

January 2006

The one-year anniversary of the Asian Tsunami of 2004 has passed, and this provides an opportunity to reflect on our accomplishments to date. Thank you so much for your generous donations to our fundraising efforts.

With your assistance, we raised close to \$9,000. Special thanks go to *The Deli* in Norman, Oklahoma, and my colleague Bob Bursik at the University of Missouri-St. Louis. *The Deli* had a fundraising evening for us that netted nearly \$2,300. And Bob, now sporting lovely chin-length tresses, sacrificed his trademark ponytail in a public cutting ceremony that took place in the window of *Blueberry Hill* in St. Louis in February 2005. His locks raised \$4,000 for our cause!



“Ponytail” Bob Bursik sacrifices his trademark locks for our cause...

Special thanks also to our friends Lyle and Patricia Rhoades at Hibbard Hardware in St. Clair, Missouri; folks at Mount Olive Tavern, HSB Smoke Shop, All Star Tattoo, Blueberry Hill, Ciceros, Riddles, Third Generation; and Sarah Reed at Toys R Us; for raising money in their establishments. And thanks to each of you for helping us make a difference.

You will recall that we initiated our fundraising to help the family of our friend Samsan, who lost his life in the tsunami. I visited his family in Unawatuna in July 2005. Samsan’s family was more fortunate than some tsunami victims, in that his body was recovered. During my visit, Samsan’s son Maddu showed me photos from his funeral, and together we visited Samsan’s grave. I am pleased to report that Samsan’s wife Vimula is well looked after by her daughter, who lives inland from the tsunami-affected areas and is financially stable.



Samsan’s grave



Samsan’s wife Vimula & grandson

We are concentrating part of our efforts on Samsan's sons Maddu and Chuti Maddu, who lost their livelihoods in the tsunami. Our funds will assist Maddu in restoring the family restaurant on Unawatuna's beach. Construction was delayed as a result of initial government regulations banning reconstruction within 100 meters of the sea. We waited to obtain official clearance and hired a local civil engineer to oversee the project. In the meantime, however, Maddu moved ahead with the rebuilding. He has asked that we supply the kitchen appliances, furniture and table linens for the restaurant on its completion. We are estimating the cost at around \$2,000.



*Samsan's restaurant,
New Years Day, 2004*



*Post-Tsunami,
July, 2005*



*Under construction,
January, 2006*

Maddu has two children: a girl of eleven, and a four-year-old son. In addition, Samsan's youngest son, Chuti Maddu, has two children: a five-year-old daughter, and a ten-month-old daughter, born just three months after the tsunami. To ensure sustained support for Samsan's grandchildren, we have opened children's savings accounts at Hatton National Bank for each of the four children, in the amount of Rupees 50,000 each (approximately \$500 each, for a total of \$2,000). These accounts have an interest rate of 5.5 percent, and are accessible only after the child's 18th birthday. Since the average monthly wage in Sri Lanka is only around \$100, these accounts will provide a meaningful sum for each of the four children when they reach adulthood.



Maddu & his son



Chuti Maddu & family

With a remaining balance of approximately \$5,000, we have invested in several additional projects, which I carefully chose to ensure that each dollar was spent for the greatest impact.

First, Punyaka's father and uncle were the founders of Taos Yacht Company, a boat manufacturing firm in Sri Lanka. Through his work at Taos, Punyaka got to know a fishing boat builder, Mr. Jayatillaka, from Galle, a port town in Southern Sri Lanka just up the coast from Unawatuna. Mr. Jayatillaka's boatyard was completely destroyed in the tsunami. To assist in his effort to relocate and rebuild the boatyard, we have provided Rupees 100,000 (approximately \$1,000). With our and other donations, he has begun manufacturing fishing boats once again. This was a timely investment, not just for Mr. Jayatillaka, but also for the livelihood of many tsunami-affected families, since many earned their livings as fishermen and lost their fishing boats in the waves.



*Mr. Jayatillaka's boatyard,
Post-tsunami (January 2005)*



*with newly manufactured boats,
(July 2005)*

Second, we provided 50,000 rupees (approximately \$500) to a dear, impoverished woman, Puncha, who lives in Pannapitiya, near Colombo. Puncha was faced with a land erosion problem on her small property, and with the funds we provided, she was able to build a retaining wall to secure her property. With this small amount of money, we have made a difference in easing her life's difficulties.



Puncha

Finally, after the tsunami, I worked with the staff at the University of Missouri-St. Louis' Center for International Studies and its director, Joel Glassman, to establish a campus-wide fundraiser to assist in school reconstruction in Sri Lanka. In all, 163 of the island's schools were destroyed or damaged in the tsunami. I placed approximately \$2,500 of our private tsunami funds into the UM-St. Louis Reconstruction Project, and have spent the remaining \$1,000 on site for the project.

The campus project is being completed in partnership with the Sri Lanka Library Association (SLLA), and targets two tsunami-affected schools: Thambilivul Maha Vidyalaya, a public secondary school in the village of Tirrukkovil on Sri Lanka's war-torn east coast; and Andaragasyaya Vidyalaya, a public primary school in Kirinda, a small village on the country's southeast coast. Though reconstruction work has been completed at Thambilivul, I have not been able to travel safely to visit the school due to escalating political violence in the region. However, Andaragasyaya is safe to travel to, and has developed into a wonderful, sustainable project.



Andaragasyaya Vidyalaya students

Andaragasyaya serves about 80 students; several lost their fathers to the tsunami and all lost their families' livelihoods. Villagers make their livings from fishing and paddy cultivation, both of which were severely affected. The school staff includes a principal, and eight teachers and staff, including four who have worked for no pay at the school for the last four years. Before our project began, Andaragasyaya had neither electricity nor indoor toilet facilities.

Even with such infrastructural limitations, we were very impressed with the school's principal and staff, and their dedication to the children who attend the school. I was also touched by the children themselves. Despite suffering tremendous losses, and living in extreme poverty, they nonetheless show such potential and resilience. This is such a wonderful opportunity to provide them with educational resources to improve their lives.

We have already made great strides in our work at the school. Library renovations are completed, and the library now has electricity, a ceiling and fan, large windows, a TV and DVD player, colorful new furniture, many new books, and other educational materials. The official opening was held on January 12, 2006, and was well-attended by parents and administrators from the Ministry of Education.

ANDARAGASYAYA LIBRARY



Pre-renovation (July 2005)



Post-renovation (January 2006)

OFFICIAL OPENING, JANUARY 12, 2006



Parents & students



with Premila Gamage, SLLA



lighting the ceremonial oil lamp

Our project goals, however, extend beyond infrastructural repairs. With Premila Gamage of the Sri Lanka Library Association, we have committed to building a sustained connection to the school, sponsoring workshops for students and parents, staff training, and providing a site for after-school and weekend activities for the children. With our private tsunami funds, I am sponsoring the school librarians to attend a one-year library sciences training course. The SLLA has waived the young women's tuition; however they must travel seven hours by bus each week to attend the course. Our funds provide money for their bus fare and meals (\$40/month).

Because they live in a remote, economically impoverished village, the students have had few extracurricular activities available. Our project has provided the means to change this. Premila raised private funds to sponsor an art and music workshop for the children (fall, 2005), and we then selected seven students to paint murals for the renovated library walls. This provided the children the opportunity to actively participate in the renovations, which they eagerly undertook.

MURAL PROJECT, JANUARY 2006



WHAT'S NEXT?

If you are interested in contributing additional funds to our project at Andaragasyaya, here's what we're up to in the near future:

1. I am selling sets of notecards with reproductions of Andaragasyaya children's artwork. The cards and envelopes are made of colorful recycled paper, produced especially for our project by Chakra, Pvt. Ltd., an eco-friendly recycled paper company in Sri Lanka. Sets of eight notecards sell for \$10, and all proceeds go to sponsoring additional programs at Andaragasyaya. Please contact me at jodymiller@umsl.edu if you are interested in purchasing a set.
2. Plans are in the works to take Andaragasyaya's 4th and 5th graders on a field trip to Colombo, Sri Lanka's capital. These youngsters have never been beyond the nearest town, and the field trip will provide them with the chance to see the national museum, planetarium, zoo, and aquarium. We are seeking volunteers to sponsor each of the 27 students, at a cost of \$45 per student for the two night trip. Donations can be sent to the UM-St. Louis Tsunami Reconstruction Project (details provided below).
3. And, of course, we are seeking continued support to sustain ongoing programming for the children at Andaragasyaya. The wonderful thing about our project is just how far a dollar can go. Everything we've accomplished to date at Andaragasyaya has cost just \$5,000, and **100 percent** of the money we've raised has gone directly to the project.

To make an additional **tax deductible** donation, please send checks to:

UM-St. Louis Tsunami Reconstruction Project
Center for International Studies
366 Social Sciences Building
University of Missouri-St. Louis
St. Louis, MO 63121

I hope you are pleased with the progress we've made, and appreciate seeing the direct impact of your generous donations.

Wishing you a safe and healthy new year.

Jody & Punyaka Miller-Gunawardena

