

Report about the 6th journey to Sri Lanka from October 8th to 29th, 2006

The 6th journey of Hans and Christine Heinrichs took three weeks. We, again, could achieve a lot with the funds of € 70,000 which were available.

Monday, Oct. 9th

Today we met with our Singhalese contacts, which informed us what had been organised and settled during the past three months, and what we can tackle during our three weeks stay.

Tuesday, Oct. 10th

We visited a 37 year old head of a family, who has to feed 10 persons. During the Tsunami he had lost his Tuk-Tuk (mini taxi). Today he is working as an employed driver, which means he has to pay half of his daily revenues to the taxi owner.

As the civil war flared up again the number of tourists is very small, so that he does not earn enough to get along. Therefore, we bought him a new Tuk-Tuk which enables him to make his living independently.

In the afternoon we met with our Swiss colleague Lotti Loosli. She reported of a huge number of families living in absolute poverty who she had preselected as needy beneficiaries of 23 potential aid projects.

In addition we agreed on when already assisted families and fisher-families are to be visited to hand over rain jackets and caps. Furthermore, we discussed the start of a Kindergarten project and scheduled an "Eyeglass Day".

Additionally we decided to visit two families whose children urgently need heart surgeries.

Wednesday, Oct. 11th

When getting 55 the technician Christie will lose his job in six months. His savings, his repair shop as well as his house were completely destroyed by the Tsunami. We decided to support the reconstruction of his business financially. In turn he assured to train two apprentices having been affected by the Tsunami.



In co-operation with the Lions club Bentota we decided to finance English lessons for 80 pupils of a charity school by buying school material, and paying the teacher's annual salary.

Afterwards we visited a family for which one of our members had accepted a godparenthood. The father had died during the Tsunami. The mother is paralysed. The three sons are attending school. While the oldest will repeat his failed graduation the second son is looking for a vocational training. However, given his insufficient English knowledge, he has at present next to no chance to succeed. Therefore, we enabled him to attend a private tuition school for one year. Given the enormous distance to school and the lacking bus connection respectively we made a bicycle available to him.

We handed over money to another supported family which is living in a Tsunami house several kilometers inland which was made available by a British relief organization. The father, a casual labourer, finds hardly a job and very often has to visit the hospital with his spastic child. However, the next bus stop is seven kilometers away. Therefore, we decided to provide him with a used Tuk-Tuk which enables him to earn some money by carrying passengers as well as driving his kid to the clinic



Afterwards, we visited two more assisted families we had provided with sturdy timber houses. Because of a very generous birthday donation of one of our members and now we could also order toilets and a power connection.



Finally we could fulfill the special desire of a member to care for the vocational training of a poor, but exceptionally talented nine year old girl by sending her to an English private school.



Thursday, Oct. 12th

A year ago we reported that German employees of an international law office made it possible for us to place an order for the construction of a new building for a charity school which had not been funded by the government. Today we had the honour to hand over this school building comprising four class rooms and a teacher room. The solemn ceremony in Panadura was broadcasted by the regional television.



Friday, Oct. 13th

Early in the morning we went to Kalutara. Here we controlled the building progress of an extension building assigned in June for the local mother-child hospital. The building shell is nearly completed. Interior fittings should be finished until January 2007. When accomplished, the formerly inhumane conditions will have been remediated.



Afterwards we visited a heavily damaged school in Induruwa, at which approximately 500 pupils are taught. Since the playground of the primary school was in a disastrous condition we decided to purchase playing equipment (chute, seesaw, swing and climbing scaffolding).

Afterwards we visited the mayor of Bentota. We discussed, among other things, when and where we should organize the planned second "Eyeglass Day", which kids urgently need heart surgery, and how we might further support the district hospital. Since the next public (free) dental clinics are located in Colombo (80 km away) and Ambalangoda (40 km distant) respectively it appeared reasonable to install a dentist station in Bentota hospital where appropriate premises are at hand.

Indeed employment of dental personnel was assured by the government, but no provision of technical equipment. Therefore, we decided to purchase a dentist chair for EURO 3,850. With this donation we will contribute to a proper treatment, especially for the young people.

Afterwards we checked the building progress of the new basic building of Bentota Gamini school. The construction work is in full swing. Soon, the cover over the ground floor is going to be poured.



In the evening we visited eight year old Fatima, who in the meantime was successfully operated at her heart. The family is very happy that Fatima is well.



Saturday, Oct. 14th

To avoid overlaps today we met with the English relief organization "Rebuild Sri Lanka", in order to coordinate planned aid projects.

Sunday, Oct. 15th

This morning we visited the hinterland of Payagala fishing community. There we selected a small property for a widow and mother of two who occupied a rented accommodation before the Tsunami and never received government aid. On the selected plot we will erect a timber building with power connection and a toilet. Though this woman is dearly trying to earn her living by cooking and finery services she only has a poor and irregular income. Therefore, we decided to support this family. Since the Tsunami mother and children are living with their relatives under very restrained conditions. The relatives are, however, no longer able to care for them.



Then we visited six year old Ramesh, who, thanks to our financial assistance, got over his heart surgery. We were pleased to see how well the boy is and how much he'd grown. He is happy of being able to attend school now.



Right after we visited two families. They were very pleased about godfather money, plush toys, ballons and sweets like jellybabies which we'd brought with us.

In the afternoon we travelled to Haburugalla. With a small ceremony we inaugurated a well which we donated to approx. 50 families. In addition we visited a godfather family living nearby and handed over sponsorship money.



In the evening we met with some needleworkers to hand over three sewing machines which we had promised to provide during our last trip.

Monday, Oct. 16th

Today we visited Bentota hospital. The well project we initiated in the course of our last journey was completed so that water supply is

now guaranteed. We delivered various orthopedic goods such as splints and dressing material having been collected in Germany.

Afterwards we visited a plot covering 525 qm which we will acquire to erect three timber buildings for homeless people.

In addition we handed over ten wheelchairs having been acquired in Sri Lanka to paraplegic older persons.



During recent years more than 100 petitions were sent to the mayor, the local administration, and the government from a small village nearby Kosgoda with 39 houses and 100 inhabitants, in order to get the dried drinking water well replaced. So far an answer is still missing - possibly due to difficult overall conditions within the area (accessibility, soil conditions, low ground water level) and associated high costs (approx. EURO 1,500). Half the village's population gathered when our consideration to start a well project became known. After having consulted with a well digger we decided to drill a well during our next journey in February. The people reacted indescribably happy.



Then, we and our Swiss member Lotti Loosli visited 11 more poor families. To two already sponsored families we gave sponsorship money. Four more families qualified for sponsorships. Their respective situation will be presented to German godfather parents. We helped five families by financing roof repairs, house repairs, power connections, furnishings as well as by providing food, school uniforms, and teaching material.



We supported some families by buying smaller items (e.g. spinning wheels for the production of coconut ropes) to contribute to their living.

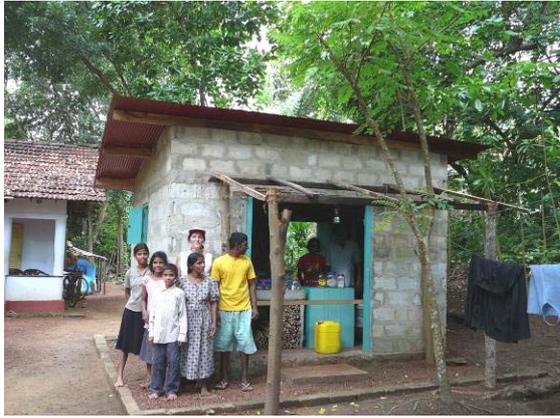
One particular case deeply touched us. A 65 year old widow lives in a 10 sqm single room loam hut. Her children had not visited her for years. She tries to make her living by weaving grass sleeping mats. Earnings are not even sufficient to buy basic foods. Each day there is hunger on the menu. Our member Lotti will supply the starving woman with food parcels regularly.

We arranged for roofing the mud house with palm leaves for the existing roof is leaking dramatically. Furthermore, the holey mud floor will be replaced by a cement layer. To make the hut a humane habitation we will provide a bed, cabinet, table and chair (kids are important to all of us, however old people should not fall into oblivion).



Tuesday, Oct. 17th

Today we visited twelve families in Kosgoda, Ahungalla and Balapitiya. Five families are already sponsored. We handed over the sponsorship money and assigned the delivery of urgently needed beds, mattresses, mosquito nets, cabinets, chairs and a "Petromax" (lamp). We were particularly happy about an asthmatical father of five, who due to his illness wasn't able to work anymore. During our last trip we placed an order to establish a small grocery shop on his property, which he is



running successfully now. Furthermore, his wife contributes to the family's living by producing coconut ropes using equipment donated by us. Not only the kid's health improved significantly, their school performance did, too. Now the family appears to be completely happy.



The extremely poor living conditions of five of the other seven families caused us to arrange sponsorships. For example Lotti introduced a family to us having five kids between four months and eight years of age. The 31 year old unskilled father earns only about 20 EUR a month working as a hand fisher and fishing assistant respectively. The family starved and still lives in an temporary two room shack which was provided in the wake of the devastating Tsunami. For us it was incomprehensible that there was only one double bed for seven people. The sponsorship enables the family to buy urgently needed basic food, and the children can go to school regularly.



The two eldest children of a family of eight, who also live in two rooms of a timber building since the Tsunami, have to sleep at their grandmother's place which is situated several kilometers away.



Finally we purchased two looms for a family with three children, whose father had produced coconut mats manually. From now on he and his wife are able to earn their living.



Wednesday, Oct. 18th

Two days later we got notice of the bomb attack in Hawarane (in the North) which followed the attack on Galle army base (in the South).

Despite heavy monsoons we visited ten families. Five are already sponsored, the situation of three more caused us to look for new sponsorships. The other two were supplied with mess kit, beds, mattresses, mosquito nets, tables, chairs and care parcels.



For poorly educated boys and girls there is hardly a chance to get an apprenticeship. We established an aid programme for five young people, who will get an apprenticeship. Furthermore, an apprentice consulting taking place once per week will be financed by us.

After a Singhalesian had made available a building free of charge we spent EUR 850 on the furnishing of a promotion school for 40 children who have aborted their education in Brahakkmanewatte/Balapitiya.

At a cost of EUR 75 we ordered a water mattress for an old lady. Due to a kidney disease she is permanently bedridden and is suffering bedsores. In the evening we discussed how to organize the "Hearing Aid Day" scheduled for Oct. 19th.

Thursday, Oct. 19th

In Germany we had collected 14 analog hearing aids from different hearing aids acoustics.

Since many natives had addressed us regarding a hearing aid, we asked Dr. Kiriella from the hospital in Gonagalle to accompany us during "Ear Day". Free of charge he could help 9 out of 15 selected persons with a hearing aid. It was impressing to witness an 8 year old boy, which could not speak due to his auditory defect, hearing sounds the first time in his life. His parents hadn't been able to raise the EURO 200 for a hearing aid.



And for us it was great to see the bright faces of the patients, who could hear again. However, the prospects for a 15 year old girl were pretty bad. She needs very strong digital hearing aids for both ears, and the costs would

amount to approx. EUR 700. Alternatively a surgery would cost about EUR 20,000 per ear. Therefore we decided to purchase digital hearing aids for this girl.

Right afterwards we drove to a 58 year old lady, whose legs had been amputated. For her and her siblings it was impossible to save money for a wheelchair (approx. EUR 80). It is beyond description, how happy the handicapped woman was to get into the next room within less than a minute and off the four walls she had been confined to.



Afterwards we visited eight needy families. For five families we could arrange new sponsorships, so that their future living as well as school attendance of the kids are guaranteed. In the dilapidated houses of three other families - for Europeans unbelievable - no single piece of furniture existed. Grandparents, parents and three up to five children slept on the bare floor. We provided beds, mattresses, mosquito nets, tables, cabinets, chairs etc.



Friday, Oct. 20th

We visited a poor family living in a house resembling a mere shell in the hinterland of Induruwa. Being a casual worker the father earns money sporadically. He has to feed a wife, a granny as well as five children between one and fourteen years of age. Their two rooms were furnished with one bed, a cabinet, several chairs and one table only. We purchased some furniture and arranged a sponsorship.



Right after we drove to Gonedalle regional hospital in the hinterland of Induruwa. This hospital consists of four 60 year old buildings. The rooms look like not having been renovated since the building was completed. The hospital's equipment is dated and completely obsolete. For example, there is no backup power generator, though during dry seasons power supply is often interrupted for several hours a day.

There are only three physicians working a 24-hours service. The two midwives employed have to act as nurses. Caretaker and charwoman included the staff comprises only 8 people. The hospital is frequented by 200 - 300 patients a day. Men's ward, women's ward and maternity ward have only eight beds each.



The annual budget including costs for medicine is 700,000 Rupies (approx. EUR 55,000). Despite hundreds of letters addressing the government the hospital does not receive any additional funding. The conditions are disastrous. We decided to help this hospital. The senior doctor prepared a "wish list", which we will execute gradually during our next journeys.



Saturday, Oct. 21st

At the first anniversary of our stone housing scheme "Coconut Garden" the residents organized a decent ceremony with a buddhist monk. During the event we handed over two wheelchairs to handicapped persons, and a tricycle to a paraplegic. His implement as a lot seller has been destroyed. Furthermore a casual labourer, whose leg was severely hurt, got a Tuk-Tuk; he is now able to earn his living as a driver.





Sunday, Oct. 22nd

In the morning we handed over 40 child chairs made of plastic to a buddhist Sundays school.



Monday, Oct. 23rd

In the morning we handed over a Rollator to a hemiplegic widow and mother of three. Her 17 year old son has finished school, but will hardly find a job without further education. We made it possible for him to attend a vocational school of an English relief organization free of charge.



In the afternoon we visited three families in Beruwala, Bentota and Payagala, for which we could arrange sponsorships. In addition we visited a destitute family, to which we passed on food and furniture.

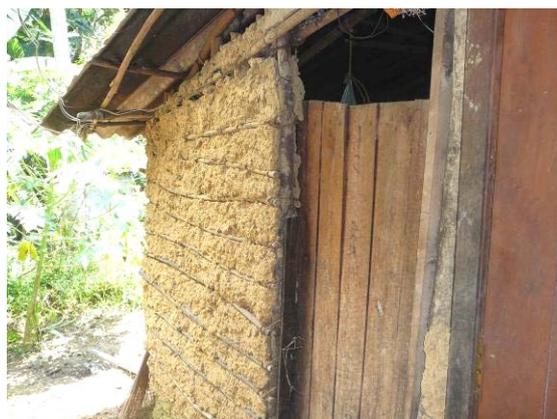
Tuesday, Oct. 24th

Together with the new mayor of Bentota, an acquaintance of us for many years, we visited six families, which were said to be particularly needy. Thanks to donations of two members

we were able to finance four heart surgeries (three girls, six years old, four years old, two years old, and a three year old boy). A donation allowing for another heart surgery was made available. However, financial participation (approx. 140,000 Rupies) of the presidential fund is still not confirmed; we expect this to happen in February next year.



Furthermore, we visited two very, very poor families living in loam huts. The fathers are casual labourers and cinnamon peelers respectively. They can work seasonally only and are neither able to make for a proper living of their families, nor can they afford paying school money. We have arrange sponsorships.





It were joyous events in Komalla and Haburugalla when we handed over approx. 200 reading glasses to people, who had sent us their prescriptions afore. Once again we say thanks to all members, who collected eyeglasses and as well to Monika, Design optics in Duisburg (who made most of the eyeglasses). Finally we visited two godfather families and handed over sponsorship money.



Finally we visited two godfather families, which we looked after for longer and handed over the sponsorship money.

Wednesday, Oct. 25th

Today, again a mostly rainy day, we used for the completion of inevitable office work.

Thursday, Oct., 26th

Early in the morning the foundation stone of the mother-child hospital in Moragalla/Beruwala was solemnly laid. For this project the monks of the temple "Buddha Siri Vihari" made available a 500 sqm plot free of charge. The mayor, regional and district politicians, and many families living in the surrounding areas attended this ceremony.



We spent the rest of the day in Gonegalle/Induruwa. We had organized an "Eyeglass Day" in co-operation with the Betona Lions club. The population had been informed by newspaper reports about free opthalmologic examinations in the Gonegalle temple. About 350 persons got appropriate glasses. For 20 people we paid eye surgeries at a cost of EUR 50 each.





Friday, Oct. 27th

Thanks to the generous support by Schüchtermann hospital in Bad Rothenfelde we could inform the senior doctor of Bentota hospital that he will get medical instruments needed.

In the hospital a six year old girl was introduced to us, who urgently needs a heart surgery. After having deducted the contribution of the presidential fund as well as the amount raised by her parents we have donated the still necessary EUR 1,370.



Saturday, Oct. 28th

We had a concluding discussion with all people involved in the project, which is to be continued when we will return in 2007.

The next trip will start on February 3rd, 2007. It'll last three weeks.