

Epiphany News

The Newsletter of the EpiphanyTrust: August 2005

Issue No. 11



After a 3 month stay, Brian Leitch reports on the reality of the Burmese refugee camps

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Pastor Sylvester Joseph - Our 'Inside man', working tirelessly in Sri Lanka

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The Indian Ocean Tsunami



What remains of Payagala, Sri Lanka - Jan 2005

Sri Lanka: 6 Months Later

Epiphany Trust, with two of its UK partners, *Hands Across the Sea* and *Jigsaw 4 U*, has launched an ambitious programme to train Sri Lankan social workers, health professionals and teachers how to enable bereaved children cope with the trauma and loss they have suffered. Epiphany has spent 6 months focusing on providing for people's physical needs, and continues to do so, but an equally difficult task now needs to be undertaken; that of enabling people, particularly the young, to start rebuilding their lives emotionally.

Experience of bereavement and trauma has shown that children and young people have a harder time in processing and coming to terms with what has happened to them. A team of nine, including four teenagers who have themselves lost close family, will spend three weeks working in three centres in Sri Lanka. They will work alongside Epiphany's current partners to ensure that

the training sessions will have far reaching benefits for as many youngsters as possible. The training will be led by Jigsaw 4 U director and experienced bereavement counsellor, Anne Davies. Commenting on the forthcoming trip, she said:

'Even with the extent of devastation, children and young people will be feeling alone and isolated. Grief for youngsters can take eight years to fully comprehend and during that time they will "puddle", that is they will be intensely distressed for a while and then continue playing etc - never really confronting the problem. It's a different experience in some ways to adult grief as the losses that they have incurred will be perceived differently as they mature'.

The previous devastating loss experienced by the team's four young people will allow them to communicate from their own understanding of coping with bereavement. Their interaction with the Sri Lankan children will help both sides understand how grief is dealt with in different cultures. This will undoubtedly make an impact on the lives of all involved - and the content of future training will reflect this.

This vitally important trip, helping Sri Lankan professionals review the way that children face their grief, will be the subject of a BBC Radio 5 Live programme broadcast from Galle on August 28th.

See pages 4&5 for further details of Epiphany's projects in Sri Lanka

Sparking Young Business on Merseyside

The “Ignite” programme on Merseyside is designed to help disabled and disadvantaged people set up their own businesses. Funded by the E.S.F. (European Social Fund), and working with partner organisation *Blue Orchid Management*, Epiphany Trust has been a training provider for over 5 years.

Driven by one to one meetings with a dedicated advisor, the Ignite programme combines a mix of academic research, street-wise local knowledge and a good dose of inspirational support to allow each individual to start up a new business with confidence... and

gain an NVQ Level 3 qualification in the process!

New businesses are given the opportunity to work alongside a friendly advisor to review progress, generate ideas, and discuss alternative approaches towards long-term sustainability.

This year’s success stories include:

Lewis Boardman – recognized as one of the hottest rising ‘house music’ talents on the renowned Circus/Cream circuit – was previously unemployed and finding it difficult to get his aspirations as a DJ taken seriously. Enrolling onto Ignite clarified all of these issues, and better prepared

Lewis to carve out a successful career as a high profile DJ.

After graduating, fashion students Karen Knowles & Clare Hart completed the Ignite programme. This led directly to the pair developing their own clothing label. “KnowHart” is now successfully selling their brand via a number of outlets. They continue to receive training to establish a sustainable business and grow their brand nationally.

Information on any of the stories featured in this newsletter can be found on our website at: www.epiphany.org.uk

Container Heading for the Congo

Three years after the official cessation of civil and neighbouring conflicts in the Democratic Republic of Congo, everyday living for millions in the region remains desperate. As reported in previous Epiphany News articles, the infrastructure of an entire nation is in tatters after nearly a half century of war, famine and corruption.

The statistics make appalling reading: 3.5 million people killed between 1998-2002, life expectancy runs at 40.6 years. 1 million people live with AIDS. 65% of the population are under 25 and the average yearly wage is \$107.



Children sometimes comprise up to 40% of active militia groups. 30’000 children are soldiers - 20’000 live on the streets. There is a chronic shortage of medicines and hospital equipment. Some medical centres have no vaccine for malaria from which most children suffer.

Epiphany Trust patron David Alton highlighted many of these problems after visiting the Republic in 2002 and subsequently urged our charity to take action.

Working together with the *Jeddiah Foundation* we are doing just that. St Martha’s school for girls in Hadley Wood, London are filling a container with everything needed for a school in Kinshasa. Desks, chairs, tables, sports equipment, as well as pens and pencils will be packed into the container in September when the girls return after the summer holidays. The DCR’s most famous footballer - Lomana Lua Lua, currently playing in the Premiership with Portsmouth will be in Hadley Wood to see the container on its way.

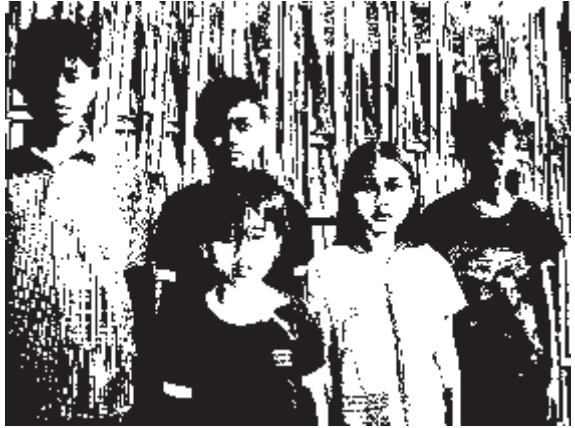


Lua Lua in action for Portsmouth

Support for Refugee Schools

Without support from the Epiphany Trust 28 Karen children, who live either in refugee camps or in migrant worker villages on the Thai/Burma border, would not be getting an education. These children, some of whom are orphans, live either in a children's home or with relatives. All require support to ensure that they can receive the same opportunities as those with normal family arrangements. The support given allows the children to pay school fees and buy uniforms & books.

During a recent visit to the Thai/Burma border, Brian Leitch had the opportunity to talk to some of the older children supported by the Trust. Many had lived in the refugee camps for most of their lives after their villages were destroyed by the ruling SPDC (State Peace and Development Council). The children in the photograph (right) are all from one family. They live with an aunt in a refugee camp after their mother died of malaria. Other children had started school then had been forced to live in the forest after their village was attacked. All, however,



share a common belief in the importance of education and a desire to contribute something positive to their country. These children have a sense of duty and purpose instilled in them from an early age. This is a world in which life is hard and these children are determined to do something to make it better, in any way they can.

Future employment is extremely limited for those in the camps. Many children find themselves soldiers in the Karen National Liberation Army due to a lack of other prospects. There is so much potential here, but so few outlets for it. This is why education holds such intrinsic value as a way of ensuring that the Burmese Junta do not win the battle to destroy the social and moral values of these people and, therefore, it is still worth fighting to provide it.

The local, indigenous organisations working to develop and manage education on the border show impressive commitment to their cause. Diligent, skilled people regularly put their safety at risk to ensure schools on both sides of the border receive supplies and that teachers are trained. Improving teaching standards, resources, and student health are just some of the challenges that education faces on the border.

Running up the cash

As the sun shone on Shakespeare's Stratford, Gareth Hill completed the 24th Annual marathon – raising funds for our Tsunami Appeal by finishing in 5 hours, 20 minutes.

Gareth was pleased with his efforts and said, "It was a fantastic day with many of my friends and family cheering me on. My medal is staying around my neck for months to come!"

The Stratford-Upon-Avon based Marathon took place on 24th April and saw thousands of runners pound the roads of South Warwickshire.

Along with Gareth, Paul White, Keith Bergman, Scott Dixon and Janna Robertson helped raise over £1'500 for the appeal.

Responding to the Tsunami

Child Rehabilitation Centres

Many youngsters were orphaned by the boxing day tragedy; losing their home, parents, siblings and friends. Six months on, there is still very little to aid their recovery. As much as counselling and practical necessities, the children need games, entertainment and social interaction - a priority of this initiative. The work is co-ordinated by Debbi Edirisinghe using funds from Epiphany Trust and other donors.

Liverpool City, through its "Hands across the Sea" scheme, is working with the Trust to set up similar programmes across the Galle district.



House Building in Kaluthara



Friends from the *Kandy Joint Churches Appeal* have set up a base in Kaluthara to build houses in the devastated area of Payagala. The project is quite unique in that it contains a limited form of business transaction - bricks are made on site by people previously unemployed, and then bought cheaply by the locals. This money is then ploughed back into the system by funding brick production and paying people a small wage to reconstruct their own houses. With the finances being topped up by the Trust and practical help donated on the ground, the system should be able to run indefinitely.

There is opportunity for anyone wishing to aid this devastated community by practically helping with the construction of these houses. Groups can visit Sri Lanka, spend seven days on site, and two days in the capital Colombo. Please contact us if you interested in joining one of these groups.

Aid Trips to the East

To help with the urgent need for aid supplies across the east and north of the country, Tim Rambukkange and Sylvester Joseph are making regular trips to many coastal regions. Tim and Sylu have worked with the Trust for a number of years. This collaboration ensures that aid gets to where it is needed much faster than direct shipping from the UK as we can bypass layers of bureaucracy. Sponsorship is currently being given to finance these essential missions.



Supplying Equipment through Global Hand

As you might be aware, the Epiphany Trust has worked closely with Global Hand in the past. Supplying equipment for the Arc (our 'half-way house') in Romania was the most recent joint venture. The Hong Kong based charity specialises in shipping huge containers of aid and equipment to wherever it is needed throughout the world.

The Indian Ocean tragedy created a need for this resource like never before, and our partner groups in Sri Lanka recently received a container with dried foodstuffs, building materials, household goods, sewing machines and bicycles from our friends in Hong Kong.

School & Church links

Three UK schools - one in London, and two on Merseyside have twinned with schools in Sri Lanka. Support through correspondence and email has been warmly welcomed and much appreciated in Sri Lanka. "Pen Pal" programmes between the children have been very successful and video conferencing is being talked of for the future. From previous experience with schools in Romania, the benefits are tremendous on both sides of the link. If you are interested in nominating a school, please contact the office.

We also feel that similar links with churches could be extremely valuable and would like to encourage any wishing to "twin" with a church in Sri Lanka to get in touch.



Sports Development

The mental and social impact of this disaster cannot be overstated. It was suggested that the Trust should promote sporting activity wherever possible. As cricket is a near-fanatical pastime in Sri Lanka we are working with other UK organisations collecting and sending equipment to clubs that have had all theirs ruined. The initiative could easily be extended to football and rugby, which also have a substantial following. If you can help with either collecting kit or even if your club would like to travel out there to play, please contact us.



'Hands Across the Sea'

Epiphany has been instrumental in setting up the ambitious 'Hands Across the Sea' initiative between the Councils of Liverpool and Galle. Within weeks of the boxing day disaster, the Liberal Democrat Council of Liverpool offered the support of the City and approached the Trust to establish links with the South Western province in Sri Lanka. Along with the Australian City of Melbourne, Liverpool informally 'adopted' Galle and promised assistance in numerous ways. Many of Liverpool's 500'000 inhabitants have signed up for a 'Give As You Earn' scheme. This, coupled with generous business donations, has already led to a wealth of aid, equipment and expertise being sent to the area.

Patron tours Europe

The proclaimed "King of Gospel", and patron of the Trust's Child Action International programme, Jessy Dixon has just finished his most comprehensive European tour yet. Through June and July, the Reverend from Chicago completed a 20-date schedule around the UK, Ireland, Norway, Romania and the Faroe Islands.

For the past decade, Jessy has impressed packed churches and concert halls with his unique blend of Contemporary, Southern, and Traditional Gospel. And this summer's tour proved no different. Highlights included joining a 140-strong choir in the Faroes in front of 2% of the entire Island population, and performing in Cluj and Timisoara, Romania before a combined audience of 3000 people.

The atmosphere in these places was incredible, Jessy was overwhelmed by the response. Speaking to the packed Timisoara church (and hundreds gathered outside) he said "even after performing thousands of concerts around the world, I have never seen so many young people so happy to be praising the Lord." Jessy also took the opportunity to sing an open-air set within the Caminula Felix orphanage in Oradea. Seeing the excitement and gratitude on the faces of these children was maybe the most satisfying part of the tour.



IN BRIEF.....

Bryn Arfor

The Epiphany Centre on the North East coast of Anglesey is not short of business! The ever increasing demand for Chrysalis holidays means that over half the year is already booked for the 12 room, ex-bed & breakfast hotel. The remaining weeks are set aside for church conferences, school residentials and private holiday hire. As well as being a valuable asset to the Trust, the centre continues to finance projects across the globe. If you wish to hire the stunningly located centre, contact the office.... advance notice is now required!

Chrysalis Holidays

Mead tasting with Chrysalis is always popular at Snowdon Honey Farm, Llanberis. Daryl (pictured with Michael Burns & Kath Coulburn) who runs the small gift shop and tea room, always makes everyone welcome and even dressed up as a wizard on last years "Treasure Hunt" holiday. It is now 5 years since Bryn Arfor Guest House became a



permanent home for Chrysalis. Its success has exceeded all expectations enabling our guests to feel secure in familiar surroundings and giving them the opportunity to get to know the local people and the surrounding area well. With a committed and ever-enthusiastic staff team, Chrysalis Holidays for learning disabled adults are as popular as ever. We continue to add new themes to the programme, which runs throughout the year enabling people to have new experiences and learn new skills that would not be possible in their normal environment.

Opening Date is Set for the 'Arc'



30th September 2005. The date set for the grand opening of the 'Arc'. Two years after conception, all is in place for the first residents of the 8 room half-way house. The initial 6 young adults from the Lugoj institution have been selected, and will be arriving in Sinaia towards the end of August.

It is expected that dozens will be present for the grand opening, including staff from Lugoj, representatives from the Trust and delegations from the councils of Wigan and Sinaia. Look out for the feature in the next issue of Epiphany News.

Challenge 2005

Following the extraordinary success of the 2004 venture (when over £30'000 was raised), Epiphany are repeating the 'Cold Mountain' challenge in Sinaia, Romania. If you like walking in the mountains, you're bound to love this experience! Set amongst some of the finest scenery in Europe, routes vary from strolling along the valley floor to scaling the summit of the impressive 2'500m Omu Peak. Based in Sinaia, location of the 'Arc' project detailed above, challengers have the unique opportunity of seeing at first-hand what the sponsorship is going towards. Funds can also be channelled to the expanding work in Sri Lanka if you would prefer. Details can be found on the enclosed leaflet. Ring or mail soon as there are only a small number of places available for the event. Need convincing? Read some of the quotes from last year's successful challengers at www.epiphany.org.uk.

— Sri Lanka - Working from Within —

It is now nearly 5 years since Pastor Sylvester Joseph from Bogolantawa in the central Hill Country of Sri Lanka approached the Epiphany Trust. Within his church - 'Smryna Evangelical', he had set up a school to educate some of the most disadvantaged children in the area but was struggling to fund the continuing costs of running the facility. With our help the Smyrna School (which includes both primary and secondary education) has been, and continues to be, extremely effective. Free transport and meals set the school apart from others in the region. Without it, most children would be unable to attend.



Sylvester's work in the community does not stop there. An annual summer camp invites children from all over the province to the school for music, games and Christian fellowship. Last year, nearly 200 children were present for the weeklong event. Smryna Evangelical also supports



handicapped children in the area and is currently re-equipping the local hospital.

Within hours of the Indian Ocean Tsunami, Sylvester was co-ordinating aid trips to the devastated areas of Batticloa and Trimcomalee on the east coast of the country. Before many Western agencies could get there, people in desperate need were



given food, water, clothing and shelter.

Since this time Sylvester has worked tirelessly for the Trust, clearing containers, sending photos, reports and directing aid donations to where it is most needed. At a time when Sri Lankan officialdom has rightly been criticised for wrapping layers of bureaucracy around the crisis, the Trust has succeeded through the labours of people like Pastor Sylvester Joseph working for us within the country.



Office Relocation

Due to the continued expansion of Epiphany Trust projects, our charity has outgrown its home at the Winwick Lane office. New premises had been sought for months and a wonderful new location has been found in the shape of a former presbytery in Newton-Le-Willows.

Over the past year the number of employees and volunteers working for the Trust has nearly doubled, a testimony to our increasing effectiveness and scope. The growth of projects in Sri Lanka, Burma, Romania, and the ever-expanding Chrysalis programme here in the UK made the move essential.

Just three miles away from the old office, the new premises provide plenty of space in an easily accessible location. The capacity for further expansion within the Trust's new home and the fact that that it comes at a very reasonable rent are a couple of reasons why this move is so encouraging for the future.

Many thanks to all who have backed our work. This progressive step has only been possible through your unwavering support.

First Taste of Freedom

A major victory has been won in the quest to free children from the bonded slave labour of the Pakistan brickyards. Last month, the Lahore law firm - CLAAS, succeeding in releasing hundreds of youngsters from 11 of these exploitative businesses.

As reported in previous editions of *Epiphany News*, thousands of children in Pakistan are forced to work in bonded labour brickyards in order to pay for family debts that have been passed down through the generations. Many youngsters are forced to sacrifice their education, social life and paid employment to work in horrific and un-legislated conditions.

In the early hours of Monday 13th June, a group of lawyers, assisted by local police, raided a large number of brick kilns around Lahore. Legal notices were issued to owners and managers on



site, and the children were transported back to the CLAAS city office. A huge crowd of lawyers, police, children and 'employers' made their way to Lahore High Court the following morning and were witness to swift justice. Within a week from the case being opened, CLAAS had won the liberty and independence of 316 young labourers and 14 injunctions were brought and upheld against employers.

Hopefully recent events will act as a catalyst to bringing down this barbaric business, and there are signs that this is the case. Since this landmark hearing, the CLAAS office has been inundated with dozens of cases of exploitation from brick kilns around the area. The new strain that this has brought on their time and resources can only be seen as a positive sign of success. People have been given a new hope that their freedom is imminent.

Joining Forces for the Children of Burma

Within the past 6 months, the 'Metta Trust for Children's Education' (MTCE) has come under of the Epiphany Trust umbrella. MTCE has been involved on the Thai/Burma border since founder James Mawdesley was released from a Burmese jail where he was imprisoned for speaking out against the military regime. James identified education as a priority for helping young refugees – something permanent that would bestow life-long benefits. Working together will give an enormous boost both to our sponsorship programme and MTCE's excellent work in the refugee schools.

Brian Leitch, who works specifically on the Trust's South-East Asian projects, spent 3 months in the border refugee camps earlier this year. See the article on refugee schools on page 3.



Ways to Support the Trust

There are many ways in which you can help - from distributing newsletters, to joining the sponsored hike in the mountains of Romania (see separate leaflet), to volunteering your skills in Sri Lanka, Romania and here the UK. For any further information please contact the office.

Please support us as generously as you feel able. You can donate in the following ways:

Post: Mail cheques payable to 'The Epiphany Trust' to *St Davids, Park Road South, Newton-Le-Willows, WA12 8EY*

Phone: Ring through credit card details on 01942 671581

Standing Order: Ring the office to set up a direct debit to the Trust

Additional information can always be found on our **Website:** www.epiphany.org.uk