

**AKSHARA**  
**(An Initiative of SISS & INSAF for supporting the students of Tsunami victim families In Little Andaman)**

**Introduction:**

On the morning of Sunday 26 December 2004, a severe earthquake in the ocean off the coast of northern Sumatra caused tsunamis that devastated communities in all the coastal areas of 12 countries in the Indian Ocean from Sumatra to Somalia. The earthquake measured 9.0 on the Richter scale, the worlds most severe in 40 years. These tsunamis destroyed homes, roads, and swept people out to sea -- resulting in a disaster of extraordinary proportions.

In India, the coastal belt of Tamil Nadu, Andaman & Nicobar Islands, and Andhra Pradesh were badly affected. According to Government reports, 10,881 people lost their lives and 5,792 were reported missing, with 6,913 injured in Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, Pondicherry, and the Andaman and Nicobar Islands. It is estimated that the livelihoods of about 645,000 families (about 3.2 million people) have been directly and indirectly affected; of them, about one third are directly linked to the fisheries sector, about a quarter to micro-enterprises with the remaining engaged in agriculture, livestock, and seasonal employment activities.

The proximity of Andaman & Nicobar Islands from Sumatra (130 Nautical miles) made it vulnerable for the Tsunami. These chains of over 550 islands of which 38 are inhabited were badly hit. Population of over 42,000 was victimized with 1205 people losing their lives in 192 affected villages. Thousands more were homeless and without access to clean water, shelter, food or clothing. The disaster hit the most vulnerable with the hardest hit being women and children, scheduled castes, and scheduled tribes who mostly live on the sea shores and huts.

**PROJECT AKSHARA DETAILS:**

Project                      To support students of Tsunami victim families at Hut Bay, Little Andaman,  
Objective                    Andaman & Nicobar Islands.

Project                      Hut Bay, Little Andaman, Andaman & Nicobar Islands  
Location

About    Project                    The main settlement of the little Andaman is Hut Bay, which has suffered  
Area                                    considerable damage due to the Tsunami. Hut Bay, on the southeast corner  
of Little Andaman Island, faces the open ocean, just a few hundred miles from  
the undersea epicenter of the earthquake, Sumatra. When the first wave hit  
Hut Bay, a town of 12,000, several thousand people rushed for higher land.  
43 people are confirmed dead here, although locals say the final toll may be  
closer to 100. More than 7,000 people in Hut Bay have lost their homes which  
are about half the population, and at least 3,000 have fled north to live in relief  
camps in Port Blair.

Education in Hut Bay There are 11 government schools in Hut Bay, of which 7 were damaged by Tsunami. Out of the 7 schools, only one secondary school (till X class) and Government Model Senior Secondary School (till XII class) are currently in operation. Harminder Bay School which is located in the Nicobar Tribal area, was most damaged, completely losing half of its building. Some of the students who previously attended Harminder Bay School are now going to other schools.

Next damaged school is Government Model Senior Secondary School which has been able to conduct classes in a few of their remaining classrooms. Staying at the relief camps, many people have not being able to get back to their routine, including regular attendance to their school. Some of the students have gone to South Andaman for betterment of living condition. Government Model Senior Secondary School which had approximately 1,600 students attending their school has now only 400 to 500 students.

According to the Vice Principle of Government Model Senior Secondary School, other damaged schools are Anna Nagar Primary School, located near Panju Tikery Camp, and Break Water School. Both schools have their buildings remaining, yet are suspending their classes due to security reasons. Severe cracks were found in many parts of the building. Another reason why primary schools are suspending their classes is that the teachers are assigned to each of the 7 camps for relief duty. Voluntary Organizations are coming forward to build 5 classrooms in Harminder Bay and another 5 in Govt. Model Senior Secondary School, although a launching date is not confirmed. Principle of Govt. Model Senior Secondary School, who is in charge of all schools in Hut Bay, says the students in the camps are slowly coming back attend their regular classes and those who have gone to South Andaman are also coming back to Hut Bay. Most of the students and teachers in the schools of Hut bay area have lost their near and dear ones and undergoing immense mental trauma and isolation. To make them come out of this grave disaster and to resume normalcy, resources and infrastructure need to be mobilized to instill confidence among the students and also their parents. Presently they are facing problems due to lack of class rooms, books and interactions to boost their morale. Children are lacking minimum requirements to attend a school and there is clear scarcity of text books since they have to come from mainland.

Methodology AKSHARA would aim at supporting students at the senior secondary school. The reason behind selecting these sections is that the students of these

classes are at higher risk in their careers as this stage is stepping stone for their careers. About 304 students have been identified who are attending school without text books. All these students would be given a set of text books each. Further a reference library cum counseling centre would be started at Government Senior Secondary School in Hut bay which would cater the needs of all the students in Little Andaman for reference purpose. This centre will conduct regular career counseling camps to guide the higher section students and psychological counseling programs for all the students to aid them to heal from the anguish experienced due to tsunami. This centre would be a hub for any further activities on education and allied areas for the entire Little Andaman. Our goal is to set up a computer system as well as start a HAM Radio unit at this centre. The students and other local people would be trained to send and receive messages using this service which makes them better equipped to face any natural calamities in near future.

#### Justification

The school can be an anchor for the whole community, providing necessary facilities at schools to reenergize the community. Virtually all the students in Little Andaman are affected by the tsunami and suffered significant losses. They have experienced deaths of family members and friends, as well as the destruction of homes and communities. The routines that would normally give them a sense of security have been shattered. The children themselves can tell you how important school is in their lives. Getting the children back to school is one of the best ways to help families and communities get back on their feet. AKSHARA would help the students to overcome their fear and provide them with books and motivation to get back to schools. The Library/Counseling centre would provide psychological counseling and career guidance. This centre would also act as a community centre with a HAM Radio unit and a computer, and can be a key resource for any activity in Little Andaman Island. Hut Bay has been at a disadvantage in Andaman & Nicobar Islands due to its distance from Port Blair, which is the capital of A& N Islands.

Any initiative is only successful and sustainable if it involves the whole hearted participation of the local community. The Government Model Senior Secondary School has agreed to provide space for the Library / counseling centre. A teacher would share the responsibility for proper and effective functioning of the program. A local committee containing opinion leaders,

community leaders, teachers, and the youth would be formed which would monitor this activity.

About SISS

Shyamprasad Institute for Social Service (SISS), a non-profit organization in India, was established in 1991 with an objective to promote voluntary action. SISS is recognized as a premier Institution working for the empowerment of rural communities and disadvantaged groups in Andhra Pradesh. It is also involved in Social research, training and documentation in the fields of Agriculture, Health and Education. In pursuance of realizing its primary goal of promoting peoples participation in issues like poverty alleviation and rural development, the Institute has achieved some good success during the last decade.

Shyamprasad Institute for Social Service (SISS) launched tsunami relief operations in January 2005 in surrounding areas of Port Blair (Andaman's) along with other partner NGOs. SISS has a committed and professional cadre with its head office at Hyderabad. It currently extends logistic support and imparts orientation for about 300 partner voluntary organizations across the length and breadth of Andhra Pradesh.

Expected benefits of the project

- Motivate the children to get back to the school
- Instill confidence among the students and parents
- Create a Reference library/Career Center for all students in Hut Bay
- Introduce the community to the use of a computer and the internet
- Provide support, career guidance and good health promotion
- Leverage the school as Community Resource

**OVERALL TARGET BUDGET FOR THE PROJECT 2005-2006  
YOUR CONTRIBUTION IS REQUESTED AND WELCOME IF YOU ARE READING THIS**

No	Activity	Target Budget
1	Books for identified 304 students (One time activity in 2005)	US\$3,400
2	Reference Library: Book Shelves, Reading tables, books, computer. Community Meetings. (Planned for Early 2006)	US\$1,400
		US\$5,000