


**MENCAFEP**


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Rani thinks, what shall I do next



Ganesh looks on in hope



Children from OZANAM - MENCAFEP satellite centre in Batticaloa.

### MENCAFEP's Work In Batticaloa District

#### MENTALLY HANDICAPPED CHILDREN & FAMILIES EDUCATIONAL PROJECT - BATTICALOA

##### How MENCAFEP Batticaloa Came About

The morning of the 26 December 2004, was a bright warm and sunny. The hamlet of Navalady, which is part of Batticaloa Town, facing out into the Bay of Bengal, on the East Coast of Sri Lanka was engaged in the usual Sunday morning activities. As the palm trees swayed in the breeze, Children were playing cricket on the white sand beach, mothers and girls doing the weekly washing and cleaning the compounds of their small dwellings. Most of the men, fishermen, were having the day off, fixing their nets, cleaning their small canoe boats, getting ready for a very early start on Monday morning. Little did they know that Monday morning would never dawn for many of them. At approximately 9:30 on that Sunday morning, 2 hours after a massive earthquake in the India Ocean on the coast of Sumatra, on the other side of the Bay of Bengal, a 20 foot wall of water reared itself out of the ocean, without warning and engulfed the hamlet of Navalady. Another 2 walls of water followed the first. In 15 minutes out of the 460 families that lived in Navalady, 90 were left alive, although out of this 90, family members were missing or dead. It's Pre-school with attached unit for disabled children were washed away.

Just along the beach from Navalady was a Hindu Ashram, where 250 men, women and children were worshipping. After the first wave hit, the Ashram and the 250 people were never seen again.

In Veloor Colony with its Pre-school and disabled children's unit, situated next to a Sri Lankan Army Camp, was ironically to some extent saved by the camp. With the initial waves crashing into camp, allowing water only 5 feet high to wash into the dwellings of Veloor Colony. Although the Pre-school and disabled unit structure was left intact, the school and certain areas of the colony are now surrounded by land mines, washed out from the mine field that encircled the army camp.

The sea front at Kattunkudy, a Moslem Town just to the south of Batticaloa, has been severely damaged; a school for disabled children in this area has been brutally broken; water supplies are polluted.

Many stories like this can be told from all over the Indian Ocean Rim that was hit by the Tsunami's on that fateful day. In Batticaloa's case, the sadness of that day runs even deeper. After 20 years of bloody civil war, 3 years of a cease-fire between Sri Lankan Government Forces and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam, who control over half of Batticaloa District and communities starting to pick themselves up again. Batticaloa is hit by the worst natural Disaster in living memory, like pouring oil on to a fire.

After MENCAFEP's visit to Batticaloa on the 28 December 2004, where the landscape in some parts of Batticaloa looked as though an Atomic Bomb had been dropped on it. It was obvious that MENCAFEP had to do something, as this community like many other communities is going to take years to rebuild.

Along with encouragement from friends and acquaintances of MENCAFEP from around the world, especially within the UK. Who know and are aware of MENCAFEP's competence's in the field of disability and as part of their efforts towards the Tsunami Disaster, is raising funds for MENCAFEP. Therefore it has been decided that as MENCAFEP's expertise is in disability, especially intellectual disability. That MENCAFEP would set up a project to work with disabled children, their families and orphaned disabled children.

Even in normal times in the Developing World, the disabled are the forgotten, especially the disabled child and her/his family. When a catastrophe hits, such as smashed into Sri Lanka, then the plight of disabled children gets even more desperate.

**In all wars and disasters it is the disabled child that is the first to die; it is the disabled child that is the first to get disease and infection; it is the disabled child that is the last to get resources when they are handed out.** This is the main reason for setting up the MENCAFEP, Batticaloa Project.

In the Batticaloa District, MENCAFEP would like to alleviate some of problems caused by the Tsunami by setting up a Centre. MENCAFEP sees this centre being in place permanently, offering varying degrees of support to disabled children and their families and were appropriate orphans.

##### The Centre would provide the following:

- ➔ Operational Office and Staff Accommodation.
- ➔ School and Resource Centre.
- ➔ Home Visit and Outreach Support.
- ➔ Support and Training for other Organisations.
- ➔ Distribution of Disability Aids.
- ➔ Assessment and Counselling.

The work will be based on and adapted from MENCAFEP's work in Nuwara Eliya; Day-care school and centre with respite care; Community Based; keeping children with families and supporting these families. MENCAFEP already has a link with Batticaloa, since September 2004 it has been doing 2 week training programmes in Nuwara Eliya, for Carers working with disabled children in Batticaloa.

In the case of disabled orphans, extended family will be traced and if possible the child placed with family. If not, then MENCAFEP has a Family Group Home system that it can feed these children into and/or use other agencies.

With the above in place, the MENCAFEP Centre can contribute quite significantly to the re-building of Batticaloa. By giving disability a presence that is not 'swept under the carpet', providing opportunities to disabled children not normally available to them. And most of all giving disabled children and their families dignity within their community.

MENCAFEP will be making regular assessment visits, meeting with and talking with potential partners. As well as getting a clear picture of the ground situation and what other needs maybe needed as the post-Tsunami period unfolds.

This is an Excerpt from

**MENTALLY HANDICAPPED CHILDREN & FAMILIES EDUCATIONAL PROJECT - BATTICALOA.INFORMATION PACK**



Tsunami hit Batticaloa.



Tsunami hit Batticaloa.



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