

Helping East Lanka Progress
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HELPING EAST LANKA PROGRESS (HELP)

ANNUAL REPORT 2006

Trustees:

Dr Vipulan Thiagarasah	(Chairman)
Mrs Vijitha Viyakesparan	(Secretary)
Mr Alan Ball	(Treasurer)
Mr Andrew Schneidau	

Accountant:

Mr Senthuran Viyakesparan

Charity no: 1111363

HELP

Helping East Lanka Progress

About Us

Helping East Lanka Progress (HELP) was set up as a Trust by Dr Vip Thiagarasah in August 2005 to relieve the suffering of victims affected by the devastating tsunami of December 2004 on the East Coast of Sri Lanka. It received charitable status from the Charity Commission on 19 September 2005.

The aim of HELP is to provide assistance to the families, and specifically the children, of East Lanka who have suffered as a result of the tsunami. HELP operates on the simple principle that all funds raised will be spent in East Lanka on the projects identified by the trustees. There will be no administrative fees incurred by the trust - everyone involved with HELP offers their services on a voluntary basis and the banking arrangements have been set up specifically to ensure that all funds transferred to Sri Lanka will go directly to the worthwhile causes identified by the Trustees.

Review of the year to end-June 2006

HELP has had a very successful year due to the generosity of its donors and the hard work of all who have been involved. Following Dr Thiagarasah's initial visit to Thirukuvil in January 2005 with a team of medical officers that provided immediate assistance to the injured and distressed, he and fellow trustees made two subsequent trips to the East Coast of Sri Lanka in July 2005 and February 2006 to identify worthwhile projects, consistent with HELP's objectives. Details of these projects are given below.

Provision of Medical Equipment

In the course of the July visit, we were able to provide badly needed medical equipment to the local hospital in Thirukuvil where Dr Thiagarasah and his team had carried out their work in January. This included the provision of the hospital's first ECG machine and a Graseby 3400 Infusion Pump that was donated by Astra Zeneca. Dr Thiagarasah trained 4 nurses to operate it and we understand that a very sick 2 month old child has already benefited from its use. More generally, we provided a much needed fax machine and a bed for the nurses on call overnight.



We remain in close contact with the Director of the hospital and have agreed to assist with the future provision of equipment as and when our funds permit.

Construction of Houses

In the course of the July visit, we were fortunate to visit Komari and link up with a locally-based charity (CFDR), which is active on many fronts to return the village back to normality. The village had been completely destroyed by the tsunami; all 750 families had been displaced and re-housed temporarily in refugee tents. HELP committed to provide funding for semi-permanent houses for the villagers, built by themselves in a traditional wooden/mud brick style (using local and natural materials), with the roofs made from plaited palm leaves.



As a consequence of a number of very generous donations, and specifically from the pupils of the King Edward VI Grammar School in Chelmsford (KEGS), we are delighted to report that we have funded the construction of a total of 19 houses for the displaced in Komari. This has made a tangible and dramatic difference to the lives of many families in the village.

We discussed the possibility of further housing development with our colleagues at CFDR during the February 2006 visit to Komari but the situation is now much improved. Only a handful of families remain in tents, all of whom have funding for temporary houses. In the circumstances, we have agreed to employ our limited funds on other worthy causes in Komari and the region.

School Playground and Community Sports Facility

Following a very generous donation from The Latymer School (Edmonton UK), HELP has funded the building of a temporary playground at the rear of the school in Komari. The original intention of building a more substantive structure incorporating existing trees, rope ladders and a jungle gym did not materialise as much of the land originally dedicated to the project had to be used for additional (temporary) school buildings. However, the children make full use of the new structures during their breaks and it is a welcome sight amidst the rubble that continues to dominate the surrounds of the school.



In the course of the February visit to Komari, we committed to fund a much



larger and longer term playground and sports facility for the village. This has since been built alongside a new community hall. Photographs of the completed facility are awaited. We understand that it includes a basketball/badminton area in addition to the usual swings etc.

Children's Orphanages

One of HELP's primary objectives is to support the children of East Lanka who continue to suffer from the tsunami and we have spent considerable time identifying suitable projects in the region to alleviate their suffering. In this respect, we are delighted to be able to report on the following achievements in the past year:

Swami Vipulananda Children's Home

The Swami Vipulananda Children's Home in Akkaraipattu provides a safe haven to 30 boys orphaned by the tsunami and the civil war. Our trustees have visited the orphanage on a number of occasions and have been struck by the dedication of the volunteer staff and the overall sense of well being of the boys. On both visits in July and February, we were delighted to provide some sports equipment to the children (cricket bats/balls, footballs and tennis/badminton racquets etc) and to discuss the problems faced by the Home's officers. It became clear in February that the funding of the orphanage (all voluntary) had fallen away and that difficulties were being faced to meet on-going expenses. HELP has therefore undertaken to provide a monthly bursary to the Home to ensure that it can continue its work. We aim to increase this monthly sum as additional funds become available.



Amman Girls' Home

The Amman Girls' Home in Akkaraipattu looks after 60 orphaned girls between the ages of 6 and 16. When our trustees visited the Home in July 2005, the girls were sleeping on mattresses on the floor in addition to eating their meals and having lessons on the floor. We were delighted to be able to provide sufficient chairs and tables at least to allow the girls to have lessons and meals in reasonable comfort. There was insufficient room to provide adequate bedding for the girls but we were able to provide some games equipment (badminton racquets/tennis balls etc) which was much appreciated. We were also delighted to provide various pieces of school equipment (and teddy bears!) donated by the pupils of Kingston Primary School in Benfleet, Essex. With the aid of the Director of the adjacent Swami Vipulananda Children's Home, we will continue to monitor the needs of the girls in this home.



Current Projects

Educational Scholarships

Again, in conjunction with our colleagues at CFDR, we are currently considering funding a scholarship programme to provide all children in Komari and nearby communities with the opportunity to pursue their A-levels and University studies. Costs are estimated at £20 per month per student and 60 students have been identified. We do not have sufficient funds to finance the entire scheme but will endeavour to fund as many students as possible.

Construction of English Schools ('Houses of English') for Orphaned Children

In the course of the visit in February, we were notified of the inspiring work of David and Tess Le Sueur, who have been very active on the East Coast providing help to local communities. Among many achievements, they have established a Girls Home in Thambiluvil, which opened in August 2005, to accommodate 56 girls orphaned by the tsunami and have built a school in Akkraipattu to teach orphaned children English. We are very pleased to be able to report that HELP donated £5,000 to fund the construction of a second floor and toilet block for this school.



David is now proposing to build two more 'Houses of English' in Thambiluvil and Pottuvil which HELP has agreed to finance. Detailed proposals and costs for the schools are awaited but it is envisaged that the total cost will be in the region of £10,000-£15,000.

The Trustees of HELP propose to undertake a further visit to the East Coast in October/November of 2006 to monitor existing projects and to identify new ones. It is depressing to report that the many difficulties and hardships inflicted on the local community by the tsunami have recently been exacerbated by the deteriorating political situation. So, although considerable progress has been made on many fronts since the horrors of December 2004, the problems of the region remain immense and are likely to prevail for the foreseeable future.

HELP is a small charity and our resources are very limited but we seek to ensure that every penny of every donation is employed on worthwhile causes. With this in mind, the focus of our work in the year ahead will remain specifically on alleviating the plight of the children of the region.

Finally, the Trustees of HELP would like to express our sincere gratitude to all who have donated this year, whether financially or through time and effort. The achievements we have set out in this report could not have made possible without your assistance.

If you would like any further information on our activities, please do not hesitate to contact us on info@helpingeastlankaprogress.org.uk.

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