



A QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER OF ORPHAN GRAIN TRAIN, INC.
Spring 2005 Volume 12, Issue 3

Tsunami and our response in Jesus' name

by the Rev. Ray S. Wilke

. . . Just as the Lord assigned each one. I planted, Apollos watered, but God caused the growth. Therefore, neither the one who plants nor the one who waters is anything, but only God, who causes the growth. The one who plants and the one who waters are equal, and each will receive wages in proportion to his labor. For we are Gods co-workers; you are God's field. . . . —*I Corinthians 3:5-9*

With only days remaining in 2004, on December 26, a section of the earth's crust hundreds of miles long tore off its moorings, slamming into the seawater above. The resulting tsunami traveled 300 to 400 miles per hour to rear up like a hydra-wall 20 to 70 feet tall onto the shores. The resulting collision swept away some 200,000 lives and millions of livelihoods across 14 nations.

Now, as broken-hearted survivors piece together the remnants of their lives, others have turned to innovative ways to help. In movements of this kind it often takes a Scotland Yard detective to figure out all the avenues and all the people involved.

Big disasters plead for big responses. The planet-changing tsunami of December 26, 2004, made a mighty big splash, changing lives for a long time to come. Some thought it was the end of the world, "the wave surrounded us and overpowered us like an army of water." Anyone familiar with Jesus' words of warning to Jerusalem must surely have thought of them at such a time as this: "When you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, know that its desolation is at hand. Then those in Judea must flee to the mountains. Let those within the city escape from it, and let those in the countryside not enter the city, for these days are a time of punishment when all the scriptures are fulfilled." In A.D. 70 when General Titus marched forth from Rome against Jerusalem most of the people forgot Jesus' warning to flee to the hills and perished inside the walls of the city.

Historic events such as this often are preceded by prophetic voices that warn of things to come and announce useful responses. Days after the tsunami, in the middle of the Indian Ocean an Indian Coast Guard helicopter flew 40 miles west of Port Blair in the Andaman Islands. There, hovering over North Sentinel Island, it was targeted by wooden arrows, good evidence that the inhabitants had survived the waves. The people of the island are hunter-gatherers who choose to live in isolation. They are a group of about 500 aboriginal people who ran to the high ground after they felt the earthquake.

The hills became their refuge and place of safety because they remembered and heeded the words of their fathers. Not unlike the traveling song of ascents on the lips of those returned exiles from Babylon who

remembered the songs sung by their fathers when danger threatened. Often sung as a blessing to one going on a dangerous journey, the song sent him on his way with the overshadowing protection of God. We know it today as Psalm 121, "The Lord My Guardian, Song of Ascents."

I raise my eyes toward the mountains. From where will my help come? My help comes from the Lord, the maker of heaven and earth. God will not allow your foot to slip; your guardian does not sleep. The Lord is your guardian; the Lord is your shade at your right hand. . . . The Lord will guard your coming and going both now and forever.

This is our prayer as we seek to be the implements of God's hand in extending the love of Jesus toward those still struggling. Mr. John Peter Kirubakaran, a Lutheran Christian in India, head of United Evangelical Mission (UEM) is Orphan Grain Train's man in India extending the care of Jesus on behalf of all Orphan Grain Train volunteers. What follows are excerpts of his reports.



Orphan Grain Train's partner in India, UEM, immediately sent two truck loads of clothing that had arrived from Orphan Grain Train, to the needy places like Nagappatinam, Velānganni, and Cuddalore. The people thronged around the trucks to receive help which clearly highlighted the helplessness of the people.

Orphan Grain Train and UEM intervene

by Mr. John Peter Kirubakaran

Tsunami?

The word and phenomenon of Tsunami was entirely unheard of in the coastal regions of India until December 26, 2004. The Bay of Bengal was well known for its tidal waves, storms, cyclones and other upheavals of the sea. But never had the sea water itself traveled like a wall at the speed of 300-400 mile per hour.

Surprisingly, the tsunami had virtually no effect on those who were on the sea. Ships, boats, and canoes did not experience anything but a slight rise in the water level.

It was pure horror for the coastal inhabitants when they saw the water rise to about 45-55 feet above sea level.

Orphan Grain Train's partner in India, UEM, wanted to help the people who were affected by the Tsunami. So, two teams were sent to the Tamil Nadu State to survey the extent of damage caused. One of the teams visited the Northern and Central Tamil Nadu and the other team visited the Southern Tamil Nadu.

The Coastal Communities

The fishermen go out in the night for fishing into the sea and return in the morning. Some of the well-to-do people own large mechanized boats and venture into the sea for a week or so. Others with their fiber boats go in for a day. But most of the fishermen own catamarans, or canoes which are made of planks of wood which are bound together. The haul of fish is then sold on the shores in the morning. Small businessmen to exporters come there to the shores to bargain and buy.

(Note: *It was at this time that the Tsunami hit the shores and that is why there was great loss of property and lives especially in the ports.*)

Other communities? livelihood is largely dependant on the fishing communities. They buy fish from them and sell in villages. They are also

involved in various other works such as petty shops, working as daily wagers in the fishing export companies etc.

When our staff visited the shores and walked the length of the coastal areas, the sights were heartbreaking. Houses were damaged, boats were flung across habitations, trees uprooted and many died. The pathetic truth is that the women and children are the ones who topped the number of deaths. Every single thing that these people earned went into the sea.

One of the inhabitants commented, "This mother (i.e., the Sea goddess) gave us everything that we had and now she has taken away every thing from us." We intervened and helped the people by supplying their needs.

Our hearts are heavy. I am still not able to come out of the devastating stories and sights that we saw and hear. It is like a war zone. Everything wiped (out) and still people are trying to overcome. Although many organizations are working, all of them cannot serve everyone. There are pockets here and there left out without any attention. We selected these villages where not many have visited. We are very glad that we are now focusing on these villages. The government is very happy about us helping the villages hit by the Tsunami. The government has (also) asked us to help with children's and women's shelters.

Preliminary Relief

As soon as we heard that the Tsunami had washed clear all the coasts, UEM immediately sent two truck loads of clothing (that arrived from Orphan Grain Train the day after the Tsunami) to the needy places like Nagappatinam, Velānganni, and Cuddalore. The people thronged around the trucks to receive help which clearly highlighted the helplessness of the people.



"The people of all the villages expressed their heartfelt thanks to our partner Orphan Grain Train for their timely and priceless help that was rendered. The faces of the people filled with smiles, joy and their expressions conveyed a thousand 'Thanks.'"



(top photo) About 300 fans were distributed to the families at Kallaar Village. The people were very thankful for all that they had received. This distribution was done with the permission of the (government) Collector.

(bottom photo) One month's food ration for a family of four.



"We could feel the joy in the hearts of people as they received groceries for one whole month and numerous 'Thanks!'"

The Second Phase of Relief

Orphan Grain Train was contacted for additional help, which came within a short time. After much thought and discussion, it was decided that the second phase of relief would include groceries.

The first month we catered to 1,070 families in four different coastal villages. The average cost was \$59.15 per family. The following four months will cost \$42.85 per family. We will buy groceries for five months.

Some examples of relief efforts thus far

Annachamkuppam is about 20 kilometers from Pondicherry in the Vilupuram District of Tamil Nadu. This village has 320 families and all of them are fishermen. With the loss of lives and boats, the villagers have gone through a great trauma and are still pining from their loss. Now their greatest challenge is "Food". There is no income and no source to earn that. In February we purchased groceries that were needed for one whole month for 320 families. We met the Collector of the Vilupuram District and shared our desire to give groceries to Annachamkuppam village. The Collector was impressed and very happy and commended our good work. Distribution was hectic. All the 320 families had gathered around us and were eager to receive their portion. The people were provided with rice and all other necessary groceries that are needed for a month. The joy and smiles on the faces of the people was worth a sight. It gave us all a sense of satisfaction and fulfillment. They were so grateful and thanked UEM for helping them in their distress.

Kallaar is a fishermen village situated in the Nagappatinam District of Tamil Nadu State. This village was worst hit during the Tsunami. About 120 people had died in this village and many were left orphans and childless. The houses were totally destroyed. There was a great loss to property as well. The people everywhere seem to be so disillusioned and traumatized. What a wreck, the Nagappatinam port was. The boats had smashed into each other and were lying in a heap.

When our team visited the village, the people welcomed us warmly and shared their problems and needs. UEM not wanting to duplicate

the providing of groceries since the government was contemplating to do so, decided on another course of action. The government had earlier given the people temporary shelters made of tin sheets. The people said that they need a table fan, for the heat inside the tin houses was unbearable. After much thought we decided that this was indeed a real need for the people.

About 300 fans were distributed to the families. The people were very thankful for all that they had received. This distribution was done with the permission of the Collector, in the presence of the Deputy who was deputed by the District Revenue Officer for relief.

At Nagercoil near Kolachel, Rev. Y. Suvisheshamuthu of the India Evangelical Lutheran Church graciously opened the church premises for us to store the groceries and also for distribution.

Rev. Christian Samraj was also of great help and identified the places for us at Vadaku Vanjur, a coastal fishermen village which was greatly affected by the Tsunami, and there were many deaths. We distributed the groceries to the people and immediately left for another village.

Chinnorpettai is a small village where the tsunami had played havoc. There are about 63 families in this village: We distributed the groceries here too. The people of both these villages were very happy and thanked UEM/OGT for all the help

Karan Theru, a fishermen village, and Kesavanpalya, a Dalit village, were equally affected by the Tsunami. We could feel the joy in the hearts of people as they received groceries for one whole month and we could see their never-ending smiles and the numerous "thanks" behind those folded hands.

We also plan to provide other items, which are needful like, almirahs (chests of drawers), emergency lamps, and chairs, etc. It was an enthralling experience for all our team members. Also we felt blessed to serve the people with all our might. We express our heartfelt thanks to our partner Orphan Grain Train for helping the tsunami affected people of our nation.

For more news about tsunami relief please turn to the Orphan Grain Train web page at www.orphangraintrain.org.



One of several feeding stations supplied by Orphan Grain Train and served by UEM-India.



Tsunami survivors camp with tents and tarps where once a fishing village stood.

Orphan Grain Train

P.O. Box 1466

Norfolk, NE 68702-1466

Telephone: 402-371-7393

Non-Profit
Organization
U.S. Postage
PAID
Norfolk, NE
Permit No. 529

Please mark your calendar!

Orphan Grain Train
CONVENTION 2005
September 30–October 1,
in Norfolk, Nebraska

Groundbreaking took place on March 29, 2005, for Orphan Grain Train's new office building at Norfolk, Neb.

Left to right: Rev. Ray S. Wilke, President, Orphan Grain Train; Mr. James Brenneman, Secretary/Treasurer; Mr. Melvin Warneke, 2nd Vice-President; Mr. Clayton Andrews, Vice-President; Rev. Russell Sommerfeld, Lutheran–Church Missouri Synod Nebraska District President; and Dr. Gordon Adams, Mayor of Norfolk.

The new building (illustration below) will be located across the street from Orphan Grain Train's warehouse at Norfolk, Neb. It will serve the administrative needs of this ministry.

