Furthermore, the community participation in the planning, decision making and implementation was a crucial element of the NDA project to achieve cultural accessibility and hence, the sustainability of the project activities, in particular of the reallocation and resettlement of people on new land.

The NDA project team includes the Administration/Finance department, the construction department and the Socio-economic department. To intensify the communication with the community, the team also extends to 5 social mobiliser/volunteers from Kudawella.

Mrs. Kumarini Wickramasuriya stated that one of the major aims of the NDA project was to go beyond the pure rehabilitation of the physical environment extending to the community development and rehabilitation on a medium and long term basis. Out of the total population of 5,951 inhabitants in Kudawella, 2244 (according to Navajeevana statistics) were directly affected by the devastating Tsunami. As a result, 2140 people have been displaced of which 453 are under the age of 15 years. 56 persons lost their lives and 5 persons are missing. A survey conducted by Navajeevana field staff in January 2005 identified already a total of 64 people with disabilities (PWDs) affected directly or indirectly by the tsunami, 22 of these are under the age of 20. In the immediate aftermath of the tsunami, 5 Tsunami committees were formed in Kudawella, one in each Grama Niladhari Division (North, East, West, North and South). The initial communication between Navajeevana/NDA and the community regarding their needs and the further planning of the project took place in joint meetings with all committee members and their presidents. The outcome of these discussions was the basis for the further planning of the activities of NDA.

The tsunami devastated the lives of the fishermen of the Hambantota District and this was deemed as a major blow as fisheries which was one of the mainstays of the Hambantota District economy. 80% of the resources were lost to the district with the tsunami according to the Fisheries Ministry statistics. There were 1200 multi day fishing craft, 800 one day fishing craft and 12,800 traditional fishing craft which were totally destroyed. A further 900 were partially damaged. Also in the lost list were 850 boat engines and 850 fishing nets. Kudawella has a small harbour and the fishing industry is the main source of income. Other economic activities revolve mainly round the fishing (e.g.

the production of dried fish that is sold by bicycle traders) and the coir industry that represents the main income-generating sector for women. Apart from that there is only few activities in the producing or tertiary sector in Kudawella.

The economic damage to the village was tremendous: About 90% of the fishery industry in Kudawella were affected: The fishery department of Tangalle claimed in April 2005 the loss of 16 Multi-Day boats (30' to 37') and 5 One-Day boats (28') in Kudawella, as well as respective engines and nets. Furthermore, a total of 24 FRP (Fibreglass Reinforced Plastic) 19' boats, 52 mechanized traditional canoes and 68 non-mechanized canoes were damaged beyond repair. The loss of these boats also resulted in a tremendous increase of the unemployment rate in Kudawella as Multi and One-Day boats are usually manned with 4 to 5 fishers.

Under its economic rehabilitation program, NDA decided in cooperation with the community on supporting boat owners that had lost one- and multi-day boats in the tsunami. The rationale behind this decision was three fold: Firstly, the majority of INGOs provided immediately after the tsunami small canoes and FRP boats, which resulted in an over supply compared to the pre-tsunami situation. Taking also the increasing over-fishing of the coastal area into consideration, the sustainable income for everyone could in such way not be ensured in the long run. And finally, the rehabilitation of jobs for the fishermen on one-and multi day boats by replacing them provided the sustainable solution for the tremendous unemployment rate in the village.

The project among the fishermen at the Kudawella Fisheries village started with the identification and selection of those who needed assistance and were eligible. It was agreed on a set of documents that had to be provided by each applicant to prove his/her eligibility ensuring the transparency and fairness of the selection process. 'In the spirit of transparency, the selection was conducted in several joint community meetings giving everyone the option to participate in the process', Ms. Jayanthi Ramasinghe, Director

Socio-economic Development at NDA and a graduate of the Colombo University, said. In such way, the decision on whom should participate in the above project was made together with the community.

36-year old Anura Muthumala is one of these beneficiaries: He is a fisherman from Kudawella, coming from generations of fishermen. He had lost his multi day boat in the tsunami: 'My boat was parked in front of my house and I was at home. When I heard a loud noise I peeped from the house to see the sea waves arriving at a much higher height. Quickly, I alerted all the members of the household and rapidly climbed up the mountain that was near our house. Although we saved our lives, our property and the house were totally damaged. The loss was irreparable. We did not have reserve funds and we could not get on with our lives as the boat that we had and that ensured our income was also destroyed', he added with disdain.

When we were contemplating what was in store for us in the future, we heard about the NDA program. We thought first that they would only help the disabled. But on inquiries, we learnt that they supported both disabled and non-disabled people. I have been included in the One- and Multi-Day Boat program of NDA, I now have a new boat and I am successfully working with it. They also gave me some assistance to repair the engine of the boat that was fully destroyed. We were people who were resolutely independent and now we can continue with our lives. It was due to the encouragement and the assistance that we received from NDA."

Next to the rehabilitation of the fishery sector in Kudawella, another major focus of NDA's economic rehabilitation activities, was the rehabilitation of tsunami affected micro enterprises: A total of 328 micro enterprises affected by the tsunami have been identified in April 2005 in Kudawella through a community based assessment.

The program aimed at the rehabilitation and uplifting of small and medium industry sector. The selection criteria were amongst others to be a resident of Kudawella and to prove that the

business damaged or lost in the tsunami was registered in Kudawella. The support provided by NDA was decided on an individual basis with each beneficiary according to the damage assessed and the economic situation of the beneficiary, who was then also responsible for the proper accounting of funds received by NDA.

One of the beneficiaries under the micro enterprise rehabilitation programme of NDA is Mrs. T.W.K. Shalika, who was engaged in business with her husband for the last 25 years: They had a reefer truck which was used in their business for transporting fish under refrigeration. 'All that was lost in the tsunami', they told us when we met them. "Our entire belongings were washed away by the tsunami and we are yet in a temporary house. We mortgaged our jewellery and hired a van so that we could carry on with the business that we were used to doing. We were provided with a financial contribution to purchase a new engine of our destroyed van and it is this assistance that helped us to rebuild our lives', Mrs Shalika spelt out gratefully.

Mr H.K. Nishantha is a trishaw driver in Kudawella South who was having a content life with his mother, wife and son until the tsunami waves came. He tells us: "I came to the harbour on a hire and that was the time that the killer waves arrived and that is the time that I fled for life. I rushed home and I returned to the place I left the trishaw after four days without any hope. I found the trishaw which was blocked in a certain area but I could not repair it. NDA provided me with a financial contribution which enabled me to repair my vehicle which was a tremendous source of strength."

Under the micro enterprise rehabilitation programme, NDA provided assistance to a large number of industries in Kudawella: Ms Lasika Sanjeevani whose livelihood was in the apparel industry needed assistance to purchase a new sewing machine; Mr. LY Francis was enabled to recommence his food business for which he is 'immensely grateful to the Navajeevana Organization' which helped him to restore his life. These are the success stories and there is a new generation of mason besses, carpenters, barbers,

trishaw drivers, shop keepers whose lives had been turned around by the Navajeevana/NDA program.

There was also a three pronged credit line for these people which was devised by the Central Bank of Sri Lanka. The establishment of the small and medium enterprises micro credit for which the assistance came from the Japan Bank for International Cooperation(JBIC), the Jeewana Shakthi program for smallest ventures which is funded by the United Nations Development Program(UNDP) and the smallest small and medium sale funding project named Suhasana are the projects. The Reconstruction and Development Agency of the Central Bank has been the implementing agency for this project.

There were the two schools in the Kudawella village which were a boon to the children of the area though, limited in that the youth take to early earnings through the fisheries industry at a young age.

The damage to the Hummanaya blow hole was also a tremendous economic loss to the people of the Kudawella. The Blow Hole is a tourist attraction located in Kudawella (one out of eight blow holes worldwide) and represents the second major local resource after fishing. The locals believe that this is the second largest of its kind in terms of size in the world, but the best in terms of attraction. There is also a blow hole at Unawatuna in the Galle District but the Kudawella tourist spot attracts as a matter of fact more visitors. It is most beautiful with the North East monsoon and it is in the month of June that it is most attractive. So far, people profit by renting parking space, offering guided tours or selling drinks, mango preparations, pickle and pea nuts and other food items for the tourists and other local visitors who relished on them. There were also the sellers of various services such as photographs or sea shells.

Though the tourists were returning to the Kudawella area, most of the stalls had been destroyed and it was NDA, which came to their rescue. Mr L.Y. Ruwan who lived near the blow hole also

had a small shop on the way to the blow hole which was named as the Cool Spot. When the wave came, he had left everything in the shop and had to carry his pregnant wife leaving the shop. His shop had suffered major damage and was restored with the support of NDA: 'The tourists have returned and now I am carrying on with the business as before', he said. They are the proud parents of a baby son. The son, Kavishkara Induwara is a delightful baby with an adorable smile and he is the cynosure of all eyes. Ruwan believes that the birth of his son brought him the luck that he needed to restore the business. For the course of the future economic development of Kudawella, the assessment of this tourism potential will be essential.

The Government demarcated a 100 metre zone in the development plans and it was decided that the all construction of houses and office buildings had to be behind that. According to Government estimates, there were 383 families in Kudawella formerly living within this zone out of which 290 were directly tsunami -affected. The construction activities of NDA included the repair of houses beyond this initial 100m line, the building of new houses on private land beyond the above line as well as the reallocation of 55 families formerly living within the buffer zone. The resettlement site for the 55 families was near the Mahawewa Lagoon on a mountain at the Pahajjawa area. In line with NDA's guiding principle of inclusion of people with disabilities and their families in all project activities, 15 houses out of the total of 55 were in agreement with the community reserved for families with a disabled family member.

This site is steep but idyllic overlooking the Mahawewa lagoon. The chief architect of the houses as well as the community centre, which will be constructed at the top of the site in August 2006, is Ms Amela de Mel from Colombo. Regarding the design of the 55 houses, NDA discussed with the community the issue of architectural accessibility of all houses. Basic accessibility standards were developed for all the houses including features such as wider doors, levelled access to the lots and houses and spacious toilets, which benefit the whole community including the

elderly or people with mobility impairment. Furthermore, the houses for people with a mobility impairment were modified to the individual needs, together with the house owner, the Inclusion Officer of NDA, Mrs Sarojani and Ms Samantha Whybrow (Accessibility Advisor from John Grooms) which included provision of handrails, grab bars or bathroom devices.

The principle of accessibility is followed throughout the whole site, including the roads, which will have landing bays to enable elderly and people with a mobility impairment to manage the steep hill. As for the sewerage system, Bio cell Septic tank units have been installed on each lot. The unique feature about this is that it recycles the waste and ploughs the recycled water back into the soil. So far, the NDA housing has gained an excellent reputation as an example of how disability can be mainstreamed into the post tsunami rehabilitation efforts making use of a unique chance towards a more barrier free environment in Sri Lanka. The consultant engineer, Mr. David Edirisinghe, says that this housing scheme creation will definitely serve as a role model in the post tsunami reconstruction activities.

Expressing his views, Mr Edirisinghe says: "It is the children of these homes who will benefit most since they will have all the facilities such as electricity and other amenities supporting their studies. They will have fish as a part of their diet which will make their brains strong. "He believes that all of them will make a significant contribution to the country with the passage of time. CBM co-worker Ms Christina Lidzba, the Project Manager of NDA, says: "We have targeted the completion of the NDA project by May 2007 but a majority of the construction work will be over at the end of 2006. Our biggest target was the sustainable development of all these areas which were affected by the tsunami. We did not merely want to provide them with housing and vanish from here. We wanted to go beyond rehabilitation extending NDA activities to economic and social development." Ms Lidzba has been working in Sri Lanka for 2 years prior to the tsunami and it was particularly that experience that assisted her in the management of the NDA project.

One of the main aims of the Pahajawa housing project is to narrow the differences between the new housing scheme and the neighbouring areas and what is attempted is an integrated community development system. The neighboring villages are: Mahawella, Moraketiara, Mahawela and Nakulugama. Next to the reallocation housing scheme, NDA also provides support for Kudawella community members whose house got completely destroyed and now want to build a new house on private land. At the time of our visit at NDA, already 43 houses were completed under the program.

The funds were provided in eight installments and adequate progress is required for the approval of each installment. The quality control and site monitoring is done by the technical team of NDA, which assists the beneficiaries throughout the construction process with advice. Mr. Priyantha Wanigabadu is the one who had his house completed under this NDA program: He is a 38 year old man who is married and has four children, of which one son; Amila was swept away by the tsunami. Mrs. Newlet Daluwatte is his wife. He is a fisherman and they have been living at a place called Kudawella Moderawatte prior to the tsunami.. He lost three of his close friends who also lost their lives and was in no mood to recollect his life at this stage. 'We have gone through tough times and I have lost a child and all property and it is thanks to the Government that we got the funds to buy the land. Government that we got the funds to buy the land.

The Navajeevana Development Alternatives assisted us in building this house by providing us with financial as well as technical support throughout the construction work', he said, choking with emotion. He said that the receiving the contribution for building their new house was tremendous and now he is confident of drinking some porridge and sleeping, he said while a stream of tears meandered from his eyes. On the wall in front of which he was sitting during our visit, we noticed a framed photo

showing all the members of his family prior to the disaster. Confident of drinking some porridge and sleeping, he said while a stream of tears meandered from his eyes. On the wall in front of which he was sitting during our visit, we noticed a framed photo showing all the members of his family prior to the disaster.

In the repair programme, the repair of 40 houses was completed by NDA while another 46 were under construction at the time of our visit. Under this programme, each damaged house was assessed by the technical team of NDA in cooperation with the house owner and the damage was measured. One of the team members in the technical team is Mr. Sumathipala Abeydheera who was a well known social worker in Tangalle. Mr. Abeydheera's wide and rich experiences were of immense value to this program.

Besides the housing units, the local primary school, one pre-school was destroyed which had a special unit for children with disabilities. The school is currently reconstructed under UNICEF patronage at Jayawickrema Maha Vidyalaya at Kudawella. For the intermediate period until completion of the construction, NDA has built a temporary class room for 16 children with disabilities from Kudawella to ensure their education.

In addition to the restoration of the lives of the community members, it was the idea of NDA to restore the environment of the area that was damaged with the tsunami. Also on the priority list was the Veheluwila Reservoir which is also one of the key wetlands of the Kudawella North area. This traditional environment site was severely damaged by the tsunami with all the debris flowed into the site. NDA prepared a plan for the restoration of the reservoir which was to enable the residents to consume its water again. Mr. Noran Yasihlal, Community

The Development Officer at NDA, explained that there were 265 families who were dependant in the fresh water fish for a living and the restoration of the reservoir was instrumental in the return of the bio diversity. It is heartening to note that the NDA project considered the environmental aspects as well as a core component in sustainable development.

A highlight of the project is its flexibility and the great degree of community participation which made it unique. The project by itself was people friendly, accessible and revolved round the participation of the beneficiaries. The cornerstone of the projects was the social stability and equality. It aimed at uplifting the standards of the people's lives economically as well as socially. The name Navajeevana is an embodiment of the restoration of the lives of this tsunami battered people and the new lease of life that they received through it ♦



11

Rhythm

IN THEIR LIVES

The sight is firmly entrenched in her memory. What I saw that day shall never fade away from my memory, reminisces Samasevaya Social Development Organization Coordinator Lalitha Gunawardana. In the immediate aftermath of the 2004 December 26 tsunami, four vehicles carrying Samasevaya volunteers were nearing the Trincomalee Town on the way to nearby Kinniya-3 village some 12 Kilometers away. The Samasevaya Volunteers were in a mercy mission, for the people of Kinniya-3 who lost around 560 lives together with their property to the unfolded. Hordes of starving children with blackened bodies descended on the convoy from nearby hillocks, from where they were keeping vigil for any relief supply vehicle coming up the winding road. The perplexed volunteers saw the desperation in their hollowed eyes. The volunteers instead of going to the village of Kinniya-3 decided to distributed food parcels, then and there. A volunteer later recalled that it was amazing to see the scarecrow like figures gobbling food as fast as their jaws could work. For the relief team this episode was a reflection of the hunger prevalent in the area.

The first batch of volunteers comprising 15 Buddhist monks and 20 activists came from the villages of Meegasyaya and Indiaspathana all Sinhala Villages in the Anuradhapura District.

They brought with them 2000 cooked food packets and amongst others such basic requirements viz. medicine, clothes edible oil, fuel and most importantly cooking utensils. The party arrived at the Moslem village of Kinniya 3, accessible after a ferry crossing of the sea. Once they reached the Kinniya-3 village, the priority task was to find a place to set up a coordinating centre for relief work. The first place they looked was the Zonal Education office. But the staff themselves displaced by the tsunami was not very receptive to the idea of setting up a NGO relief center in their office.

Thereafter, the Samasevaya group went to the police station for direction. From information gleaned they decided to approach the Ulama or the Moslem Theologians Council known as the Ayatulla Board. Fortunately there was a Moslem police constable named Mahan who was also a Samasevaya volunteer. The Ayatulla Board at first was wary of the volunteers, as there were wolves in sheeps clothing, robbers coming to the disaster area in guise of relief workers. Fortunately, there was a Moslem police constable in the Kinniya Police station named Sergeant Mahan, who was also a Samasevaya volunteer. The policeman undertook to convey the predicament of the volunteers to the Ayatulla Board. The combined efforts of all bore fruit and the Samasevaya volunteers were able to obtain the Assistant government Agents office to establish as their makeshift Headquarters. When a foothold was thus gained, Menike Weerasinghe Deputy Secretary of Samasevaya and a teacher by profession summed up the collective resolve of the relief workers.

"We shall work to the best of our collective abilities".

On arrival at the village of Kinniya-3, the Samasevaya team got clicking. First task was to feed the stricken people. In feat of true compassion, a Buddha Putra -Ven. Kandaketiye Sumana Ratana set up a communal kitchen and cooked food himself.

It was necessary to clear the backlog of debris. The Samasevaya team with the help of the villagers and a backhoe, cleared debris from the area. Constable Mahath of Kinniya Police, who joined the clearing operation, reminisces how in that fateful morning waves came over Palmyrah trees and swept inland flattening houses. An immediate task was setting up of refugee camps, which proved laborious due to lack of suitable land. The Samasevaya in a short spell of activism built four camps in the cleared land. However, the scarcity of drinking water posed a major obstacle to the rehabilitation effort.

In assisting the locals, the volunteers had to take into account the socio religious sentiments of the Moslem community. Taking into account the traditional Islamic religious taboos concerning women, the Samasevaya team was faced with the problem of getting women, to do manual work. However, as an initial step towards this end, the volunteers explained to the community the need to get them organized in order to undertake the formidable tasks lying ahead. To pave the way, in harnessing female labour a Moslem clergy from Anuradhapura Moulavi Sheiya Mohamed was brought in to intervene on behalf of the Samasevaya, the Moulavi skillfully handled the task of convincing the local clergy about the necessity of community participation in the rebuilding process. A new concept Cash for Work was inaugurated. Under this programme, Samasevaya paid Rs.10,000 to a family unit and 70 families were engaged in construction work as an inducement, the women were paid a wage of Rs.350 in respect of a days work. The Samasevaya decided to stipulate that 30 per cent of the work force should be composed of females. A social change took place. Hereto conservative women pitched in with men folk in achieving a common goal. Slowly but surely, the reconstruction effort began to take off the ground. First Aid centers were started and people were taught First Aid. Encouraged by the success, Samasevaya volunteers endeavored to establish a Montessori. Assistance from abroad was solicited and the St.Alfred's School UK provided material assistance to set up a Montessori school with 20 children.

With all the material assistance the task of rebuilding the shattered village would have been incomplete if the villagers mental state that from a state of apathy to that of self-confidence was not restored. Samasevaya councillors trained in psychology offered council linguistic services to the traumatized children and adults who had lost loved ones. said Gunawardena, a Samasevaya volunteer trained in counseling. The volunteers adopted some of the children who had lost both parents in the tsunami. A widow's welfare service was inaugurated. As the relief effort gathered momentum, the Samasevaya volunteers from other districts came to assist the Kinniya-3 village.

A student exchange programme got in motion. Two Children's Societies were set up.

Advisory societies were established. Fishing, which is the principal means of livelihood amongst the community lay devastated by the angry waves of the once benevolent sea, which sustained the fisher folk. Towards the revival of the fishing industry, the Samasevaya established four fisheries societies. To complement the effort Fishing gear was given to fisherman, along with four boats. A Fisheries Week was declared. In addition classes were held for fisherman where they could interact with volunteer personnel. Initially 28 fishermen attended these classes. Inter religious corporation had been established by the Samasevaya. The community was injected with new enthusiasm and the World Food Day was celebrated.

An onerous task of repairing roads, was undertaken.

A special mention is due to the Government Agent of the area who supported the reconstruction and rehabilitation task by synchronizing the efforts of NGO's with that of the government.

However abuses are evident. In the post tsunami period the 20x12 refugee camps continue to be occupied not necessarily by refugees. Tragically the crammed refugee camps have become an

asylum center for various unscrupulous persons, who were victims of the dependency syndrome, which accompanies catastrophes. It was evident that some of the refugee camp inmates, who were not residents of the tsunami stricken costal, were posing as refugees merely to enjoy welfare benefits given to refugees.

The post tsunami The Kinniya-3 village is now a placid village. The Samasevaya HQ was relocated to Constable Sahan's restored house. In our recent visit to Kinnia-3, we saw a pretty little girl, who had lost both of her parents in the tsunami disaster, being cared by relatives. Even now the Samasevaya Volunteers periodically visits the village and monitors activity. It was evident to us that the villagers have placed their trust upon the volunteers. Perhaps the brightest thing ever, was that the Samasevaya team had transformed the villager's from crisis driven to a crisis responsive lot ♦

DEDICATION

Their journey was a truly painful and tiring one. At one decisive point in this difficult and arduous journey, they came across the writer.

They never wavered, but stood their ground firmly like a towering light-house. With courage and determination they faced all obstacles and travails, motivated by their ultimate aim of creating a better tomorrow. At times, they even had to face a certain amount of indignance and blame. Notwithstanding these obstacles, they forged ahead with their mission with a true humanitarian outlook, preserving their identity at the same time, in order to build an environment-friendly world.

Consequently, a world totally friendly to the environment is bound to appear at some date in the future and there will be thousands of people who love the environment. Their foot-prints will naturally be engraved in the checkered history. This book is dedicated with honour to such INGOs, NGOs, CBOs, GOSL, Private Sector and Individual activists as well as those who sincerely love the Sustainable Human Development and Social Justice.

