

April 17th 2008

Hello Friends,

I came back to the South of India, for the fourth time, to work in the area devastated by the tsunami of December 26, 2004. With me, the members of the humanitarian expeditions were Italian volunteers: Alessia Sormani (bank employee and first aid expert), Paola Ballabio (kinder garden teacher and expert in child massage), Patricia Meyer (yoga teacher), Renata Polonioli (psychologist), Maurizio Mancini (cooking student and manager of a restaurant).

After the arrival to Trivandrum and a short visit to the nuns Daughters of San Joseph (with a donation to their primary school), we travelled to 200 kilometers towards the coast of the Indian Ocean, where we were housed by the Sisters of the Nirmala Hospital, 6 kilometers from Kottilpad. This is a town of 3,000 inhabitants, almost all of them fishermen, which was partially destroyed by the killer wave killing almost 200 victims.

Our activities in the hospital, which is mainly a maternity ward, were of two kinds:

DONATION

- new heating system based on solar Energy
- donation of a new equipment to give oxygen to patients under serious conditions
- donation of a manikin, size and weight of a newborn, to be used in classes of reanimation to babies just born
- donation of a scale to weight newborn
- donation of two cloths to transport seriously ill patients
- donation of tests to diagnose malaria without the use of microscope
- donation of surgical tools, band aids, stethoscope and other medical material
- donation of clothes for babies and toys for sick children and for students of the primary school next to the hospital

However, this first part, which is of assistance and thus necessary, was then combined to teachings and technology exchange with local doctors, nurses and workers through:

EXCHANGE OF EXPERIENCES

- collaboration with the staff of the hospital surgical ward: for the first time sound was possible in the operating room and, thanks to the donation of a hi-fi equipment, the only surgical nun, Sister Valsa, will be able to alleviate at least

in part her tiredness by listening to music while operates without rest.

- reconfirmation of the validity of the quick test for malaria, already known by the lab technicians.
- collaboration with the internal holistic center, led by Sister Clara: in particular Patricia taught yoga to pregnant women.
- Paola exchanged notions of "shantala". That is a massage for newborn, ancient Indian technique for the wellbeing of the baby, with mothers present in the hospital class.
- interview by Renata to Sister Clara, who has given psychological assistance for many months to the women who survived the tsunami.

From the hospital we went towards the town of Kottilpad and, as usual, we worked there in two areas:

- a) DONATION of toys, sport material, and a stereo equipment that will link all classrooms of St. Alexis school with the dean's office.
- b) AWARENESS DEVELOPMENT among the 11 widows of the tsunami: women who lost their husbands while fishing in the ocean that fatal day. We do this by a micro-credit project. Our volunteers met several times with these widows, explaining them this is a small loan to be managed by them, without interest, so they can carry out a commercial activity. Every month they will pay back a quota until they pay everything by March of next year. If they can do it, they can request another loan, twice the amount, to carry out another project or improve the current one.

If we think we could do all this in only one week of stay, we can consider ourselves satisfied of the goals achieved: practically all the goals we had established in several meetings before the expedition.

I thank again all who have helped us carry out this humanitarian expedition.

Aldo LoCurto
Itinerant Volunteer Doctor