

## Report on the second Mission of Mercy to Sri Lanka June 4<sup>th</sup> – 19<sup>th</sup>, 2005

Up to that day our society received a contribution total of € 252.300,-. The number of members increased to 245. The society wishes to express its gratitude to all who have given contribution.

The society's attendees of the second mission of mercy have been Christine and Hans Heinrichs as well as Ute and Christian Berlinghof. The travel expenses have been paid by the members themselves. We took along altogether € 80.000,- whereof € 30.000,- had been designed for the continuation of the building of the 10 stone houses.

After a smooth flight we arrived without any problems in Colombo – together with our 14 pieces of luggage (11 of them filled with aid supplies). Our fears we could have problems with customs turned out to be needless. Because of the considerably luggage there where two Minivans waiting for our transport to the hotel.

In April already we had transferred the amount of € 6.000,- to Sri Lanka as we had received the urgent request for another 40 wooden houses.

After getting the reports of all of our confidants we had been very curious to see the progress of construction work of the stone houses. What a positive surprise: two houses had already been finished up to the roofing tiles. The roofing of the third one was just taking place. Another two houses shall be finished up to the roofing by the end of June. The other five houses still happened to be bare brickwork. It is scheduled to have all 10 houses completely finished confided to their future occupants during our next mission of mercy in October. Because of the torrential monsoon rain from March till May the construction works had been a bit delayed. The routing of the road had been kind of adventurous as the big wheels of the trucks transformed the dirt track into a mass of mud. As the condition of the roads are unacceptable especially for the residents we have contacted the building authority and asked for the assignment of a fortification of the street.



Originally the water supply was planned to be solely carried out from the well situated on the estate. This would have meant, that the houses wouldn't have had a source for drinking water (like most of the buildings in the area). As the next water connection is only 1.000 metres away, we have authorized the construction of a water conduit, to have drinking water supply in all of our houses. For electricity and water supply as well as for the fortification of the road we estimated about € 13.000,-

Of course we have also been interested in the state of building of the 100 wooden houses. 98 houses have already been finished, the two remaining ones have been shortly before finishing. When we inspected the houses we where shocked: in 48 houses the residents had to sleep upon busses put on the sheer cement floor. The only furniture one or two chairs, sometimes/rarely in addition of a wardrobe. In some houses even mosquito nets

have been missing. Nevertheless the people have been deeply grateful for the shelter they had received. Spontaneously we decided to provide for each of the 48 houses individually needed furniture such as beds and wardrobes etc.



We also met some of the fishermen and their families. Lucky to be the owners of fixed fishing boats, they had no money to buy new flews. Here as well we spontaneously decided to buy new flews.

Our fleet has increased by two boats up to altogether 10 boats. For one fisherman we have bought a new boat, for one guy we found a very good used one. On top of that we have bought several flews for 10 fishermen in need.



When we heard, that there was a camp with 68 families (about 250 persons) about 2,4

kilometres inbound, close to the village of Kalutara, still living in tents, who didn't receive any help except of the tents and some food up to now, we didn't believe it. But we had to learn that this was a fact. Although government representatives had visited the camp after the Tsunami disaster five and a half month ago, no more help arrived up to now. The camp was located on a sports field with slight hillside situation. Although there had moats been graved between the tents we still watched the water running through the tents during a rainstorm. In some tents there have been no furniture at all.



Parents slept with their little children on the sheer ground. The people were short-temperedly as the government didn't do anything. Of course we couldn't help all families with our limited means but we bought six estates for six families with many children and commissioned to build a wooden house. To ensure, that these families will not have to live in empty rooms we arranged to provide them a basic furniture configuration, according to the family size consisting of one or two beds with mattresses, mosquito nets, a wardrobe, several chairs and one table. Thereafter we contacted a private English charity organisation and asked them kindly to take care for some more families.



With the large number of donated toys and stuffed animals we brought joy to lots of children in several camps and tentative

quarters. To look into the bright eyes of these children in the middle of all that misery was indescribable.



Although there have been already almost six months passed since the tsunami we still found some families, who remain to live in their badly damaged houses but who had lost all of their furniture and household articles. In these cases we also provided some kind of basic equipment (cutlery, plates, cookware and some furniture).

We have been appalled at the fact, that parents, who had lost their jobs couldn't afford the school fee for their children. We knew some German families who were disposed to become godparents of such poor children. We will make contact between these German families and the stranded families in Sri Lanka. We would be happy if there would get more persons in touch with us in respect of adopting god parenthoods for families. We talk about approximately € 50,- per month/family during a period of 5 – 6 years. If you are interested, please feel free to contact us.

By buying a new sewing and looping machine for a sewer, who had lost his little sewing shop to the sea during the tsunami, we gave this man the opportunity to restart.

The more than generous donation from the partners and employees of a German law firm enabled us to implement an school project in Tangalle, that we had recommended. The first step was to replace the 25 computer workstations, that had fallen victim to the tsunami. New tables, chairs and personal computers as well as a copy machine (the total amount of about 3,8 Mio Rupees had to be paid cash – the biggest available banknote in Sri Lanka is worth 1.000 Rupees) were given to the school in a ceremonial act. The second step will follow shortly by providing teaching material for all subjects, also made possible by a generous donation from the law firm.



### **Result:**

Almost six months after the tsunami disaster the heaps of rubble of the destroyed houses have shrunk, but they still dominate the landscape of most of the coast regions. A lot of tent camps have given way to wooden houses during the last three months but even in these houses the people live in grinding poverty. And still much too many of the tent camps exist, being not really a shelter for the families with children and babies in the heat or during the monsoon rain. Not only we but also the population asked themselves, what the government is doing for these people at all. The administration only makes discussions and plans just to abandon it the next day. There is no conclusion in sight. We couldn't see also, what the big charity organisations do for the people in need with all the millions they have collected as donation. As an exception Unicef is building emergency accommodation at many

places. The "Sri Lanka Red Cross" is providing drinking water to these places. Regarding an article in the magazine "Stern" the "Red Cross received € 124,6 Mio of cash donation. They have spent only € 33,7 Mio up to now. Why do they withhold the money? The inhabitants need urgent help NOW, not in three years time. Without the aid of a considerable number of private charity organisations there still wouldn't be much progress since the tsunami. Only these private organisations provide directly relief to the people in need. As the tourism is still paralyzed, lots of shops, hotels and restaurants still are closed, the unemployment is very high. The government relief program for fishermen gets hardly off the ground. Some fishermen are in possession of a boat again, but they don't have flews and are not able to afford buying some. Other fishermen do own a motor, but don't have a boat. After almost half a year there is still a quite chaotic situation. At the south coast near Kogalla we were told by fisher families who had almost all lost their houses and had to bemoan the loss of hundreds of family members (including lots of children) that they had received from the government only 5.000 Rupees twice (= a total of € 80,-) of compensation. As their destroyed houses all had been situated within the 100 metres line to the sea, they are not even allowed to be rebuilt. Compensatory estates are announced but nobody knows when and where. Still the help of private foreign charity organisations is urgently needed, as neither the big charity organisations nor the government seem to be able to shift the misery and the poverty of the tsunami victims.

Our next mission of mercy will take place in October 2005. It would be extremely helpful, if you would keep on to give financial support. We do ensure you that 100% of the collected money will reach the victims of the tsunami.

