

Mother Nature's cruelty has recently hit Sri Lanka with deadly landslides and torrential rain devastating the community bringing destruction to lives and property largely in the Sabaragamuwa province. Most devastated areas were Aranayaka, Bulathkohupitiya in the Kegalle district and Belihuloya and Paraviangala areas in the Ratnapura district. Aranayake was hard-struck as the villages were destroyed burying a number of families alive. Certain areas in the Colombo and Gampaha district too were affected such as those within the banks of Kelani river.

News of the destruction and the cry of the destitute people began to travel around the world. It reached Melbourne as a gusty wind. "Hey guys shall we do something for the people affected in the floods", was a simple gesture the Sweeney Reserve Cricket clan and

of individuals set on the target of relief services in the name of their motherland; some graciously offering their homes for collection points while others making sure that the plea for donation of funds and dry rations travelled through social media far and wide even beyond the borders of Victo-

It was eye-catching to notice at one collection point when their Australian neighbours enthusiastically donated spurred by the influx of donors dropping off donations. Overflowed with relief donations but overwhelming expressions of interest to give more stretched the two-day collection

unteers for Sunday” they needed as many hands as possible as the 40ft container stood as a giant enveloped by loads of packaged bags and boxes in the Trico warehouse. I enjoyed a moment's opportunity to steal a glimpse of this vastness the night before the consignment and what wait to embrace as the task ahead.

Sunday 29 May was a day to remember. Volunteers poured into deliver a hand; they brought their friends and family. Numbers increased as the day broke and slowly but steadily the 40ft container began to fill. Three wooden boxes filled to the brim with over 1000 full cream milk powder packs and 2000 liters of fresh long life milk cartons made its way into half way through the container. Every box and a bag on board the Trico container carrying goods worth of over \$100,000 received an index number en-

HEY GUYS SHALL WE DO SOMETHING ABOUT THE FLOOD VICTIMS

their closest friends came out with. They believed every penny at this tough times would make a difference and their heartfelt warmth would bring in some comfort to those who lost it all. The Group's Viber page Sri Lanka Flood Relief commenced the carriage of the ideas that poured out; "shall we join the already established channels who are collecting basic essential", "can we organize a small dinner dance to make about \$5000". The idea of a Facebook page

ria. Vibrant and dynamic, the group commenced their humanitarian efforts towards supporting those who lost what they used to claim as their own. Many became homeless in the flood-affected areas as the roof over their head was thrashed away by the stormy winds, the belongings swept away in the floodwaters. Heartlessly, recent floods took away about 100 lives further missing around the same amount that

deadlines to a further week expanding the opportunity for the Sri Lanka Melbournians to toil for the sake of their suffering motherland. Every effort was also made to invite those willing to give in cash as 'Sri Lanka Flood Relief' community page on Facebook



<https://www.facebook.com/SLFloodrelief> and a web page <http://www.handforlife.com> was cooked up that wide-opened the communication channels broadening the opportunity for more hands and hearts to come forward. "Shall we meet up and discuss further after work", they were concerned that the money must go via genuine path so it reaches the helpless and needy. While the discussions went on someone had another idea, "we can donate the money to a couple of families to build them up". "We can follow the Nepal earthquake relief collection modelinstead of sending large amounts of moneytry food/clothes/basic medical supplies etc. there will be shortage of basic necessities in shops due to supply disruptions." Whilst international aid started flowing to the Island in both commodity and money, this passionate group

believed to have been buried alive in the landslides.

Many offered their support, time and money and the relief efforts got strengthened with Nexus Cargo and Trico International lifting the burden of shipping gifting free 20 boxes and a 40ft container respectively. As with many cases the time was very scarce. It didn't take long at all for the collection points covering Berwick, Lynbrook, Cranbourne, Craigieburn and Mount Waverly to feel the enormity of the task ahead of them. They experienced a blasting inflow of donors at their doorstep. These homes got flooded with all sorts of deliveries including dry food, milk powder, canned food, sanitary supplies, baby supplies, clothing and footwear to name some.

bourne chilly nights. They found that among many great offerings were also a few disgraceful donors whose idea behind donating could have been a mere 'get rid of my unwanted waste'. I wonder if they were moved by the idea 'one man's litter is another man's treasure'.

While the sorting and packaging come to an end they now face the enormous responsibility in transporting the goods to the Trico warehouse in Hallam where the gigantic 40ft container gifted by the company awaits the loading. The kind-hearted Melbourne Sri Lanka community kept the Group's attempts strong. Dry rations were not all what they offered in donation but also trucks, vans and cargo facilities to entertain the efforts. "We need about 100 vol-

unteers for Sunday” they needed as many hands as possible as the 40ft container stood as a giant enveloped by loads of packaged bags and boxes in the Trico warehouse. I enjoyed a moment's opportunity to steal a glimpse of this vastness the night before the consignment and what wait to embrace as the task ahead. Sunday 29 May was a day to remember. Volunteers poured into deliver a hand; they brought their friends and family. Numbers increased as the day broke and slowly but steadily the 40ft container began to fill. Three wooden boxes filled to the brim with over 1000 full cream milk powder packs and 2000 liters of fresh long life milk cartons made its way into half way through the container. Every box and a bag on board the Trico container carrying goods worth of over \$100,000 received an index number en-



keeping the communication flowing posting Sweeney Reserve account details ensuring utmost transparency in the process ahead.

The first phase of a massive plan ended only to begin with another involving sorting and packaging of the collections. Those that sacrificed their household had no escape, no relief from flood relief donors. Their homes bombarded with bags and boxes of dry rations, sanitary clothing and other used clothes now face the challenge of sorting, boxing and transporting. Nothing is so excruciating if you have the heart for it and hands to support, I believe. The Group's volunteers acted swiftly sweating away their after-work hours in the cold and miserable Mel-

able a full inventory of the donations sailing home. The day was graced by well wishers and those who cared to treat the gathering crowd to lunch and teas. Keeping in tact with the Sri Lankan rituals a Buddhist Thero was invited to further grace the occasion. The shipping container overflowed concealing its every depth and breadth; paying off an arduous task by the Sweeney Reserve Cricket Club members, their friends and families, showcasing the act of kindness of a collegial Melbourne community that came together in the need.

Sri Lanka Administrative Services Association (SLASA), the governing body of all divisional secretaries, is the coordinator of the relief donations in the consignment. Exclusive storing facility for the shipment has been requested from the Election Commissioner. SLASA has a well-established distribution mechanism working in collaboration with Sri Lanka Disaster Management and entrusts the dispersal of the donations to those who genuinely need them. Meanwhile in Sri Lanka, concerned authorities have been attending to access to drinking water availability, providing sanitation and health facilities and providing full access to cook meals and dry rations. Ministry of Disaster Management with Disaster Relief Services Center and also with the support of Sri Lanka Red Cross and World Food Program, have assisted in many ways. Various bodies and religious institutions and also Christian institutions such as Charitas have supported towards helping those affected in various ways. Reputed Media bodies such as Derana and Sirasa have not forgotten to play their part too.

The ship is sailing in the rough seas bearing the heaviest container Trico had ever shipped; it will be days before it reaches the Sri Lankan shores. They stopped for nothing, waited for no one yet worked as a team. Three Cheers! for the generosity of all who labored for a great cause.