

Kiwanis Visions of Hope Project, Sri Lanka

The village of Pandiruppu, situated on the east coast of Sri Lanka adjacent to Kalmunai, was among the hardest hit of all the Sri Lankan coastal communities, with 1,711 lives lost in Pandiruppu alone from the tsunami's impact, and 8,571 deaths in the Kalmunai municipal area, for the worst death toll of the tsunami in all of Sri Lanka. Children who survived were severely traumatized by loss of kin, friends, homes, and belongings.

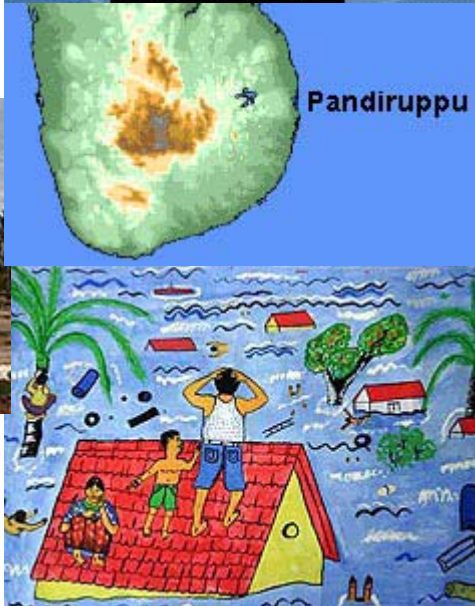
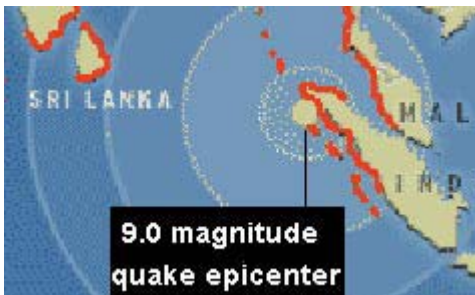


In February 2005 Kiwanis EC&C Division 18 of Canada contacted the Kiwanis Club of Colombo City to propose a major project to assist tsunami affected children of Sri Lanka. After months of fruitless searching and bureaucratic dead ends that nearly led to Kiwanis Club of Colombo City giving up the search, it learned of the existence of the Anathi Project, an all-volunteer effort to assist children's homes throughout the eastern coastal belt.



Volunteers joined the VoH Project and it began to move forward. Identifying the village of Pandiruppu as having an urgent need for a facility to care for tsunami affected children was the first step.

However, it soon became apparent that, under new Sri Lankan legislation, establishment of new homes for children is officially discouraged to the point of making it nearly impossible. At that time the Project learned of the existence of the Nava Shakti Welfare Organization in Pandiruppu, an existing community



Drawings by children of Kalmunai who survived the Tsunami



based organization that had taken upon itself the initiative to care for 50+ children, ages 4-15, all of whom were affected by the tsunami.

Kiwanis Division 18 of Canada provided funding for the land upon which the Centre was built. **Kiwanis Club of Colombo City** provided funding for project activities to be conducted in an alternative facility before, during, and after the construction phase.

The Visions of Hope Project was initiated by Kiwanis Division 18 of Canada with assistance from the Kiwanis Club of Colombo City. It is administered by the **Sri Lanka Children's Trust**, a registered national voluntary service organization that undertakes small projects to improve sanitation, health, nutrition, and education for children affected by poverty, conflict, disabilities, and natural disaster.



The Visions of Hope Project benefits 75 children ages 4-15 who attend afternoon and evening free tuition classes. All receive nutritional supplements in the form of fresh fruits and milk five days a week. The children all reside nearby and return home to their parents or legal guardians each evening.

The Visions of Hope Project aims to improve the health, nutrition, and educational opportunities for tsunami affected children of age 4-15 for years to come, until they leave school and enter university or become employable.

The vision of this project is to benefit the tsunami affected children of Pandiruppu and vicinity with direct support in terms of better health, nutrition, vocational and other training, and general well being.

The Project planned, built, and today operates a tsunami affected neighbourhood day care and children's rehabilitation center in close proximity to affected children and

their families in Pandiruppu. This neighbourhood center provides specialized child care, enhanced nutrition, vocational and other (artistic, academic, etc.) training, and related activities to rehabilitate tsunami affected children.

VoH Children's Center promotes disaster management, sources scholarships for talented children, and conducts special activities like educational tours. The facility also accommodates related activities like day care for tsunami-affected pre-schoolers at times of day when the children are attending school and space is available.



Today the Project looks after the interests and well being of 75 tsunami affected children of Pandiruppu through the method of community based rehabilitation (CBR) by conducting the following activities:

- Sri Lankan and foreign volunteers teach songs, rhymes, games, and activities to children according to age group.
- Qualified teachers conduct free after school tuition classes that follow the national public school curriculum.
- Activities are designed to reinforce formal education, so children's attention spans are increased, self-confidence restored, etc.
- 'Synergy Club' social & artistic activities counter tsunami victims' shyness, depression, loneliness, etc. and facilitate return to normal psychological well being.
- Visions of Hope Project children relate to one another as brothers & sisters who have survived a common catastrophe, so their bonds of friendship are exceptionally strong.
- The VoH Children's Center provides them with a friendly and positive supportive environment away from the alcoholism and family violence that plague tsunami-traumatized families.



- Nutrition: daily fresh fruit & milk essential for growing bodies, as nutritional supplement for children and staff volunteers, that are lacking in their heavy but nutritionally poor diets.
- Health & nutrition awareness, career guidance, disaster preparedness and other counselling activities
- Social work – local volunteers go into the homes of affected families to identify needs and remedial actions to help individual affected children.



- CD-DVD shows in the evenings of educational and children's interest displayed using digital projector.
- Educational tours: (bi-)annual bus outings for Nava Shakti children
- Supervised swimming lessons on weekends at nearby community pool.
- Theatre productions for and by children with costumes.
- Scholarships planned for talented children in arts & vocational fields.
- Academic activities linked to the local school calendar and curriculum.

For more information about Kiwanis Visions of Hope Project, contact the **Kiwanis Club of Colombo City:**

- President Daya Ratnayake
- President Elect Bernard Joseph
- Past President Ferhad Nilgria
- Secretary Arjuna Yatawara
- Treasurer Joe K. De Silva

Tel. (+94) 777301664

Web: www.Kiwanis.lk

e-mail: info@kiwanis.org

See also:

- Visions of Hope Project web site
www.NavaShakti.org
- Sri Lanka Children's Trust web site
www.SLCTrust.org