

Helping East Lanka Progress
Registered Office:
47 Broadfields Avenue
London N21 1AG
+44 (0)208 245 7152
Email: info@helpingeastlankaprogress.org.uk
Web: www.helpingeastlankaprogress.org.uk

HELPING EAST LANKA PROGRESS (HELP)

ANNUAL REPORT 2007

Trustees:

Dr Vip Thiagarasah	(Chairman)
Mrs Viji Viyakesparan	(Secretary)
Alan Ball	(Treasurer)
Andrew Schneidau	

Accountant:
Senthu Viyakesparan

Charity no: 1111363

HELP

Helping East Lanka Progress

About HELP

Helping East Lanka Progress (HELP) is a UK registered charity that was set up 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. Charitable status was granted by the Charity Commission on 19 September 2005.

The aim of HELP is to provide assistance to the families, and specifically the children, in the Ampara district of Eastern Sri Lanka who suffered as a result of the tsunami. HELP operates on the simple principle that all funds raised will be spent on the projects identified by the Trustees. All expenses and administrative fees incurred by HELP are met by the trustees personally and everyone involved with HELP offers their services on a voluntary basis.



HELP is a very small charity which relies for funding on the goodwill of friends, families and their contacts. The Trustees aim to visit the region at least half yearly to monitor the progress of projects and to ensure that all funds raised are spent appropriately.

Review of the year to end-June 2007

Thanks to the continued generosity of our donors and the hard work of all involved, we are pleased to report that HELP has had another very successful year.

All of the projects identified in last year's report have been completed to the full satisfaction of our Trustees. In 2006, thanks to the particular generosity of the children and staff of the Latymer School in Edmonton and the King Edward VI Grammar School in Chelmsford, HELP was able to fund the construction of 19 temporary houses for families displaced by the tsunami in the village of Komari and build a temporary playground at the rear of the school in the village. We were also delighted to support two children's orphanages in Akkaraipattu, and the hospital in Thirrikuvil where HELP started its work. As explained below, and thanks to the generosity of all our donors, we have been able to maintain our support for these organisations and to fund a number of other very important and worthwhile new projects that our Trustees have identified during their visits to the East Coast in the past year.

Community Play Facility



In 2007, Year 7 of the Latymer School provided the funding for a larger and more substantial playground and sports facility for the children of the village in Komari. This has been built alongside the village's Community Centre and includes swings, a roundabout and a large wooden tree house with ladder and slide.

The facility was designed by the local community under the guidance of our colleagues at CFDR, a small US charity based in Komari, and was built by workers from the village using local materials.

Our Trustees were privileged to see the completed project during a visit to Komari in February 2007 and to see the children playing on the equipment. It was clear to see that the children were having fun and that the playground had gone a long way to improving the quality of their daily lives.



The Year 7 students of Latymer School can feel very proud of their fundraising activities for the joy they have brought to the children of Komari, many of whom remain severely traumatized by the tsunami of 2004.

Children's Orphanages

One of HELP's primary objectives is to support the children on the East Coast of Sri Lanka and our Trustees have spent considerable time identifying suitable projects in the region to alleviate their suffering. In 2006, we identified two orphanages which were doing marvelous work to help care for, and rebuild, the lives of children orphaned by the tsunami and the civil war. Due to the continued generosity of our donors, we have been able to continue our support of both organizations.

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 over the past 2 years and have been struck by the dedication of the volunteer staff and the overall sense of well being of the boys. In 2006, we were delighted to have been able to provide sports equipment to the children (cricket bats/balls, footballs and tennis/badminton



racquets etc) and to set up a small monthly bursary to help meet on-going expenses.

During our visit of February 2007, it became clear that the funding of the orphanage (all voluntary) was falling away, as memories of the tsunami faded. The Principal of the Home was particularly concerned to develop the children's IT skills. We are pleased to report that we have agreed to increase our monthly bursary to meet the costs of employing a part-time IT teacher. Our original monthly bursary continues to meet a large proportion of the Home's on-going costs and we receive

regular reports from the Principal on how our funds are used.

We are delighted to be able to report that your funds are making a genuine difference to the lives of the young boys in the Swami Vipulananda Children's Home.

Amman Girls' Home

The Amman Girls' Home in Akkaraipattu cares for 60 orphaned girls between the ages of 6 and 16. When our trustees first visited the Home in July 2005, the girls were sleeping on mattresses on the floor as well as eating their meals and having lessons on the floor of the Home. In 2006, we were delighted to be able to provide sufficient chairs and tables to allow the girls at least to have lessons and meals in reasonable comfort.

When our Trustees re-visited the Home in February 2007, they were pleased to see that the children continued to be in good health and well cared-for, but basic necessities were lacking and

the overall quality of their lives remained poor. We established their immediate needs with the help of our Tamil speaking colleagues from CFDR and were very pleased to be able to buy all 60 children badly needed new school socks and shoes. We also bought irons, ironing boards and water heaters for the Principals of the Home and were delighted to be able to hand over clothing and toys to the girls donated from friends and family in the UK.



We are unable to provide a direct bursary to the Home as its ownership is uncertain but our colleagues at CFDR have undertaken to visit the Home on a regular basis and report back on the girls' needs. HELP fully intends to continue its support of the Amman Girls Home throughout the year ahead.

Construction of an English School in Akkaraipattu

Working in co-operation with Friends From Europe, a small UK-based charity set up by David and Tess Le Sueur, HELP was delighted to be able to contribute to the construction of a second floor extension of a dilapidated school in Akkaraipattu that teaches English to local children from the Muslim and Tamil communities. The ability to speak English is a key skill to enable the children of the region to escape the poverty and deprivation faced by many of their families.



Our Trustees visited the school in February 2007 and were pleased to see that it was already in operation with over 150 children attending on a daily basis.

We hope to be able to work with David and Tess in future. David was based on the East coast for a couple of years and together they have been

very active helping the local community rebuild their lives after the destruction of the tsunami.

Current Projects

Educational Scholarships

The village of Komari has only one makeshift school (the original was washed away by the tsunami), providing education up to the equivalent of GCSE level. Those students capable of attaining the equivalent of 'A' levels or above are required to travel to neighbouring towns for their education. Although there are no fees for the provision of education in Sri Lanka, the costs of books and travel prevent these students from pursuing their further education.



Education is key to breaking the cycle of poverty and hardship that most of the children of the region and their families continue to endure. Working closely in conjunction with CFDR, we have identified 45 children within the village of Komari who have the capability, but not the financial capacity, to undertake further study. HELP has therefore agreed to provide full educational scholarships to these children. The scheme will be administered and monitored by CFDR (at no cost) and monthly/termly reports on each of the students are submitted for review.

HELP's continued support for each student will be dependent upon their regular attendance and success in examinations. The annual cost per student is approx £180 (SLR 20,000). We have financed the first year of the scheme in full and have committed to fund the remaining three years, subject to resources being available.

We consider this to be an important initiative and have no doubt it will fundamentally change the livelihoods of many of the children in Komari. This project has the full support of the elders of the village.

Provision of a teacher for Komari and restocking of the village library

The junior school in Komari does not provide for the teaching of English, a key language for the children. Our colleagues at CFDR have identified and hired a specialist English teacher from the local university who will provide after-school English lessons for both children and adults on a weekly basis. HELP has agreed to meet the tutor's salary and travel expenses for a period of six months, at which point we will review progress. Subject to resources being available and the course being a success, we would aim to continue funding the tutor for the foreseeable future.

The village library in Komari was completely destroyed by the tsunami in 2004 and its stock of books washed away. The building has since been restored but there are no funds available for new books. HELP has therefore agreed to provide the necessary funding to restock the library. Working with the local school and village representatives, HELP and CFDR have agreed a list of adult and children's books, in both Tamil and English, that would benefit the school and the whole community. The books are being acquired as this Report is being produced and we hope to be able to provide photos of a fully stocked library on our website in the course of the next few months.



This will be a wonderful facility for Komari and the surrounding villages of Pottuvil and Thirrikuvil. Local arrangements have been established by CFDR to ensure that the library's facilities are managed and maintained on an on-going basis.

Refurbishment of Komari Ante/post Natal Centre

We are delighted to be able to report that HELP has been able to fund the complete refurbishment of the medical centre in Komari. This facility was destroyed by the tsunami in 2004, but through the generosity of our donors, it has been restored to its original condition. A doctor from the local hospital visits on a weekly basis to hold a maternity clinic in the centre for expectant mothers, and nurses provide an after care service for recently born children. This facility provides an invaluable service to the local community.



Continued Support for Thirrikuvil hospital

HELP originated from the work that our Chairman, Dr Vip Thiagarasah, and a team of London medics undertook in the immediate aftermath of the tsunami in 2004 in the village hospital of Thirrikuvil. We have therefore been keen to continue our close relationship with this hospital and its small but dedicated medical team. In 2006, we were pleased to be able to provide badly needed medical equipment, a much needed fax machine and a bed for the nurses on call overnight.



In our two subsequent visits in the past year, we have funded the installation of ceiling fans for the male and

female wards and have undertaken to fund additional essential equipment as and when our funds permit. The hospital has specifically asked for funds to acquire 20 beds and bedside lockers, 100 bedsheets, 3 medicine and dressing trolleys and various essential items of medical equipment such as nebulizers, saline stands and water filters. The total cost of the medical equipment and other goods required by the hospital is £5,000. We will aim to meet this request in the year ahead.

We are delighted to be able to maintain our close links with our friends at the hospital where HELP originated.

Micro-Finance scheme

During our visit in February 2007, our Trustees were fortunate to meet the local representative of Relief International, a humanitarian non-profit agency that provides emergency relief, rehabilitation and development assistance to vulnerable communities worldwide. RI has set up a number of small micro-finance operations on the East Coast of Sri Lanka. These provide very small loans at minimal interest rates to families (mainly women) to enable them to develop sustainable small businesses. All interest is re-invested in the community. We are looking at the possibility of funding a small scheme for 200 families in Pottuvil and will review after our next visit to the East Coast.

The Trustees of HELP will continue to visit the East Coast in the year ahead 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. Although considerable progress has been made on many fronts since the horrors of December 2004, the problems of the region remain daunting 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.

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 been made possible without your assistance.

If you would like any further information on our activities or would be interested in fund-raising initiatives for HELP, please do not hesitate to visit our website (www.helpingeastlankaprogress.org.uk) or contact one of our Trustees directly or through our email (info@helpingeastlankaprogress.org.uk).

June 2007