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REACH THE UNREACHED*

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### UPDATE ON LENA SYUMKA IN ST. PETERSBURG, RUSSIA



a business woman and a doctor. They both received the Lord Jesus! Lena expresses her **deep-felt gratitude and extends a warm thank you** to each person who gave and prayed!

### FROM THE EDITOR

Shortly after the Tsunami, we were connected with an Indian missionary, Varughese Mathew and his family in the Andaman Islands whom we presented to you in the January 2005 Bridge Report. We knew this was a "divine appointment", and that he was the right administrator of the funds we had collected for the victims.

We are always looking to serve and support those who are pioneering the Gospel on the cutting edge in unreached parts of the world – and the Prakash family sent as missionaries to the Deglipur Island from Varughese's fellowship, is doing precisely that. We embrace their vision to build a Christian center on the island from which the love of Jesus will be extended to the Bengali and Ranchi peoples and they will be cared for both physically and spiritually.

We received generous donations and we are thankful for everyone who responded to the need and gave. Our donated funds will initiate this project, but they are not sufficient to complete it. I am actively pursuing financial partners who will continue to finance the center when our funds stop. Regretfully, the billions of dollars donated by the world community is not permitted to be used toward any active Christian works. Please pray for our new friends, and ask that the Lord will help us connect them with the right people.

In the December issue of The Bridge Report we asked for financial help toward a hysterectomy for Lena Syumka who is our co-worker witnessing for Christ in the business community of St. Petersburg, Russia. Lena had suffered for years with a fibroid tumor that had become larger than a seven month fetus. It was causing a serious decline in her hemoglobin and platelet count, and threatening her life.

Our donors responded generously! On February 23, Lena had a successful surgery at reputable, quality clinic in the city. She is now recovering at home focusing on increasing her hemoglobin level. After the surgery, Lena shared her faith with her two room-mates at the clinic: a

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LINKING GOD'S PEOPLE TO REACH THE UNREACHED

# The Bridge Report

### Tsunami Update from the Andaman Islands



Medical help provided for the victims via Mathew's ministry

A year and two months after the Tsunami hit the coastal areas of the countries around the basin of the Indian Ocean, there is still much devastation and human suffering among the millions who were directly affected by the disaster. Representatives of the world's governments, the U.N., and large scale NGOs (non-governmental relief organizations) have converged onto the regions most affected and done massive work by providing the bare essentials to the most needy, and cleaning up of debris and rebuilding of many local communities. Yet, there is still much to be done.

Billions of dollars were donated toward the Tsunami relief from all over the world. Regretfully — in spite of all that is being done, it is also true that such large operations are rife with spillage. Much of the available resources go into the hands of the wrong people — greedy middlemen with bulging overheads and high administrative costs and corrupt officials and local leaders — before a trickle goes to those in need.

The Bridge raised app. \$10,000.00 toward the Tsunami victims. It seems insignificant in light of the magnitude of the needs. We prayed, however, that we would be led to the right field person with a concrete project that would make a measurable difference for the Gospel among the unreached, and that our donation would be the springboard from which funds from other sources would be added. We know that the Lord will continue to lead us, so this is an update along the way.

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# TSUNAMI UPDATE FROM THE ANDAMAN ISLANDS



Varughese Mathew with his family

Cont. from p. 1 In the ensuing days after the Tsunami, I prayerfully studied the map and countries of the region to familiarize myself with that part of the world. I was praying that, if the Lord wanted The Bridge to have a part in helping the victims, He would quicken that to my heart.

Sensing that our focus of help should be directed toward a more remote area that would receive less attention than the densely populated cities, my eyes kept being drawn to the Andaman and Nicobar Islands. They are an archipelago of 572 islands of which 38 are inhabited, located far out in the Indian Ocean, a thousand miles south of India but nearer to Indonesia, and were very close to the epicenter of the Tsunami. When I learned that most of

these islands have no Christian witness in that the main religion is Hindu, and that they are home to six stone-age tribes who have been isolated from and are hostile toward the outside world for thousands of years, I knew that this was the right place for us to help with our resources. Imagine partaking in impacting one of these tribes with the message of Jesus Christ and see them apply their faith and Biblical truth through their own culture and language without the trappings and influence of the Western church! What an honor that would be!

Through one of our partnering ministries, we were introduced to a pioneer missionary, Varughese Mathew, an Indian missionary who had left his homeland eighteen years ago with his wife and baby daughter to pioneer the Gospel in the Andaman islands, believing that the Lord who had called him would also provide all his needs. Being Christian believers among Hindus, through much persecution and hardship, Varughese founded Indian Christian Fellowship which today includes 36 churches, a Bible training school, and an orphanage. His vision is to have a Christian center established on every inhabited island.

When we initially communicated, Varughese told me that the Indian government had very strict regulations to protect the stone-age tribes and their indigenous culture from being exploited by outsiders. Therefore, they were permitting no one from the out-

side to set foot on these islands. He and his coworkers had prayed for years that the Lord would give them an open door for the Gospel among the stone-age people. "Since we could not go to them, they came to us", he laughed on the phone, referring to hundreds from those tribes who had to be airlifted from the islands in order to survive the ravages of the Tsunami. They were placed in schools and other public buildings in Port Blair, the capital of the Andaman Islands where Indian Christian Fellowship is headquartered.

The members from the fellowship regularly visited these displaced victims and extended much love and care, although they were not permitted to openly share their Christian faith with them. After a few months, the refugees were brought back to some of the southern islands that had maintained the natural infrastructure they need for their survival. The door was open for a season, and now it is closed — but the Holy Spirit knows no boundaries! Let us pray that the love and presence of God they experienced through the Christian believers will remain with them, causing them to begin seeking for God and that Jesus Christ will be revealed among them!

Varughese was ecstatic when I emailed him that we would like to help the most needy and the funds were available. He said, "Two years ago, we sent out a missionary, Dharam

Prakash and his family to establish a pioneer work on the Diglipur Island inhabited by Bengalis and an unreached people group called Ranchis. Among them are many Tsunami victims and many orphans. Just last week we bought 10 acres of land among them in faith that we would build a church with an orphanage, a clinic, and a Bible training school to reach them with the Gospel — and then your email came about the funds!"

Presently we are supporting the Mathew and Prakash families with \$100 per month each. We are seeking partners who will increase the funds we have to make the vision God has given them become reality.

