



HMS CHATHAM



NEWS RELEASE 03/05

HMS CHATHAM HELPS IN REBUILDING OF BATTICALOA

HMS CHATHAM has remained off the east coast of Sri Lanka near the town of Batticaloa and was joined today by RFA DILIGENCE. Having surveyed the town yesterday and marked the channel from the lagoon back to the open sea, two working parties were landed by helicopter and boat.

The first party were tasked to concentrate on repairing some of the local boats so that the locals can begin to return to their livelihood of fishing. Some of this party also assisted at a local convent and orphanage with general repairs to allow the children to play safely outside. Several boats were repaired and it is hoped that they will be useable tomorrow. The second party were involved in house clearance. Whilst this may seem a rather trivial task the local population has been deeply traumatised unable to help themselves. The team found that once they started clearing rubble and attempting to reconnect power the locals themselves started assisting and worked alongside the sailors. Many of the houses get the water from wells which have been contaminated with seawater and it is hoped that a pump can be landed from RFA DILIGENCE tomorrow to start pumping these out so that with water and cleared houses the population may start to move back in.

A small party from the ship also attended the daily meeting of the various aid agencies operating in the area and from this the ships have offered to help construct a tented village tomorrow for up to 250 families.

The crew of RFA DILIGENCE were briefed on the efforts being made and their work boat, which can carry up to 40 people was used to ferry personnel to and from the town, enabling a greater number of personnel to be moved in a shorter time.

Captain Steve Chick, the Commanding Officer said; "Today has been a good day when CHATHAM's ship's company have been ashore in numbers, conducting useful tasks and helping the community start to

rebuild their lives. By working with the local authorities and other aid agencies we can ensure that maximum use is made of our assets and skills, such as the helicopters and skilled personnel and boats. The crew have found it incredibly rewarding work and feel very lucky to be able to help these people start to rebuild their lives.”

For further information contact: Lieutenant Commander Peter Sellers, Public Relations Officer, HMS CHATHAM, BFPO 253

Telephone: Ship's Mobile : 0044 7802 356488

Inmarsat: 323 458110

SSS: 9297 3087 800 (via Whitehall operator)

E Mail: 253-WEO@a.dii.mod.uk

Website: www.royal-navy.mod.uk/static/pages/1571.html