

## Friendly Visitors from Down Under: A Case Work on Australian Humanitarian Project in Sri Lanka

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The arrival of a Portuguese visitor in the southern coastal town of Galle by accident in 1505 is considered as the beginning of the 'Western invasion' in Sri Lanka. The Dutch and the British followed the Portuguese and their arrival and action not only changed the modern history of the Island, but also influenced the economic, social, environment and cultural activities of the nation.

Five hundred years after the arrival of the first Portuguese invader to Sri Lanka, thousands of foreigners arrived in the Portuguese controlled areas on or after 26 December 2004. On this occasion the main motive was neither invasion nor trade as the influx of new wave of foreigners in 2004 was associated with humanitarian assistance to those affected by the Boxing Day tsunami.

Of the large number of foreigners who arrived in the Sri Lankans shores after December 2004 included Australians, representing NGOs, the Government and individuals. Some of the NGOs included professional organisations such as the Australian Medical Association (AMA). For example, in February 2005, the AMA Branch in Western Australia delivered an aid package worth over A\$ 2 million. Medical contingencies from other states included not only medications and equipment, but also individual practitioners and medical students.

This paper outlines a humanitarian project conducted by the Australian Medical Students' Association (AMSA) in conjunction with the Unite for Sight Foundation and the Sri Lanka United Nations Friendship Organisation, and their work in the southern coastal belt commenced in December 2005. This paper will discuss the objective, processes involved and the possible outcomes of a humanitarian project led by the AMSA in the southern coastal belt providing, both short and long terms benefits not only for the tsunami affected people but also for the 'visitors' who will gain benefits as future health care providers in a multi-cultural Australia and elsewhere.

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