



Asian Tsunami 2005

Over £1 million in support for Tsunami victims

Over the course of a few hours on 26 December 2004, twelve countries in Asia and Africa were devastated by one of the worst natural disasters in living memory. Triggered by an earthquake off the coast of Indonesia, enormous waves travelling at speeds of up to 500 miles an hour (800 km/h) and weighing many millions of tonnes crashed onto the shores of countries across the Indian Ocean, killing more than 250,000 people and leaving millions more homeless or displaced. The worst affected countries included Indonesia, India, Sri Lanka and Thailand. People around the world sprang to help the survivors. The Freemasons' Grand Charity, working on behalf of Freemasons across England and Wales, was one of the first organisations to respond to appeals for assistance. Within hours of the first reports of the disaster the President of the Grand Charity authorised an emergency grant of £100,000 to be paid to the British Red Cross.

Immediate emergency grants for the tsunami victims totalled £135,000

The grant helped to fund the Red Cross's initial flight carrying emergency relief items, including clothes, medical kits, cooking equipment and emergency shelters, to the worst affected areas. This initial donation was followed by grants totalling £35,000 to the Masonic Districts of Sri Lanka and Madras to assist their relief efforts.

In the days following the disaster the true scale of the destruction began to emerge. It was clear that extensive support would be needed to assist in the longer-term rebuilding and regeneration of the region. In response to this need a specific relief chest was established. The response was overwhelming and within a month over £175,000 had been deposited in the chest.



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Over the following weeks and months, generous donations from individuals, Lodges and Provinces continued to pour in.

In the first 12 months of operation, deposits to the tsunami relief chest (including interest and Gift Aid) totalled more than £850,000.

At an early stage, the Council of the Grand Charity agreed to focus its support on projects bringing relief to children orphaned or otherwise affected by the tsunami and selected Plan International, a leading international community development organisation, as its main delivery partner for projects in India, Indonesia and Sri Lanka. The Council also agreed to support an orphanage in Thailand as part of a project developed by the Light of Siam Lodge.

All of the projects supported with funding from the tsunami Relief Chest have been selected for the long-lasting legacy they will help to create for their communities, districts and regions.



Projects

India, scarf – £40,000

In conjunction with Plan and the District Grand Lodge of Madras, the Grand Charity supported the Schizophrenia Research Foundation's (SCARF) study of the long-term impact of the tsunami on the psychological and social wellbeing of survivors. The project ran for 3 years and improved understanding of the effects of the disaster, helping to improve care for survivors of future disasters.

India, Villapuram– £320,000

The lives of more than 78,000 people were affected when the tsunami hit the coastal fishing community of Villapuram, India. A donation of over £300,000 from the special Relief Chest supported a 3-year, multi-faceted Plan project to rebuild the lives of the residents of 10 fishing villages in the district. All of the activities were delivered in partnership with Rural Education and Action for Liberation (REAL), a local non-governmental organisation which has over 15 years experience working with poor communities. The short and long-term health of the community has been supported through access to basic health care and regular check-ups for all community groups and a range of educational initiatives on issues such as nutrition, sanitation, reproductive health and personal hygiene.

'...I was the weakest student in my class at school... after joining the evening tuition classes organised by Plan and REAL I have started enjoying my lessons and taking a bigger interest in my work....I have started doing much better in my studies.'

P Prasanth, student at tuition centre.



Almost 200 young children are benefiting from childcare centres offering a secure and stable environment, with access to medical check ups, nutritional food and counselling. Educational evening classes played an important role in rebuilding the shattered confidence of a further 375 children over five and re-ignited their enthusiasm for studying. New boats and nets, solar-powered fish dryers and training in business and craft skills helped to secure the livelihoods of hundreds of families, including households headed by widows and other vulnerable females. Nearly 900 women were helped to develop long-term sustainable incomes with the support of self-help groups. This financial independence will play an important role in securing a voice for the women, in village matters, for many years to come.

The children of Villapuram will benefit from the lasting legacy of their regenerated community with a positive future, to which they will continue to contribute as they grow and support their own families.

CASE STUDY

Asian Tsunami 2005

PAGE 3 OF 3

Hambantota, Sri Lanka – £200,000

Over 5,000 children lost their school when the tsunami struck Hambantota. The ratio of pupils to teachers doubled and school life became a crowded, noisy and unsettling experience.

'I am still afraid. I have flashbacks sometimes and nightmares... I want to get on in life and perhaps be a teacher'
Kalta, Hambantota



Over two years, the grant from the Grand Charity helped Plan to build a new school, designed with the input of local children. With capacity for more than 3,000 children and improved provision, the school has broadened access to an excellent education for the youth of Hambantota.

'A new school is our priority. We are building in partnership with Plan, looking at the plans together with the community. We are all prepared to recruit new teachers and make a fresh start for children.' MK Bandula Chandratne, District Education Officer

Construction started in late 2005 and classes commenced in 2007.

Indonesia – £110,000

Aceh Besar benefited from a school constructed by Plan with the help of funding from the Grand Charity. Rebuilding the education system was one of the key foundations of recovery for the country hit hardest by the tsunami. The school will play a role in children's education for many years to come.



Working with Plan

Plan is a child-centred community development organisation working in 66 countries. It aims to achieve lasting improvements in the quality of life of deprived children through sustainable long-term social and economic development. Since Plan was already active in many of the countries hit by the tsunami, the Grand Charity judged that it had the experience and knowledge to help with the longer-term redevelopment activities essential to the devastated regions.

Plan carries out ongoing monitoring and evaluation of all projects, reviewing achievements and assessing progress and future requirements.

To find out more about Plan, please go to www.plan-uk.org

