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Testimony to the work of Donna Williams and the WordLoveWordLove documentary.

In 2004 the east and southern coast regions of Sri Lanka were impacted by the enormous surge waves of the Asian tsunami in an event of unprecedented magnitude and destruction. While direct effects were obvious, secondary repercussions were equally huge in terms of human suffering both physical and mental. It is hard to over emphasize the degree of shock experienced by the majority and in the especially vulnerable, the children of the region. The effects were catastrophic. Rose Charities managed to transport a medical team into the region on request of the local paediatric hospital in just over a week but assessment revealed problems far deeper than the directly physical and structural. The deepest psychological foundations of security of so many children had been utterly uprooted through the process of instantaneous 'out of the blue' losses of home, parents, friends, school and others. Suddenly, for tens of thousands, all they knew had been churned into non-existence or an utterly different form.

Donna Williams, creator of WordLoveWorldLove, proposed documenting the power of words to assist children in healing from trauma after a life altering crisis. She would co-produce her documentary with Tony Papa of Avanti Pictures (2004 Gemini Award). Donna made contact with Rose Charities after attending the 2005 Tsunami Imprints Exhibit, at the Pendulum Gallery in Vancouver. Powerful, emotional drawings from children who received post tsunami counselling displayed the dramatic layers of loss experienced.

The WordLove idea was simple but beautifully effective. It was to help restore roots and psychological foundations for the disaster stricken elementary school children in Sri Lanka by linking them with messages of friendship from their caring and concerned child counterparts in Canada. It was the elegance of that concept that made the idea work. The simple exchange of words. But not just any words. Words that would connect, would heal, words of kindness, of caring, compassion and empathy. Words sent from Canada and words received in return in a personal but worldly exchange. Children empowering children through their words.

Rose Charities was happy to help implement the film production via their ongoing relief programs through engaging a Canadian/Sri Lankan liaison, choosing an appropriate school for the exchange, orienting the crew pre-production and coordinating counsellors who had been involved with the children in Sri Lanka to share their experience with the Canadian children. Donna successfully engaged two schools, two classes of grade 4/5's, teachers, parents, communities and Rose Charities in both Canada and Sri Lanka.

Hand delivering words from Canada to a tsunami stricken village in Sri Lanka and receiving words in return proved to be a powerful exchange for everyone involved. The words were gifts between children worlds apart geographically and in fortune of events, yet linking each other with meaningful bridges of empathy as siblings of the same planet. The children in both countries experienced the WordLove program taking what they learned about compassion, kindness and empathy home to their family members and into their communities. The young students continued to communicate with each other for three years after the film was made.

A unique, effective series of lovely bridges had been constructed through the collaboration for children in two countries to bring the WordLove concept to life, so needed, not only in this situation of disaster but highly relevant to so many other areas in our fractured world of today. We at Rose Charities were privileged to have been able to help facilitate the beautiful initiative of WordLove. The film was awarded Best Documentary/KIDSFIRST! 2006 Film Festival, Best Editing/Houston International and selected as the opening film of CIDA Beyond Borders Program/Calgary International Film Festival, reflecting the meaningful resonance.

Donna Williams continues her filmmaking career. The WordLoveWorldLove vision and its successful creative implementation bears no better testimony to the effectiveness of her imaginative concepts as well as her determination and skills to make them a reality.

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "William N. Grut". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned above a horizontal line that underlines the name.

William N. Grut MD.PhD Gen Exec.
Sec Rose Charities International
Hon Sec. Rose Charities Canada.