

## Nightfall in Sri Lanka

The sun had already set on a tiring day; the past 12 hours had conveyed some of the most despairing sights I had ever witnessed. Our journey had snaked along the southern coastal road through more destruction than I had believed possible.

Television had not come close to preparing me for these almost-apocalyptic scenes. As we passed through a small seashore dwelling, thousands of candles lined every road, doorway and surviving monument. A vigil was being held, a month after the disaster, to mourn the immeasurable loss and reflect on an event that will change these people's lives forever.

It was here that the sad realisation dawned that there is going to be no quick fix for the complete destruction so horrifically evident with every corner turned. I found myself overwhelmed with the feeling that whatever we do here, whatever our charity can accomplish, it will be like a drop in the ocean. The physical scars will take decades to erode. The mental scars will never fully heal. In this moment of despondency I saw a man, sat on a piece of concrete debris, clutching a candle with both hands and staring despondently at the floor. I don't know what this man had lost – I can't begin to imagine. I was filled with sadness but also a renewed determination to help these inconceivably unfortunate people. The recovery of this beautiful nation *will* materialise, but only piece by infinitesimal piece.

The aim of my visit to Sri Lanka was to gain first hand knowledge about what the Epiphany Trust can feasibly achieve out of this mountainous problem. During the 10day visit we travelled around the coast to meet with those affected and offer our support to individuals, families, churches and organisations. I was humbled by the attitude of these incredible people – who, despite their circumstance, remained gracious, stoic, friendly and appreciative.

The immediate needs are immense. Thousands of people are left homeless, living in tents, temporary shacks and crammed into communal buildings. People have lost all worldly belongings and their livelihood. The physical needs are desperate, yet are certain to be eclipsed by the physiological issues that emerge over the coming years. Children have lost parents, grandparents, brothers and sisters. Adults have lost their partners and children. A whole community of friends have been taken away.

The Epiphany Trust is to try and address many of these issues through a long-term commitment to re-house and rehabilitate. We have begun building and equipping houses, sending essential supplies, aiding schools & hospitals and establishing child care centres.

My heartfelt gratitude goes to all of you who have supported this initial phase of our work. But as you will be aware, the magnitude of our task cannot be understated. In the coming months and years, as news coverage fades and the tragedy drifts from the public gaze, the situation for tens of thousands will remain desperate. Please continue to follow our progress, support our efforts and inform others about the Trust's work in Sri Lanka.

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