

PROJECT VOLUNTEERS TO ASSIST IN SRI LANKA??

You would have noticed in the February edition of 'Rotary Down Under' that RIPN Bill Boyd has emphasized the importance of Rotary Clubs and Districts planning their tsunami aid programs very carefully. Bill notes that Governments and large relief agencies are best placed to undertake the immediate provision of relief; whereas Rotary is at its best when it is directing its efforts to rebuilding and securing the long-term future of unfortunate victims. Bill Boyd strongly supports the initiative suggested by PRIP Sir Clem Renouf together with PRIP Glen Kinross, for Australian Rotary Districts to involve themselves in the rebuilding of a total village, but where might this be? Well, District 9640 has a suggestion for consideration Sri Lanka.

On March 10th, several Rotarians from RAWCS and 2 District Governors met with 4 representatives of a committee called the Sri Lanka Disaster Relief Fund of Queensland (SLDRFQ). All members of the above committee are Australians of long-standing but are of Sri Lankan origin. Needless to say their hearts have gone out to their country of origin and they have been working tirelessly since early January to raise funds to assist with disaster relief.

The SLDRFQ have raised a significant amount of money and have made a commitment to assist 2 villages in Sri Lanka one in the south (Sinhalese) and one in the east (Tamil). Impartiality and unity across all ethnicities is a hallmark of this group. Sri Lanka has been enduring a civil war on ethnic division for many years so this aspect is important.

Another commitment they have made is that whatever they do will accord with the plans of the Sri Lankan Government. This government planning has taken some time (distracted by the early rush to rebuild) and the universal determination now is to get it right. Like Bill Boyd the SLDRFQ believes that careful planning for rebuilding for the future is the best way forward. So they haven't rushed into a project as yet. It may take a few more weeks before any projects can be finalized because at the moment the two co-chairmen of SLDRFQ are over in Sri Lanka meeting with Government officials, material suppliers etc. and checking out all details.

So, where does Rotary fit in? Well, the SLDRFQ has approached us about the feasibility of setting up a Project Volunteers project in Sri Lanka. This would offer them the added advantage of directing their donors to the tax deductibility of our RAWCS while aiming at a specific project in Sri Lanka. We had a most agreeable meeting (lubricated by a drop of red wine), and there was general support for the idea by all Rotarians around the table.

I have discussed this idea with PRIP Glen Kinross and he says it sounds close to the mark of what he and Sir Clem Renouf had in mind. There is a lot more to be worked out of course. The two

SLDRQF chairmen have gone over armed with our Project Volunteers application form and we've given them additional questions to ask. I've also given them contact details for the DG in that area DG Lucky Peiris in Colombo. Hopefully DG Lucky will help them identify an active Sri Lankan Rotary club or two who are keen to be the local partners. This is the only way to ensure proper management and accountability of any project we identify. I understand Sri Lankan Rotary clubs are active in rehabilitation work. I am told there are already some Rotary PV teams working in Sri Lanka. I look forward to the return of these chairmen in about 2-3 weeks to tell us if there is scope for a project for D9640. I'll report next month!!

Meanwhile here's a few points taken from a recent report prepared by the Asian Development Bank and others, on the damage and needs assessment.

- The earthquake triggered a series of tsunami waves that radiated through the Bay of Bengal at a rate of more than 500 kilometers per hour.
- Along the coastline of Sri Lanka impacts vary considerably among different areas affected by the tsunami. Except in extremely small pockets, the tsunami has affected a narrow strip along the southern and western coastlines of 500 metres or less at elevations below 205-3 metres. The north east coastline appears to have borne the brunt of the disaster with affected areas reaching 203 km inland.
- Areas protected by natural barriers such as mangroves and sand dunes have been left virtually unaffected.
- The percentage of the coastal population affected ranges from an estimated 35% in Kilinochi to 80% in Mullaitivu and 78% in Amparai coastal district divisions.
- Vulnerable groups such as poor fishermen living close to the shore in simple houses and shelters have borne the brunt of the negative impacts.
- All of the dug wells located in coastal areas where seawater has penetrated have become brackish and polluted by wastewater and seepage from damaged septic tanks. This is a serious public health issue as most local water sources have been contaminated. In addition, the pipe borne water supply system in the affected coastal areas is largely out of service because of damage to the distribution network.
- The tsunami surge completely destroyed around 99,480 homes and partially damaged about 44,290. The completely and partially damaged houses together comprise 13% of the housing stock in the administrative divisions along the coast. The net replacement cost for housing is estimated between US\$437million to US\$487million.

Terry Loos has given us this information and he is the son-in-law of PDG Ken Smith. Terry is a member of the SLDRQF. We look forward to further developments and will keep you all informed.



Left - Lismore Central RC celebrates the Centennial

Right - PDG Ross Smith inducts new member Ross Smith into the RC of Mullumbimby! They even look alike!

