

# Helping Friends in Need (cont.)

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The next morning (5th February 2005) at 5.00 am we were taken to the Ratnamalar airport in Colombo and we took a flight to Palali airport.

We arrived at Palali airport at about 10.00 am. Due to the high security in that area, it took us 3 hours to arrive in Jaffna town. Dr Umapathy and his team received us at the Jaffna town and we were taken to Jaffna Hospital. After lunch we had ward round and had discussion as regards treatment of orthopaedic cases that were in the hospital.

Dr Umapathy is a competent and dedicated surgeon. Single handed with limited facilities he was doing a splendid job treating the orthopaedic cases in North Sri Lanka.

At 3.30 pm, we together with Dr Umapathy proceeded to the Tsunami affected area of Mulaithivu. Dr Umapathy had got the necessary approval from both the government of Sri Lanka and the Tamil Tigers who controlled that area.

It took us about 3 hours to reach Dr Poonambalam Memorial Hospital in Puthukudiyirrupu, Vanni which was near Mulaithivu. We had to pass numerous check points which were manned by the Sri Lanka government forces and Tamil Tigers. We were received warmly by Dr Sivapalan and staff of this hospital. Dr Sivapalan with his staff managed all the orthopaedic and general surgical cases in this hospital. Due to the civil war, he had vast experience in treating trauma cases.

Dr Poonambalam Memorial Hospital is the only hospital in North Sri Lanka other than Jaffna General Hospital that is partially equipped to perform orthopaedic operations. This hospital has one operation theatre and another room where dressings and minor procedures can be done. This operating theatre has yet to be equipped with an Image Intensifier and an orthopaedic operating table. They have basic orthopaedic equipments. The equipments that we had taken were very useful.

Our accommodation in this hospital for the guest was luxurious. It was an air-conditioned room with all modern facilities.

Following a sumptuous dinner, we did a ward round in that hospital. We selected 13 cases to be operated the following day (6th February 2005).

After breakfast the next day (6th February 2005) we proceeded with the operation. Two orthopaedic surgeons did the operation while the other ran the outpatient orthopaedic clinic. A number of patients having heard of our arrival came to see us. We saw tsunami affected patients, patients injured during the civil war, congenital cases and other general orthopaedic problem cases.

On the 6th February 2005, we operated from 8.00 am to 12 midnight and operated on 13 cases.

The following day (7th February 2005) we selected 12 operations and we operated from 7.30 am to 12.00 midnight.

On 8th February 2005, we started to operate at 7.30 am and finished at 12.00 midnight and we operated on 12 cases.

On 9th February 2005, we started at 8.00 am and finished at 2.00 pm and we operated on 3 cases.

The cases that we operated ranged from mal-united fractures, un-united fractures, fusion of ankle joint, shoulder joint and wrist joint due to old fracture dislocations, leg lengthening procedures using the external fixators, neglected bilateral and unilateral club feet, quadricepsplasty for stiff knees, sequestrectomy for osteomyelitis, tendon transfers for nerve injuries, subtalar arthrodesis for old fracture calcaneum with subtalar arthritis and triple arthrodesis for deformed feet. We were unable to do any spine or joint replacement procedures due to lack of facilities.