

Disaster relief gifts enable ongoing recovery

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By John Hall

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DALLAS—Disaster recovery continues in South Asia and Louisiana, and Texas Baptists remain integrally involved in both locations.

Texas Baptist donations have enabled the Baptist General Convention of Texas, Baptist Child & Family Services and Texas Baptist Men to continue rebuilding lives throughout Louisiana and Sri Lanka.

BGCT, Baptist Child & Family Services and Texas Baptist Men leaders continue using the funds collected as early as December 2004. More than \$180,000 still is earmarked for tsu-nami-related ministry, and nearly \$400,000 is available for hurricane-related response work.

Disaster relief gifts to the Baptist General Convention of Texas have enabled Texas Baptists to minister longterm in Sri Lanka and Louisiana. Texas Baptist Men work on this trade school in eastern Sri Lanka. (Photo by John Hall)

This marks the first time in TBM, Baptist Child & Family Services and BGCT history that Texas Baptists have shifted their ministry from purely disaster relief to service that includes recovery on such a large scale, officials noted. Leaders are listening to the needs of local Christians and seeking to meet them strategically.

About 185 congregations have helped the recovery process in Louisiana through a partnership between the BGCT and the Greater New Orleans Baptist Association.

Texas Baptists are helping New Orleans Baptists rebuild their churches and reach out to their respective communities. Funds are being allocated to churches and families who were affected by Hurricane Katrina.

“Recovery can take years,” said Milfred Minatrea, a BGCT staff person helping coordinate Texas Baptist relief efforts.

“We have long-term and strategic investments in churches in Louisiana and Southeast Texas.”

Texas Baptist Men is meeting needs through partnerships of its own. Gospel for Asia, an evangelical group that has partnered with TBM since January 2005, continues to share needs. Texas Baptists will finish another building near Batticola that will complete a trade school.

TBM also will work with the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship in the near future to build homes in Sri Lanka. CBF has been ministering in Sri Lanka for about a year.

These relationships help TBM expand its ministry in the island nation, said TBM Executive Director Leo Smith. Texas Baptists will continue to spread the gospel to a country largely comprised of non-Christians.

“There are a lot of people who are being touched,” Smith said.

“In Southeast Asia, when we were over there, it opened the door for the Muslims and Buddhists. It changed what they thought Christians were. They saw people care and love them.”

Baptist Child & Family Services continues developing a foster care program for Sri Lanka. The effort is the first of its kind in the country.

While Louisiana and South Asia remain on the minds of many people, Minatrea reminds Texas Baptists they also are ministering to victims of wildfires across North Texas, providing supplies and committing to the rebuilding process, and in Southeast Texas, they are helping victims of Hurricane Rita.

News of religion, faith, missions, Bible study and Christian ministry among Texas Baptist churches, in the BGCT, the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) and around the world.