

Comprehensive Note

Tsunami – Nagapattinam - Anugriha

To

Our Valued Donors

Anugriha Charitable Trust
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Arasavanangkadu, Tiruvarur District
Document detailing Tsunami Work

Form No: 01 Rev: 2 22-June-05

Temporary Shelter for 25 families by the Govt



We distributed books and stationery before their school began



Razed to the ground. The area in the photo should have 100 house



Boats damaged and Catumaram pulverised



The 200 houses that are now debris



Vellapallam

Now we have vessels. The food too will come



Vessels to make a home



A packet bigger than himself



Learning the ropes - going fishing with Raghavan



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Introduction:

The tsunami struck a part of India, devastating an important coast of Nagapattinam covering over 64 villages in the district. This is our report on the happenings there as we experienced it.

Notes have been added for the subsequent period activity since the first note on 28 April 2005. The parts so updated are in this colour

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1. Background

The initial shock of the news of the Tsunami drove us to understand the area under attack. We started with the modest idea that the two of us may be able to help with some children who have been affected providing them a safe haven free of influences of 'disaster-struck' areas. We imagined that we would provide temporary relief by getting the children to our school and would live in the premises until things were ready for them to go back.

As we went along the work areas we defined for ourselves were as follows:

- Give ourselves the opportunity to work in disaster-area. We had done it in the past working in relief work in the Morvi Floods and the Latur earthquake situations. We had done little in the Bhuj tragedy and we were feeling the inability to help, we being far away. This was then a unique chance, the place we live is only 50 kms from the disaster area. .
- Understand the relief work provided to the villagers from larger organizations with their vast funding resources and supplement them in small ways to fill the gaps in the requirement and supply situations.

2. The initial relief work:

2.1. *The first review*

We began with our work on 27th December 2004.

- Tiruvarur the nearest ‘safe’ town to the Nagapattinam coast was besieged. We had never seen Tiruvarur (the town nearest to our school) so full of people; but people from the coastal areas had fled and found refuge in various marriage halls and schools in the town.
- The first two days went in responding to their plight and providing initial relief; milk, food, clothing and generally housing them in the available large buildings.
- We then set out to the actual area under Tsunami devastation. We visited two villages Kallar and Vellapallam and generally went through Nagapattinam and Velanganni.

2.2. *Our initial thoughts*

We found that other than in Vellapallam there were quite a few organizations (of course much larger than ours!) involved there. We were not sure what just two individuals with such limited resources as ourselves could do.

But Vellapallam drew us on December 29, 2004 – three days after the Tsunami struck, and meeting some of the people from the village, talking to them, feeling the pain of their loss made us decide that we would have to do something for them, with them.

In hindsight, our first meeting with them gave us an indication of the struggles in the days to come.

The first thing that they said was they do not need us as we would be coming in the way of their getting ‘foreign’ and government aid.

Can you give us 10 million, 1 million ... half a million ? This was the first question. We were aghast. Here we were two individuals with little over what we were wearing. We could run away... what were we getting into? Can we actually do anything?

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3. Our limitations

3.1. *Limitations*

Our limitations looked like:

- We had little by way of resources and certainly nothing to write home about if we decided to work.
- The expectations of the fisher-folk were so high
- It was obvious that they were in for a major disappointment – their dreams could never be matched. This was brought home to us even more so when we attended the NGO coordination cell meetings.
- Just as we had decided not to bother and stay home and continue our work at school the phones began to ring almost continually. The first calls were from Mr Hamied of CIPLA, Jayashree Janardhan and Reshma Madhusudan of Asha, Mike Weimann of Kratza and our own family members. All wanted to know what we were doing and ‘not worry about funds’.

3.2. *Our first relief work:*

- The first few days we helped with the food, drinking water and medicines.
- We bought water tanks to store drinking water as the water was all contaminated and saline. We had a truck that came in everyday bringing fresh water from the main village which is about 3kms from the fishermen community
- Coordinated with the youth congress leader Arun Pawar from Sholapur and helped in the distribution of clothes, bedsheets, towels and such material
- Dug six bore-wells so that they have water.
- Distributed notebooks and other school items for children from class six to eleven
- Provided the ladies with a small ‘feel clean’ pack containing some oil, soap, soap-nut powder, comb, safety pins and ‘bindi’ packet

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4. Government Processes:

4.1. *Relief provided by the Government Agencies:*

- ❖ The government provided the following relief measures:
 - Clearing up the debris of the torn down houses.
 - Putting up the electricity poles and restoring electricity and telephone lines.
 - Providing a fire station at the village.
 - Distribution of monies as detailed later in the note.
- ❖ The Central Government announced a relief package a month ago in which they said that each fisherman would be given a loan of Rs.1,50,000/- of which Rs.52,500/- would be a subsidy and the balance as a loan repayable in 7 years at an 7% interest.
- ❖ They however, ran a note which said that the subsidy would be given directly to the participating bankers. This meant that the state government would be ignored in the disbursement process. This irked the State Government and they objected vociferously and have stopped all processes in the loan disbursement. The stalemate continues even as of date. The fishermen in the meanwhile have asked for the entire amount of the loan to be subsidised. This has been used as an argument by the State Government as a reason for non-disbursement.
This has been a non-starter.
- ❖ The state government in the meantime has disbursed the following as we understand it from the villagers and other reports in the press:
 - Rs. 4,000 per family as gratis payment
 - Rs.10,000 to each person for purchase of fishing nets.
 - Rs.22,000 to each person have a catamaran for purchase of new catamarans
 - Rs. 20,000 to each boat owner for boat repair etc. (a few were paid for the entire cost of the boat – although there was no such case in Vellapallam.)
 - Rs. 5,000 to each owner of marine engines for repair of their engines
 - Rs. 1,000 to each member owning a goat
 - Rs. 1,000 per family for three months along with ration of rice, pulses, condiments etc.
 - About Rs.4,00,000 was released to families per member deceased.

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- ❖ Areas have not yet been demarcated for permanent shelters. There is a tripartite disagreement. The local landowners / holders feel that they need to be compensated above the going rate of land per acre as their cultivable land will be taken, and therefore, livelihood will be marred. The fisher folk do not want to go too inland as that would bother their work; the government is not ready to have them build homes within 100mts for fear of a repeat disaster. We do not wish to build and then find that we are too far away from the permanent settlement, and this was getting too delayed for our interest in it to be sustained.

As of a week ago a part of the area in the village has been identified. Now the regulations which began with housing 1000 meters from the sea and was reduced to 500 meters from the sea has now become less than 200 meters from the sea. One area has been identified and the NGOs are to begin the construction work.

4.2. Relief provided by other Non-Government Agencies include:

- ❖ Temporary shelters have been constructed per government regulations.
- ❖ Vellapallam has found a new school building in place of the old one which was in dilapidated.
- ❖ The community hall has got a face lift with an additional floor.
- ❖ A large area has been cleaned up for use by the village. This space had been devastated by the tsunami filling it with brackish water and debris.
- ❖ 90 marine engines have been donated.
- ❖ Fishing nets worth over Rs.20,00,000 have been disbursed
- ❖ Fans and other amenities worth over Rs.5,000 to each family have been given
- ❖ Milk packets are distributed everyday to each family – this continues to date
- ❖ A child study center for children below five has been started
- ❖ Regular tuitions were provided for children of the primary and middle school.
- ❖ A small park has been erected for the children of the school
- ❖ Several house-hold articles – clothes, stove, vessels, fan, food articles etc. have been provided by several NGOs (at least this is true of Vellapallam)
- ❖ NGOs have been designated to provide housing to each of the 330 families at a cost of Rs.1,50,000 each. This work is to begin soon.
- ❖ One NGO has promised more boats to groups who are so willing.
- ❖ Self-help groups have been formed and work is progressing in that area.

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5. Areas of our efforts:

5.1. *For the men:*

- After some waiting for the stalemate to break, we in our impatience, decided that we would pay the whole amount of the motors (instead of giving monies after deducting the subsidy element from the motor cost). This meant that we would have to pay about Rs.20,00,000/- instead of Rs.10,00,000/- or Rs.13,00,000/- as envisaged earlier.

But we felt it was getting on in time and the delay was abominable. Each in their own way was contributing to delay in them going back to the sea and begin earning again and this we felt spoke poorly of all of us, the Central Government, the State Government and the NGOs willing to help. We therefore decided that we would just pay Rs.20 lakhs and then get the motors. The boats are being repaired by the fishermen partly at their own costs and they have some other group sponsoring the nets to add to their salvaged ones. This way with the motor in place, they would be able to get back to work.

The decision was loudly protested against by most people we met and spoke to, but we decided to go ahead. We have paid the entire amount to the engine supplying company for the purchase of 50 numbers of 7HP motors

We had hoped that the government would provide about 35 to 50 % subsidy on the motors and we would provide the balance amount from the trust. Due to government regulations, we have to purchase the motors in the name of the fisherman (so that the subsidy on the motor can be availed). Hence we placed this order on a trading agent. He has procured the motors in bulk with our advance and will make individual invoices in each fisherman's name.

We have now received the motors. However, since we insisted that within a period of 5 years ending on 30th April, 2010 they repay the 17000/- that they would have paid, there were at first no takers. We insisted that the money be repaid into a village account and that the money could be used for further infrastructure as seen essential at the time. But when the govt. announced that there was to be no more relief measures, 50 fisher people have signed up and have agreed to repay at the end of 5 years. Outlay of Rs.20,00,000/-

Subsequently with increased number of persons acquiring boats for themselves using the relief monies from the government the village panchayat requested us to

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buy fifteen more boats. However, we have said that we would provide ten and that is the number we have ordered and have obtained delivery of the engines. But we are still to receive the power pole assembly pieces and hence we are waiting for them before handing over the engines to the seekers. This cost us Rs. 4,00,000/- approx

We are really happy to say that a month after we have actually handed over the engines almost all of them are going to sea. None of the engines we have provided have been sold or otherwise disposed yet, and that itself is a consolation.

- We have placed orders for 39 fishing nets. This is for those owning single catamarams who have not been issued nets by the govt.

This has been enhanced with a further requirement of 9 numbers which we agreed to and have hence procured and distributed. Thus every person who owned single catamarams or who has since purchased one has now been supplied nets by us. This cost us about Rs.2,00,000/-

5.2. *For the women:*

- The women wanted specific vessels that they use for their cooking. While they have got vessels during the initial relief measures, they were stainless steel vessels meant for families of four. Since the average families are 7 in number, we got them what they wanted. This cost us about Rs.1,10,000/-
- The women also wanted their 'professional implements' called 'ammukkuthi' for cutting and then drying fish. We have placed an order for 330 ammukkuthis. We hope to supply these by the next fortnight.
- The women asked for cutters (called aru-ma-manai). This is also to required to slice fish, the tell us. We have obtained samples of this cutter and ordered for 330 numbers of this contraption, which are now ready. We shall carry them along with the ammukkuthis and give them off together. We expect the above two items to cost us about Rs.55,000/- to Rs.75,000/-

5.3. *For the youngsters:*

- We have had a medical camp for children. Besides identifying and ensuring children with special problems have been taken to the nearest general hospital,

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vitamin, calcium and iron tonics were distributed to make up for poor nutrition and lack of fish.

➤ On the youngsters' front we have

- ❖ Purchased toys, games, balls of various sizes and indoor activity based puzzles etc. We have taken up the space of one of the ladies of the village for a small retainer and she issues the games to the children to play and keeps an account of the same. This has been quite a hit with the children and she has her hands full in the evenings.
- ❖ We have placed in that center several thousand rupees worth of toys and games and colouring material given to us/purchased by us. Linda from Seattle has helped set up a small center where the above things have been placed and had organised it pretty well (*Thank you Linda!*). The center is still popular.
- ❖ Sneha - an NGO has set up a kids' center and a teacher has been appointed to occupy the children between three and five years, through the day. For these children we purchased toys, games, balls of various sizes and indoor activities such as puzzles, construction Lego set, wooden blocks etc. and handed them over to Sneha volunteer working there. We have promised the teacher that we would speak to the organization heads and set up a process by which we would be able to provide them with several such small assistance.
- ❖ Seeing the activities of the two organizations – the PDA (a group with its office in Madurai) and Sneha (an NGO which has been working in several fishing villages for the last 20 years), we were wondering how our own concept of the children activity center would be organized. Whereas we were still wondering on the way we could organize the activity and find the place for this, these two organizations have already begun with some 'activity center'.

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5.4. General

- Providing motorized bore-wells and laying pipeline and taps so that water facilities would be moved to the door-steps of the temporary shelters. This cost us about Rs.20,000/-
- Water tanks have been put up on top of the school building. We found that the water tanks given by us and others were lying simply discarded and in poor state of use. After bringing this up with the panchayat (the control group of the village), we sought to place the tanks in strategic building tops and have dug borewells and laid pipelines so that water may be stored. This cost us about Rs. 10,000/-
- We have become the friendly neighbourhood listening post to their problems. Many hours and days we have spent just going there being with them, allowing them to talk, to give vent to their feelings, to share their thoughts.

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6. Issues to be addressed:

- After a lot of deliberation we have proposed to take up the construction of a toilet block consisting of 10 to 12 toilets for the primary and middle school. Presently the school does not have such a facility. Discussions have been held with the school head-master, the panchayat and ourselves and we have identified the place to house the toilet block. Work is to begin soon and we hope the rooms would be ready by 15th August. This is estimated at a cost of about Rs.2,00,000/-
- Another proposal that we have accepted is the construction of a “Computer Center” for the school. We have agreed to initially build a 400 square foot room, with three computers. (They asked us for one computer but we felt that with more than 300 children in the school we should atleast begin with three). Work is to begin soon and we hope the rooms would be ready by 15th August. This is estimated at a cost of about Rs.4,00,000/-
- A third proposal that we have agreed to is the construction of mini-auditorium. The proposed size is about 30 feet x 30 feet with two rooms of 100 square feet attached to it. It would be a raised platform with provision to stage shows and conduct village meetings. Earlier they had the procedure of constructing one such place on a temporary basis every year at a cost of Rs.25,000 a year they say. This construction would provide a permanent place for such events. This is estimated at a cost of about Rs.5,00,000/-
- After all this we may still have some funds left over. But we are being cautious that it is put to the best use, that we can figure. We are still hopeful that we could do something substantial that would see the prosperity of the village in times to come. For the moment however, all the demands from them have been revolving around their livelihood and housing and day to day requirements. They have not yet been weaned from that thinking process – something we hope will happen as soon as they are settled into their permanent homes, and cease to feel the overwhelming sense of loss. God be with us.

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7. Issues on hold:

- Children Activity Centre: As noted earlier in the note : Whereas we were still wondering on the way we could organize the activity and find the place for this, these two organizations have already begun with some 'activity center'. Although our conception of this 'activity center' is much more comprehensive and detailed – moving towards education rather than keeping children busy - we are not sure how the same can be implemented, in view of two such organizations already working with children. We do feel that we would rather supplement them with some financial and material assistance, perhaps train their teachers in our methods rather than start a third center, as if in competition.

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Work done at Vellapallam

Months September and October 2005

Photo Clip

T-Shirts and shorts were distributed to a 20 kid kabbaddi team and a 20 kid football team and a 11 kid cricket team. The kids had been badgering us for quite some time with the refrain that the older boys had been given something but the younger ones got no such dress although they had teams too!! This statement was hotly contested by the older children saying that the little ones knew nothing and it was a waste giving them a dress; quite forgetting of course, that in their younger days they too would have frequently wanted something with the older ones got!! So we decided to ensure that atleast all the boys in the 11-12 year age group got a dress each. There were about 50 children as per the records and so they split up. We asked the kids to make a list each. For sure we received lists of cricket teams even from six and seven year olds!! We ignored all except the ones who were in the 11-12 year age bracket and made dresses for them. The moment they got it, there was a terrific scuffle and in an instant they had all changed into the new shorts and t-shirts and were wanting to be photographed (a thing we had completely forgotten). Late though the day was by this time we did and the photo is up on the net.

320 'ammukuthis' (knives that the women folk use in their day to day work for drying fish) were distributed. The women complained that we had done quite a few lakhs worth for the men and the kids but had not done them justice. They had only been given a feel clean packet and then a set of vessels that had been hand picked for them. When asked what tool they use most they indicated that they use the vessel we had earlier given and the ammukuthi. It seemed interesting to provide them with this. To this they added one item an 'arumamanai' again a tool to cut the fish. The ladies were really thrilled that a sizable 'ammukuthi' and a large 'arumamanai' was now a part of each house-hold to be placed beside the vessels given earlier. There was the usual scramble, noise and shouting until some wise old women shouted over the din and wisely informed them that we had always ensured that every person got something – that was reassuring coming from them!!

We had occasion to meet the retiring head-master who the village held in high esteem as the one person who had made a difference to the village by building up the school to its present level. As a gesture we asked him on the day he was leaving what he would like to present the school as a mark of his stint there. Just to be cautious we mentioned that we had about Rs.75,000. He said, "I would like two things – a) two toilets one for boys and one for girls and b) One computer." The request was too modest. We

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were a trifle ashamed that we suggested a limit of Rs.75,000/- and he really stuck to it; and we had been worried that he would ask something of a few lakhs!!

On enquiring we found that there were about 300+ children in the school. Looking at the number we suggested that ten toilets (five for the girls, four for the boys and one for the teachers) would be appropriate. They were very happy that their problem was being looked at afresh! A place was identified and we have, after comparing quotes from three masons, given the contract for construction of the 10 individual tiled toilets with a separate borewell and motor, an overhead water tank, a septic tank and with electrical fittings in each toilet. They were quite taken aback. When they asked for two toilets they meant one area for the boys and one for the girls – the concept of individual toilets had not occurred to them!! The proposed cost of the toilets is about Rs.2,00,000/- (approx 4500 USD or 3600 euros). The construction has already begun and we hope to finish the same before January end.

On the computer front we looked at the number of children who may be using the computer and decided that they need at least four computer. We also decided that we have to first make a room in which it would be possible to place a computer and hence we called for quotations for a 200 square feet room to house the computers. The approximate cost of this too seemed to work out to about Rs.2,20,000/- (approx 5000 USD or 4000 euros). The construction has already begun and we hope to finish the same before January end. We have already purchased the computers as we got a good deal with a person from whom we had ordered for computers for our school

Every year in Vellapallam several neighbouring villages are brought together and a variety program is held. This function they say has more than 3000 attendees. For this they have been erecting every year a stage at a cost of more than Rs.50,000/-. But this year they were afraid that this function would not be held as they would be unable to muster such a large amount. It was thought that a more permanent structure would be beneficial. Besides being used for the function it could house the temple festivities, the school functions and of course wedding receptions. So we got quotations from the masons and we have begun the construction of a large 'stage' with its own green rooms. The estimated cost is Rs4,00,000/- (approx 8,000 euros).

We have been visiting the sites and the construction work is going on well and we expect to complete work on time. The mason and his troupe live at Vellapallam itself. Since the 'stage' is at a spot that cannot be reached by any vehicle, a pair of bullocks and a cart has been purchased to transfer loads from the main road to the spot.

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The permanent housing structures are going up. The ngos connected with the construction have had them move out of the temporary shelters since the permanent houses are coming up at the same spot. They were not given any help / materials to move out and reconstruct a temporary shelter. The rains have already come. Since only 200 odd temporary shelters needed to be shifted immediately, we decided to help by giving Rs 65,000/- for buying materials / pay labour to enable them shift before rains.

Further, since there has been a dispute as to who should give up his land for the benefit of the village so that permanent houses be put up, they have been unable to muster enough money to buy the required land. We decided that we would step in temporarily with Rs1,00,000, help them buy the land and have them return the amount when they get reimbursed by the government. That should be by the end of December.

300 sets of 100 odd picture flash cards have been printed. The topics include animals, birds, fruits, vegetables, vehicles, colours, flags... They shall be distributed among ngos that already have activity centres for children. We have taken the opportunity to also distribute the same for all balwadis of Thiruvarur district through the offices of the Project Officer at the Collectorate. The children of the villages are no better than those affected by the tsunami, we thought. The approxiamte cost of all sets has worked out to Rs75,000/-

All in all, rehabilitation work is going on albeit at snail's pace. We are still playing a very low profile, filling in wherever the bigger ngos do not venture. The fishermen have begun work, but the catch seems low and the buyers are few. The big buyers have not yet begun to place orders and drying fish in this season (it has begun to rain) is impossible.