

Local family aids in tsunami relief overseas

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“What we basically did was visit the schools, shelters and camps and we talked to hundreds of children and parents and we asked their needs,” he said.

Those needs are often overlooked by organizations that donate without having people on the ground.

“We went to three schools and they all wanted textbooks for grades 1-5, and we purchased textbooks in the local languages and gave them to them,” he said. “The government agencies had distributed exercise books and pens and pencils, but nobody had given them textbooks.”

In another fishing village that had been wiped out, the locals said the government had promised to rebuild their homes, but that if they were going to start fishing again

they’d need hurricane lamps. So the Yogachandra family bought about 500 hurricane lamps to give out.

Another school had lost its water pump and lost all running water for the last two months. So they purchased and donated a water pump.

In southern India they visited day-care centers for the children of fishermen lost in the tsunami, and saw that conditions were dilapidated. So they bought tables, toys, mats and water containers.

Natascha brought her beanie babies, and gave them out individually to children in the refugee camps.

Nat Yogachandra will always remember his daughter hugging those crying children.

“It was an eye-opener, and it was a culture shock,” he said.

Natascha said it’s so different from here.

“They have extreme poverty

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They have extreme poverty and extreme wealth and they don’t have much in between.”

**Natascha Yogachandra,
on her visit to areas hit by the
recent tsunami**

and extreme wealth and they don’t have much in between,” she said. “There’s many beggars and many people who are

wealthy and don’t come out of their houses often.”

She wants to go back. She doesn’t know when, but she knows she wants to help.

The work, she says, has hardly started.

“We didn’t do even half of the things they need. We just gave them what they wanted at that time,” she said. “They haven’t even started to rebuild.”

Nat Yogachandra said that as he and his family go to the community to tell them how their money was spent, they’ll also be recruiting for help in the next step.

“There are about 88 to 100 orphans from one small town alone. We’re planning to find sponsors for those children for the next five to 10 years. That’s our plan,” he said. “And we’ve identified 130, 140 schools that need libraries, and we’re going to provide them.”