



Griffith Engineers Bring Hope to Tsunami Ravaged Indonesia

Arriving in Banda Aceh a year after the 2004 Boxing Day Tsunami, no-one would be blamed for thinking they had stepped into the midst of a war zone. While the troubled Aceh province in Northern Sumatra has experienced great civil unrest for many years, people now have a common enemy - poverty and homelessness. Even a full year after the tsunami, the utter devastation remains all too apparent. Kilometers inland, large boats still lie where they came to rest after the massive wave subsided. In areas where prosperous fishing villagers once thrived, nothing is left but mud and rubble. Where great mosques and churches once stood, only foundations remain.

When most engineering students undertake industrial experience, it is not uncommon for them to be confined to an office, drafting reinforcing layouts for columns for months on end. Fellow student, Steven Davies and I, however, had a vastly different and considerably more rewarding experience. This was all thanks to the Zero-to-One Foundation and the Thwaites family.

During our 2005/2006 summer vacation, Steve

and I were fortunate enough to travel to Indonesia, where we worked with the charity based, Zero-to-One Foundation. Working with charity organisations such as the Australia Red Cross, the foundation participates in the reconstruction effort of the devastated Aceh province and Nias Island (Northern Sumatra, Indonesia). Following the Boxing Day Tsunami and the March Earthquake, these two areas were left ruined, with over 200,000 people killed and

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Whilst working with the Zero-to-One Foundation, we were able to experience first hand the incredible destruction caused by these natural disasters and apply our engineering knowledge to aid the area's restoration. The majority of our time was spent in the town of Sirombu, on the West coast of Nias. Here, the Zero-to-One is in the process of building over 500 houses for local residents left homeless after the catastrophes. In addition, the foundation has

been constructing schools and medical clinics, and installing water purification plants. Throughout our time in Sirombu, we assisted and supervised the construction of one school and over 60 houses, and managed to pass on vital building skills to the local community.

Working on such a mammoth project in such a remote location was not an easy task. English was spoken by very few and we were forced to

contend with meals consisting entirely of subtle variations of rice and fish for breakfast, lunch and dinner. In saying that, the personal gratification was priceless. Having the opportunity to build houses, and through this rebuild a community for people who have nothing, was greatly fulfilling. It was a life changing experience, and one which I'm sure both of us will never forget.

**By Daniel Dray
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