

# Disaster Relief

*"It is essential that doctors should have the sterling virtues of love and compassion."*

–Sri Sathya Sai Baba, January 21, 1994

Natural disasters often cause widespread devastation affecting the individual, community, and society. To provide immediate assistance to the victims of such calamities, a proactive and broad approach is necessary. A comprehensive assessment of needs is required, not only at the individual level, but also at the family, community, and societal levels. These needs can be categorised as (a) medical needs, which encompass the physical, emotional, and psychological aspects, and (b) non-medical needs, such as proper shelter, sanitation, clean drinking water, healthy food and education, as well as spiritual and socioeconomic assistance. The need can also be designated as short and long term.

Whenever natural calamities have caused havoc to human life, the Sri Sathya Sai Organisation has been extremely responsive in providing assistance to the affected population. Under the direction and guidance of the Sri Sathya Sai Organisation in India and the International Medical Committee, teams of volunteers have quickly reached the affected areas, assessed the needs, and developed plans. The relief teams were composed of members in the medical, paramedical, and non-medical fields.

Medical services included administration of first aid, treatment of acute and chronic conditions, and eye care with the provision of eyeglasses. More importantly, because of the sudden catastrophic nature of such calamities, grief counseling was given to the affected individuals, families, and large groups. This allows the individual, the family, and the community to emotionally cope with the situation and move on with their lives. Non-medical relief included the provision of food, clean safe drinking water, shelters, sanitation, clothes, blankets, bed-sheets, cooking utensils, lighting supplies, and other basic necessities. Community-level needs were also addressed. These were mainly to reestablish educational infrastructure and provide school supplies. Tools of the trade such as sewing machines, bicycles, woodworking tools, etc., were provided so that people could return to their normal lives. All activities were carried out with an undercurrent of Divine Love, humility, compassion, empathy, and respect for the distressed. Below are summaries of several disaster relief activities organised all over the world.

## India

### Andhra Pradesh: Visakhapatnam District

**Gurudev Express Train Accident** The district rendered noteworthy assistance to the passengers of the Gurudev Express that had an accident at Duvvada on June 11, 2007. Sathya Sai Youth and other volunteers evacuated the passengers from the derailed railway cars and took them to the emergency relief camp. They put the injured in ambulances for further treatment in various hospitals. They also collected the luggage and handed it over to the owners and deposited the unclaimed luggage with railway authorities. They distributed about 6,000 water packets to the passengers at the accident site and relief camp and provided food and other assistance to the patients and attendants till their hospital discharge.

### Bihar

**Dirpul (Flood Relief)** This is a story of what unfolded in one of the most-populous states of India—Bihar—in August 2008. Each year, the river Kosi flows into the inhabited lands of Bihar and destroys crops and property. On the night of August 18, the river broke its embankment at Kusaha in Nepal and through a huge 2-km breach in the dam a huge wall of 22 feet of water started rushing in furiously and washed away everything: buildings, people, cattle, castles, trees, etc. that were in its way. Thirteen districts were affected, but in four districts the damage was severe with Supaul being the worst.

The *New York Times* reported it as the worst flood in the area in 50 years; the headline pronounced: “Millions Displaced by Floods in India.” The prime minister of India declared it a “national calamity”. The Indian army and non-governmental organisations operated the biggest flood rescue operation in India in more than 50 years. More than 2.3 million people were stranded. At least 247,000 acres of wheat and rice paddy farmland were destroyed. Over 800 villages were destroyed and over 1,000 people lost their lives. It was unprecedented, unexpected, and the most severe devastation the state had seen in half a century.

**Sathya Sai Organisation Response** Members of the Sathya Sai Organisation of Supaul rushed to the site of devastation. They used motorcycles to immediately ride towards the affected areas and the sights they saw were staggering. They returned and immediately started preparing for relief work. The government and other non-governmental organisations, which were ill prepared for a calamity of such magnitude, were still trying to come to grips with the situation. Meanwhile, the spirited Sathya Sai volunteers collected essential food items and on the night of August 21 served more than 2,000 people. They went into villages that were completely isolated and difficult to approach. In fact, it was so risky to visit those remote pockets of inhabitants that the police were stopping people from entering those areas. However, Sathya Sai volunteers were not afraid and the Sathya Sai Organisation was the first to start relief work in this area. Loaded with *poha* (beaten rice), jaggery, biscuits, milk, salt, candles, bread, clothes, and medicines, these supplies were distributed to the various villages. Twenty volunteers served from 9 at night till 4 in the morning with the help of torches. They located every individual seeking help in the destroyed zone of Supaul and offered them food and clothes. Overwhelmed with gratitude, the flood victims thanked the volunteers of the Sri Sathya Sai Organisation for their unconditional love.

### Orissa

**2008 Floods** Orissa witnessed one of the most severe floods in the last 40 years in September 2008. Out of 30 districts of Orissa, 18 were severely affected by floods. In this time of calamity, Sathya Sai workers worked day and night to save, feed and console flood victims. Relief in the form of dry food, cooked food, tarpaulins, drinking water, clothes, medicines, and other articles of daily need was provided to hundreds of thousands affected by the floods. New houses to homeless people were provided by the Sathya Sai Organisation.

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**Coromandel Train Accident** On February 14, 2009, the Coromandel Express had a serious accident at Jajpur. Sri Sathya Sai Seva Organisation of Orissa, whose members were at a nearby Sai Mandir, responded immediately. A team of 60 members of the Sathya Sai

Organisation carried the injured to the Sai Mandir. They saved lives, donated blood, and rescued trapped passengers.

### Tamil Nadu



**Disaster Relief Training** Since 2005, Tamil Nadu has been actively providing disaster management training to the youth in Tamil Nadu. Recently the Sathya Sai Organisation was called upon to impart similar training to police inspector trainees at the newly inaugurated Tamil Nadu Police Academy, Vandalur, near Chennai. The trainees enthusiastically participated in the various emergency methods of rescue, first aid techniques, and practical demonstrations in fire fighting. The police officers and trainees were impressed by the commitment and dedication of the entire team of trainers of the Sathya Sai Organisation.

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**2008 Floods** Many areas of Chennai and its suburbs were flooded in the wake of cyclone “Nisha” from November 27-30, 2008. Many low-lying areas and slums in the Kancheepuram and Thanjavur Districts were also flooded because of incessant rains. The Sri Sathya Sai Seva Organisation of Tamil Nadu immediately swung into action and provided food packets and drinking water to the affected people. A total of 1,522 volunteers participated in this service activity and distributed more than 10,000 food packets daily for three days to alleviate the suffering of the people who were completely stranded.

## North America

### USA

**Hurricane Katrina** On August 29, 2005, Hurricane Katrina made landfall in the State of Louisiana as a category 4 hurricane. It cut a swath of destruction that was the worst in American history over the last 100 years. It devastated the central Gulf Coast States of the United States. Cities such as New Orleans, Mobile and Gulfport bore the brunt of Katrina’s force. Its impact was far reaching, resulting in loss of life, property destruction, disease, and destruction of vital oil and water pipelines, which affected the national economy. Devastation by Katrina was immediately followed by Hurricane Rita that made landfall on September 24, 2005 causing widespread damage to Southern Louisiana and Southeastern Texas.

In response to these national tragedies, several volunteers from the Sathya Sai Organisation quickly prepared themselves and began rendering immediate aid. Several Sathya Sai volunteers underwent Red Cross training. Refugee families were adopted by local Sathya Sai Centres and were provided food, clothing, shelter, utensils and transportation. Children of all ages helped to pack 500 toiletry bags and, along with adults, helped take care of needy children. Family counseling services were also provided. Hurricane Rita had caused extensive damage to Jasper, St. Augustine, Newton, Sabine, and Tyler counties in Texas. On December 3, 2005, Sathya Sai volunteers especially several young adults who took leadership roles visited these areas to deliver 636 care packages consisting of bottled water, blankets, fruits, gloves, socks and other essential items. Personal visits were made to 140 homes on that day. On the same day, Sathya Sai doctors visited several homes to examine children and the elderly. A medical screening was set up to see patients and prescriptions were filled for them because they had lost their medications and/or their prescriptions, and the clinics they were attending were closed indefinitely. As part of the relief efforts, Sathya Sai volunteers have provided refrigerators and freezers to a food pantry and more than 300 school children have received shoes, socks and winter coats.

In addition, assistance has been given to rebuild homes devastated by the hurricane.

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**Hurricane Rita** Jasper, a small town in the state of Texas, was hit by Hurricane Rita. Six months later, the population was still recovering from the destruction and waterborne diseases resulting from the hurricane. In response to this major calamity, Sathya Sai volunteers from the Sathya Sai Centres in the states of Arkansas, Oklahoma, Texas, and Louisiana, working together selflessly, conducted a medical camp on February 4, 2006 providing free medical care to the needy. During this camp 400 patients were seen and preventive health screening was done for diabetes, hypertension, osteoporosis, etc. Groups of volunteers visited a nearby nursing home for the elderly and provided love and care to the residents.

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## Central America

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### El Salvador

**Earthquake Relief** In 2001, Sathya Sai volunteers provided food and clothing along with medical relief immediately to the remote community of Talpetate after the region had been ravaged by two earthquakes. Medical service and food was provided to Guadalupe, a town that was also destroyed during the same earthquake. There were 6 medical camps held within 2 weeks of the quakes, including one where the health-care team had to embark on canoes to get to an island in the Gulf of Fonseca in order to help the needy inhabitants. They were extremely grateful to the Sri Sathya Sai Organisation for their prompt response.

### Mexico

**Floods of 2007** Tabasco and Chiapas are agricultural states located on the Gulf of Mexico. Over a million people were left homeless after a week of torrential rains and floods damaged the towns in October 2007. A medical camp was held immediately following the disaster in the village of Villahermosa from November 9-11, 2007. Local government officials welcomed a team of Sathya Sai volunteers, including physicians and support personnel, at the airport and escorted them to the camp site, where the municipal

president greeted them. During the three-day medical camp, 445 patients were seen and treated for acute waterborne illnesses. In addition, preventive health measures and health education were provided. The people, including government officials, were deeply moved and grateful for the loving selfless service rendered by the team of volunteers from the Sathya Sai Organisation.

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## South America

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### Peru

**2007 Earthquake** On August 15, 2007, an earthquake with a magnitude of 8.0 on the Richter scale hit the coast near Lima, killing 514 people and injuring 1,090. Over 35,500 buildings were destroyed. Sathya Sai volunteers visited the town of Centro Poblado La Garita, 213 km south of Lima, on September 1, 15, and 29, 2007 to render help because the town was completely destroyed by the earthquake. About two tonnes of food, water, clothing, and 248 heavy blankets were transported to the town through roads that were partly destroyed by the calamity. Sathya Sai volunteers set up five pre-fabricated homes for the displaced families. During the construction, some of the volunteers played with the children and talked to them to allay their fear and grief from the calamitous event. A workshop on proper nutrition with emergency rations was held, teaching them to use locally grown green vegetables and the donated soy beans for protein. Personal hygiene kits were distributed to 150 people. In addition, toys were given to children.

The local newspaper, *La Verdad del Pueblo*, reported on the care and love that people had received from the Sathya Sai Organisation.

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**Post Disaster Recovery Efforts** For more than 16 months, Sri Sathya Sai Organisation of Peru has continuously provided tonnes of food, clothes, personal hygiene items, school supplies, wooden houses, etc., in the towns of Pozuelo, Chinchabaja, Magdalena, and Mariposa, which were severely affected by an earthquake on August 15, 2007. Sri Sathya Sai Organisation conducted several workshops on self-management, making stuffed toys for the children, preparing

soy-based food products, and providing healthcare. Education in Human Values (EHV) workshops were also held. The children and adults of these towns were inspired by the EHV workshops. Medical services were provided free of charge, and free medicines were also provided to hundreds of people.

As a follow-up to the relief provided to the earthquake victims of La Garita in September 2007, Sathya Sai volunteers visited the devastated villages again on October 14, 2007. Eight hundred notebooks and pencils were provided to the children of a school in Chinchá. Large quantities of food were distributed to the people of La Garita, and the sick were tended to in a Sathya Sai medical camp conducted by three internists, two gynaecologists, and three dentists. A total of 142 patients were given free and loving medical care. The follow-up and selfless service by the Sathya Sai volunteers was comforting to the earthquake victims.

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**Governmental Acknowledgment** The mayor of the district of Chinchá Baja, Emilio del Solar Salazar, praised the work of Sri Sathya Sai Organisation of Peru and presented the Medal of the City, in acknowledgement of the selfless service activities carried out by the Sathya Sai Organisation in various towns of the region. The medal is inscribed: “Medal of the City, District Municipality of Chinchá Baja, presented to Sri Sathya Sai Trust of Peru.” Emilia Tapia, Principal of Pozuelos also admired the services of the Sri Sathya Sai Organisation.

## Europe

### UK

Sri Sathya Sai Organisation has provided clothes, essential household and medical items during the following disasters: (1) Orissa cyclone; (2) Gujarat earthquake; and (3) Sri Lanka Tsunami.

## Russia

**Floods of 2003** An international medical camp was held to help rebuild a town destroyed by severe floods in Kochubeevsky district of the Stavropolsky Region (Cossack villages Barsukovskaya, Nadzomoye, Zurabovka, and others) from June 27 to July 5, 2003. More than 200 members of the Sathya Sai Organisations of Russia, Ukraine, Belarus, Kazakhstan, the UK, Germany, Poland, and other countries took part in it. Approximately 8,800 people were examined by the medical team, and a further 1,250 patients received eye consultations and treatment. The nearby medical college invited the team leader to address local doctors about the uniqueness of the Sathya Sai vision in providing compassionate, selfless service combined with the best medical technology to the remotest corners of the world.

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**Rebuilding of the city** The whole team worked together tirelessly in rebuilding a new school, an orphanage, and a prayer hall for the local people. Repair and construction work was also done in the hospital and the ambulance station, as well as in the houses of the elderly and the disabled. It was indeed inspiring to see the commitment of the local volunteers. Some of them had travelled long distances from the Ural Mountains (Siberia) and had taken five days to get to the disaster area. Concerts were held for the patients and the local population every day.

## Asia

### China

When a major earthquake struck the region of Sichuan in 2008, the Sathya Sai Organisation responded immediately by sending 200 tents, 3,000 blankets, drinking water and bags of rice to the disaster victims.

### Indonesia

**2004 Earthquake** In February 2004, an earthquake hit Karangasem village of East Bali. Sathya Sai Centres around Bali took up relief work for the distressed

families by providing medical aid to the villages. Over 500 patients received medical care through these efforts. Several medical camps have been held since then: Bangli (155 patients); Sidetape and Kayuputih (500 villagers); remote areas of Palu in Sulawesi Island (95 people); and Tabanan village (150 people).

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**2005 Earthquake** The world's second-largest earthquake since 1964 (8.7 on the Richter scale) struck Indonesia on March 28, 2005. In responding to the massive disaster at Nias Island—North Sumatra, the Sathya Sai Study Groups of Jakarta and Medan dispatched a total of 14 cartons consisting of medicine and medical equipment to the victims in April 2005. One of the cartons containing 202 boxes of Vaccine anti-tetanus serum was delivered urgently to the general hospital in Gunung Sitoli (capital City of Nias Island).

Many schools were badly damaged, and children were left with no books or stationery to resume their study. In responding to this situation, Sathya Sai Groups organised a distribution of stationery and books on June 18, 2005, to Primary and Junior High School in Yayasan Budi Bhakti at Gunung Sitoli, capital city of Nias Island. Large quantities of writing pads, books, pencils, pens, rulers, and erasers were supplied to the schoolchildren. On July 3, 2005, food was distributed to 320 families. Each family received 5 kg of rice, eight packs of instant noodles, one bar of bath soap, and two pieces of cloth.

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**2006 Earthquake** A massive earthquake measuring 6.3 on the Richter scale, struck the island nation of

Indonesia early in the morning on May 27, 2006. This caused several thousand deaths, injured over 15,000 people and caused a million people to lose their homes. The quake was centred in the Indian Ocean about 38 km to the south of Yogyakarta at a depth of 33 km under the ocean. The members of Sri Sathya Sai Organisation of Indonesia sprang into action to provide immediate relief to the earthquake victims. Twenty-two Sathya Sai volunteers formed four teams and reached Yogyakarta the next day, along with much-needed medicines.

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**Comprehensive Disaster care** On May 28, medicines were distributed to two hospitals, namely, Dr. Sarjito Hospital in Yogyakarta and Cakra Husada Hospital in Klaten. Medicines were distributed at these two hospitals, including thousands of antibiotic doses, syringes, bandages, and other necessary medical items. The distribution of food, clothes, and stoves was carried out in other afflicted areas. On the second day after the earthquake, the teams distributed emergency supplies including 40 tents, and hundreds of pieces of clothing. On the third day, 3 trucks full of supplies (consisting of over 3 tonnes of rice, 1,000 bottles of water, clothes, and other essential items) reached the area for distribution. In addition, over 3,000 mosquito repellants were distributed.

On the fourth day, two mobile medical teams began making house-to-house visits supported by another stationary team, helped by 10 youths who also started setting up kitchens. By the fifth day two public kitchens began feeding the hungry, as more supplies arrived, including 1½ tonnes of rice and more household supplies. Three hygienic public kitchens were set up in the areas of Klaten, Imogiri, and Gunung Cilik, and remained open till June 29, 2006. Fresh vegetables were supplied daily to the base camps from the Sathya Sai Centre in Yogyakarta. The volunteers, with the help of the local villagers, worked round-the-clock and served with love three meals a day for thousands of people.

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**Ongoing care** Over the next few days, six medical teams were working to aid the survivors. Over 2½ tonnes of rice were given out and 50 stoves and many essential food and household items were distributed. Building

materials, tools and volunteers arrived to help in rebuilding homes and 80 new homes were built. Thousands of items of clothing were distributed, including 10,000 pieces of clothing and 2,500 blankets donated by a company run by volunteers. By June 14 as many as 1,070 victims had been medically treated by Sathya Sai volunteers who also provided shelter and clothing to the homeless. The Sathya Sai Organisation also provided the finance and human resources for nine houses in the district of Bantul. In addition, they gave much-needed emotional support to the traumatized survivors. The Sathya Sai Study Group of Medan, Indonesia, also joined in the relief work and helped the victims.

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**Rebuilding of the community** On June 3, 2006, Sathya Sai Organisation volunteers from Jakarta began building facilities to manufacture bricks for reconstruction of the many homes that were destroyed. The flow of relief materials, food, and clothes accelerated. On June 4, 2006, the Sathya Sai volunteers from Bali constructed many tents to house homeless victims. Working with the Sathya Sai Youth, they began reconstruction of the damaged homes. On June 5, rebuilding and rehabilitation work was initiated by Sathya Sai volunteers in several villages, and the Sri Sathya Sai Central Council provided financial aid, building materials, and financial resources to rebuild homes.

As this disaster relief was being rendered, on July 17, 2006, the southwestern coast of Java was again hit by a tsunami. The Sri Sathya Sai Organisation again rose to the occasion. Office-bearers visited the devastated areas, assessed the damage, ascertained the needs, drafted a plan to provide the urgently needed humanitarian aid, and began, without delay, to implement the plan.

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**Aceh Floods** The province of Aceh in Indonesia has witnessed several natural disasters that have shocked the world and, at the same time, brought the world together in an unprecedented bond of compassion and solidarity. Unrelenting rain, floods, and devastation, displaced over 87,000 inhabitants and 23 people lost their lives. The flooding caused widespread damage to crops, plantations, cattle, poultry, fish ponds, roads, and bridges. Over 1,600 houses were completely

destroyed, and more than 15,000 houses were damaged. The Sathya Sai Organisation sprang into action to provide immediate relief. Evacuation camps were set up for the displaced, and rescue operations were mobilised immediately. On January 14, 2007, service was rendered to Bukit Tempurung village in a subdistrict of Aceh Tamiang, where food was distributed to 1,065 households. It took 14 volunteers about four hours to drive each way to deliver the rations, including food, medications, sanitation facilities, and potable water.

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**Jakarta Flood, 2007** The capital city of Jakarta has repeatedly suffered natural calamities over the past years including a major flood that ravaged the city on February 10, 2007. With compassion and love, the Sathya Sai Organisation responded promptly on February 11, 2007, by coming to the aid of villagers stranded in Cakung. About 300 families were rendered homeless due to the floods and sought refuge in metal containers and concrete culverts. The Sathya Sai volunteers distributed food and potable water to these people. By February 14, 2007, the water levels had subsided, and the people were returning to their demolished and flooded homes. Sathya Sai volunteers donated mops, brooms, and pails while working with the victims to help restore their homes. Once the homes were habitable, on February 17, the volunteers distributed gas stoves, rice, and drinking water. An acute care medical camp was set up to look after patients with pulmonary and gastrointestinal disorders due to the floods and poor living conditions. The camp continued until March 11, 2007. Extensive insecticide spraying and water supply disinfection was carried out. Families were given mosquito repellants and coils. Flood victims were touched by the emergency relief provided with love by the Sathya Sai volunteers.

During a medical camp held in April 2007 (the fourth camp within a span of two months), 200 patients received medical care.

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**2007 Earthquake** On September 12, 2007, an earthquake struck southern Sumatra in Indonesia with a magnitude of 8.4 on the Richter scale. This was followed over the next several days by earthquakes of magnitudes 7.8 and 6.7. About 88,000 houses, 2,000

educational facilities, and 620 health facilities were damaged by the earthquakes. In immediate response, Sathya Sai volunteers in Bengkulu distributed 2,000 kg of rice to 300 families in the villages of Lubuk Tanjung, Pasar Palik, and Tebing Kandang on September 16, 2007.

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**2009 Jakarta Fire** A blazing fire on January 25, 2009 in Jakarta affected 133 families, and about 580 people were rendered homeless. Between January 26 and February 2, 2009, volunteers from Sathya Sai Study Group, Jakarta rendered loving service to all these people. Food was served on a daily basis. Approximately, 3,800 meals were served. Clothing and hygiene supplies were distributed, and school supplies and backpacks were distributed to children. On January 27 and January 30, 2009, doctors and Sathya Sai volunteers provided medical services for common ailments to approximately 95 people. Sai Spiritual Education (SSE) children and Sathya Sai Youth also participated in this selfless service activity, which touched the hearts of many people.

### Myanmar

**Sri Sathya Sai Baba Village** On May 2, 2008, tropical storm Nargis hit Myanmar's capital city, Yangon, and a large portion of the Ayerawaddy delta region. An estimated 200,000 people died, and an estimated 2.5 million others were affected. At the invitation of the Myanmar government, the Sathya Sai Baba Central Council of Malaysia (SSBCCM), with the help of volunteers from Singapore and Thailand, undertook the monumental task of building 51 new homes, a temple, and a school, to create a new village called "Sri Sathya Sai Baba Village." The village was inaugurated on December 21, 2008.

The Myanmar government was touched and impressed with Sri Sathya Sai Baba's mission and promised its full cooperation. The village was to be constructed in a remote area, about an eight-hour boat ride from Yangon, far from any towns, shops, roads, electricity, or facilities. Construction took place from July to December 2008. For the new village's opening ceremony, officials from the village, the army, and schoolchildren gave a rousing welcome to SSBCCM volunteers. A big picture of Sri Sathya Sai Baba

adorned the main wall of the school building, and the front wall of each house exhibited a Sarva Dharma (all faiths) symbol.

### Sri Lanka

**Post-Tsunami Housing Project:** Volunteers in Sri Lanka have been working on providing housing for the most needy tsunami victims. The district of Hambantota is a set of villages located about 250 km southeast of Colombo, and it was devastated by the tsunami. Sathya Sai volunteers in Sri Lanka undertook a project to provide houses for those families. A total of 10 furnished houses were built and donated to families during December 2005.

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**Feeding the Children** In a large cooperative effort by Sathya Sai volunteers of Ticino, Switzerland, and Sri Lanka, several container loads of milk and rice cereal have been distributed to malnourished children between the ages of one and five years in tsunami-devastated villages. This project has continued since the tsunami to the present day, and 254 children from several refugee camps have been given milk and rice cereal daily. The children are also visited by Sathya Sai physicians and screened and treated for any health-related problems.

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**Treating the Needy** Sathya Sai Organisation in Sri Lanka carried out a massive service project to alleviate the suffering of those housed in refugee camps in the north and east areas of the island. There are five refugee camps in these locations with approximately 220,000 people, mostly from the Mannar, Killinochi, and Mullaithivu districts. Access was granted to the Sathya Sai medical teams to serve these people. Two medical camps were conducted over six days, during which approximately 5,000 patients were seen. The first medical camp was held from May 29-31, 2009 and the second from June 6-8, 2009. Approximately 40 volunteers, including doctors, nurses, pharmacists, first aid practitioners, volunteers, and youth took part in these camps. Sathya Sai volunteers constructed a 20-bed temporary hospital with a tarpaulin roof to care for the sick. In addition, mobile clinics were held to help patients who could not travel to the main hospital. Patients with complicated or serious illnesses





were referred to nearby general hospitals. Free medicine and nutritional supplements were dispensed as needed. Patients received follow-up care, and patient education was provided at the medical camp. Fruit, infant milk powder, biscuits, and sweets were distributed to thousands of children. Many patients required special medicines for ailments such as heart disease or epilepsy. Sathya Sai volunteers collected such prescriptions, purchased the medicines, and distributed them to the patients. For several months, the Vavunia Sathya Sai Centre also distributed essential food items to hundreds of expectant mothers and small children.

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**Floods** On a number of occasions the southern region of Sri Lanka was affected by floods. The Sathya Sai Organisation in Sri Lanka rose to the occasion by sending essential goods (food, clothing, etc.) to the affected areas. Truck loads of food for immediate consumption were supplied on each occasion when the affected areas were under water. Sathya Sai volunteers even risked their lives by going by boats to reach affected people to provide essential items.

In the aftermath of floods, at a time when diseases started spreading, medical camps were conducted in the badly affected areas. Over 500 hundred families benefitted from this project each time it was carried out.

**Tsunami-Immediate Relief** In the western zone, nearly 300 Sathya Sai volunteers served cooked meals to approximately 10,000 people in the worst affected areas in Modera (a suburb of Colombo) and the towns of Galle, Moratuwa, and Hikkaduwa. Three thousand parcels of cooked food, 35 crates of drinking water, toiletries, and clothes were transported to the eastern belt, which is about 160 km from Colombo. Four trips were carried out during the first week of the disaster.

In the northern zone of Sri Lanka, the coastal regions were severely damaged by the tsunami waves, and thousands of people had been displaced from their homes. One hundred eighty volunteers from the Sathya Sai Organisation served about 3,000 people with cooked food and clothing. They also provided medical services in the refugee camps for over five days. In total, 818 volunteers served 19,500 people

during the relief operations in the immediate aftermath of the tsunami.

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**Housing** Volunteers from the Sathya Sai Organisation in Sri Lanka undertook a project to build 10 houses in a remote village in Hambantota for tsunami-displaced persons. Each house is constructed on eight perches of land. The houses are constructed in accordance with government-approved standards. The floor area is 500 square feet and will include a toilet and kitchen. The houses will be provided with a water connection and electricity. In addition, the organisation provided each household with basic furniture and utilities (a transistor radio, bicycle, a two-burner gas cooker, crockery, etc.).

The Sathya Sai Organisation constructed two houses for displaced families in the village of Thelwatte.

A number of families who had been displaced from their homes as a result of the continuing civil unrest in the country and also affected by the tsunami had been living without proper shelter and access to water and sanitation. The Sathya Sai Organisation built six houses in different locations in the Jaffna peninsula and resettled the displaced families.

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**Self-Employment Project** The village of Thelwatte is about 50 km south of Colombo. This is the village where a train was completely washed and dragged off the tracks and about 1,500 passengers were killed by the tsunami. The Sathya Sai Organisation donated sewing machines to seven families in the village and assisted five families with seed capital to start their own self-employment projects.

Fishing nets and Petromax lamps, kitchen utensils, clothes, and water pumps were distributed to 34 tsunami-affected fishermen in Veeranagar, Trincomalee.

Eight fishermen were provided with assistance to repair their boats and outboard motors.

With the objective of promoting self-employment, 24 poor women from Kuchchaveli village and Verugal village were provided with a sewing machine.

A group of six farmers from Verugal village and a poor family from Kuchchaveli village consisting

of seven members were provided with two water pumps.

#### International Tsunami Medical Camps



The Sri Sathya Sai International Medical Committee initiated a disaster relief effort, providing medical treatment and counseling for the affected persons. Among the many relief missions from overseas, teams of doctors, nurses, and volunteers from the USA, Canada, Australia, and the UK under the Sathya Sai umbrella came to Sri Lanka and participated in a massive humanitarian effort. There were five such missions between January 5 and March 25, 2005. In these five missions 187 volunteers from the four countries listed above served 16,000 patients in several towns and villages in Sri Lanka.

Over the period of the mission the teams carried out the following tasks:

Task Performed	Stats
Cataract surgeries performed	800
Chlorinated and purified drinking water wells	6
Counseling adults and children (approx.)	1,400
Distributed children's clothing (approx.)	15,000
Distributed milk powder to children and adults (approx.)	1,800
Donated bicycles	80
Donated carpentry tool sets	50
Donated fishing nets	300
Donated water tanks	8
Installed water pumps	12
Conducted medical camps for refugee population living in tents	230
Performed orthopaedic and dental care (approx.)	1,500
Screened schoolchildren and updated their health report cards (approx.)	15,000

Upon completion of their mission, medical supplies, including medicines and medical equipment worth thousands of dollars, were donated to the hospitals for use by the local doctors where the teams had worked.