

# peacemail

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OFF PEAK  
AUSTRALIA

VOLUME 7 • ISSUE 7

CARE FOR PEOPLE DISPLACED IN SRI LANKA

**act for peace**  
reduce poverty | protect refugees  
prevent conflicts | empower communities

The international aid agency of the National Council of Churches in Australia (NCCA)

Peel gently to open

Peel gently to open



The National Christian Council of Sri Lanka (NCCSL) is helping communities to rebuild after extreme flooding in late December 2010 to February 2011. Two million people were affected with large scale displacement and damage to their houses, livelihoods and crops. The floods followed more than 30 years of ethnic conflict, greatly escalating from 1983 up to May 2009. While all communities were affected, those in the northeast bore the worst of the war between government forces and the rebel Tamil Tigers, the secessionist movement which fought for an independent state for the Tamil minority.

Once the floodwaters receded, most of the families returned to their original places to find major losses to property and livelihoods. NCCSL provided food and shelter in churches based on need, regardless of ethnic or religious differences. Livestock and semi-permanent shelters are being provided to the very poor to assist rehabilitation.

The war received widespread reporting, but at the time of the floods, media attention was focused on other disasters, such as the Brisbane floods. Our help is essential, as there is such limited capacity for recovery and the need is still great.



**\$22** can provide two hot meals and a dry ration pack



**\$260** can repair mud brick houses



**\$200** can provide basic household utensils



**\$320** can provide a family with a cow

All gifts of \$2 or more are tax deductible.



**act for peace**  
**actalliance**

**THANK YOU Partners** for your commitment to Act for Peace through your prayers and regular gifts. Through your generosity, we are making a real and lasting difference to the lives of many people affected by conflict or extreme poverty.

If you would like to upgrade your regular gift, simply free call Howard or Emma, **1800 025 101** or email [hgraham@ncca.org.au](mailto:hgraham@ncca.org.au). Also, all feedback and suggestions are welcome, as we love to hear from you and to pass on comments to project partners.

On the other hand, if you are not yet an Act for Peace Partner and would like to be, or would just like to help this project, your call or email will be welcomed!

Act for Peace is the international aid agency of the National Council of Churches in Australia (NCCA)

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## Survivors Tell of Recovery after the War and Floods

*Dear Partner,*

My name is Reverend Terrence and I am responsible for 12 Methodist churches in the Batticaloa region of eastern Sri Lanka, including the church in the village of Mahiladytheevu. This village has had more than its fair share of calamities. It used to be controlled by the Tamil Tigers. Most of the young children were forcibly taken by the Tigers or joined them willingly. There were battles from 1985 to 2007 between the Sri Lankan government army and the Tigers, during which many people disappeared. Then, when the Tigers were divided into two groups, there was a massacre between the two factions - a disaster within a disaster.

The floods in December last year through February this year compounded the misery and problems faced by the people. I've asked two of them to tell their story:

**Thevarajah, local farmer, said:**

"When the floods came, I took my my children and elderly father to the church in my village. I knew they would look after us. Before the flood, I had a home garden growing chilli, brinjal and okra, which I used to take to the market and sell. I had an acre of land and could support myself, my six children and my wife, while making a little profit. Over the years, I was able to buy a cow and some goats. They grazed near the lagoon. When the floods came, all my animals perished. Twenty-two years of my life washed away. All my savings were in those animals."

**Vasantha, local rice grinder, said:**

"During the war, my husband went missing and I was left alone to care for my family. I used to grind rice flour. I built my tin-roofed clay house with the profits of my rice-pounding. When the flood came, I got up at 4.30am and saw that everything was under water. I took what I could but had to leave cooking utensils and food. One of my daughters was studying for an exam, and all her notes were gone. I thought the church was a good place for shelter and protection. If the minister had not been there we would have died. We were completely cut off.

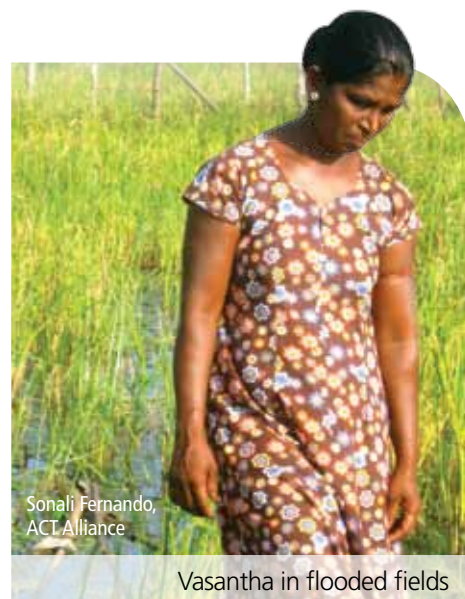
"The flood subsided in the third week of January and I returned to find that my tin-roofed house, earned through years of back-breaking work, had been ruined: half the clay walls and the flooring had been washed away. And then, a few days later, in February, the rains came back and the second flood took away the rest of the house. My first thought was, why do I live here in this world? Should I kill myself? But my children were crying and I knew I had to protect them. I stayed with my family in Mahiladytheevu church with 575 other people. Thank you for helping us."

The little church accommodated 35 people, all of whom are Hindus. Most of the NGOs have gone now, but Act for Peace and ACT Alliance are still here and we are most grateful.

*Reverend S.S. Terrence*

**Partners Prayer Points:**

- *Prayer for those struggling to rebuild their lives and communities after war and floods.*
- *Pray for NCCSL in their commitment to long term support with communities, using its livelihood recovery work to help build reconciliation.*



Sonali Fernando,  
ACT Alliance

Vasantha in flooded fields



Sonali Fernando,  
ACT Alliance

Reverend Terrence shows how high the floods reached