

# PURE RELIGION

## A Donation from the Jesus Church

The day after the tsunami hit South Asia, taking with it nearly 300,000 lives and causing incalculable destruction, Elder Subandriyo, an Area Authority Seventy, called upon several Saints he knew he could trust. One call he made was to the district Young Women president, Bertha Suranto.

First, he asked her to purchase the materials for 3,000 hygiene kits. Then, he asked her to help make arrangements to unload a cargo plane.

When Elder Subandriyo needed several members of the Church to take a leave of absence from their jobs and travel to the areas hardest hit by the tsunami, Sister Suranto was among those who volunteered. She arrived in the northern Sumatra city of Medan, where she immediately began purchasing building materials, tents, food, clothing, kitchen stoves, school uniforms, and materials for thousands of additional hygiene kits.

“When we had the option of buying cheap goods or quality goods, we bought quality,” she said. “If we wouldn’t wear or use something ourselves, we didn’t buy it.”

Members of the Church worked from early morning until late at night filling forty 40-foot-long trucks with tens of thousands of needed items.

As each truck was filled, Sister Suranto phoned ahead to her husband who was with another group of Saints in Banda Aceh, one of the hardest hit areas. He received the trucks his wife had filled and helped to distribute the items among those in need—99 percent of whom were Muslim.

In many cases the boxes—each labeled “A Gift from The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-

day Saints”—were stacked inside the mosques. Everywhere they went, townspeople ran out to greet and welcome them.

“We felt as though we were movie stars,” Sister Suranto said. “Often, we arrived in villages, towns, and refugee camps that had not received help from anyone else.”

Each time they met with village leaders, they asked, “What is it you most need?”

One village chief said that more than anything else, his village needed copies of the Koran because theirs had been swept away in the tsunami. A few days later, the Church presented the village with 700 copies.

As trucks from The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints were unloaded into mosques and city squares, the words rang out, “We have received another donation from the Jesus Church!” And hundreds of grateful mothers, fathers, and children lined up to receive the life-sustaining goods.

Heads of villages and heads of families smiled whenever Sister Suranto and the other members of the Church came. “You are a different church,” they said. “You don’t want anything in return, only to serve. You are our brothers and sisters.”

As for Sister Suranto, her outlook on life changed as well. “Before the tsunami, I didn’t often associate with those of other faiths,” she said. “The people we helped probably felt the same way. Very few of them had ever heard of our Church or knew anything about us. We were strangers to each other. Today, things are different. Today, we feel a close bond. We know we are brothers and sisters.”

