

## **From theoretical knowledge to practical use**

How Hygiene Resource Centres help children and parents to improve their lifestyle

### ***Suzanna Lipscombe's fourth report for the Malteser International Lent Campaign 2008: 40 Euros for Sri Lanka***

Today, we hold our monthly Rainwater Harvesting project meeting at the Malteser International Office in Galle. All relevant project staff, the field officers from our implementing partner Lanka Rainwater Harvesting Forum (LRWHF), and our funding partner UNICEF attend the meeting. This forum provides an ideal opportunity to discuss construction progress, site selection, provide feedback from site visits and from discussions with the beneficiaries regarding their new Rain Water Harvesting (RWH) tank. We also address any issues or concerns that have surfaced over the previous month. And – last but not least - it is a nice opportunity to get everyone together and maintain the good spirit within the project.

This meeting highlights the achievement of completing the 400 RWH tanks allocated to Matara, and the first 100 tanks in Hambantota Districts. Having reached this milestone, we will now be able to focus all our attention on the remaining 500 tanks to be completed in Hambantota before the 31 May 2008. However, it isn't just tank numbers that we need to consider. The aim of the project is not only to improve water security to families in the southern Province who either have limited access to any water supply, or whose water supply is unsafe, but also to promote the technology as a viable means to provide drinking water as part of a longer-term, sustainable solution. One of the means by which to do this is developing 'Resource Centres' in the project areas. These take the form of a 20m<sup>3</sup> tank being built at a public or religious building. Through partnerships with them they will act as a focal point within the community where they can see the technology and find out more information. At this meeting we discuss a secondary school that has been identified in Urumutthe - a small hill-top village in central Matara District - that will receive one of these tanks.

LRWHF Field Officers have been in touch with the school's Principle who is very enthusiastic about receiving a tank, and is positive about integrating it into the daily activities in the school. For example the children in the senior classes (between 16 to 18 years old) will be offered the opportunity to participate in the construction of the tank, and thereby learn masonry and plumbing skills that could later be developed should they choose such a profession. Since the wider concept of hydrology is already part of their academic syllabus, the inclusion of a tank at their school will provide an opportunity for the school children to see how rainwater can be used for their benefit. Thus, they will gain an understanding of water supply, water quality and hygiene promotion. And gaining practical knowledge of an academic subject will of course be useful for them when they come to take their exams.

I find this to be such a positive element of the project, as not only will the children learn some useful skills, they will also be able to start thinking about the wider

concept and take these messages home to share with their families. Malteser International actively promotes the inclusion and participation of children in such projects, since they are the future generations who will continue to seek and maintain a safe water supply.