

## **Interviews, stories and an arrest**

Making of... the new Malteser International WASH film in Sri Lanka

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

A couple of weeks ago, a film crew were coming to our office in Galle. The idea was to produce a film that would showcase some of Malteser International's water and sanitation projects in the Southern Province of Sri Lanka, as part of a number of activities to mark the UN's International Year of Sanitation. So the Galle team (that's what we call ourselves here in the Malteser International office in Galle) started planning which projects and which sites to take them to, and made the arrangements for the staff and beneficiaries to play a role in some of the scenes. A young girl, Malcha, one of the students from our Child Friendly Schools Project, was invited to play the key role in the film that highlights different water supply, water quality and sanitation issues faced by the people in Sri Lanka. It was quite hectic organising all the logistics, but we managed it nonetheless. And then they arrived...

This morning I take Martin Hilbert and Bianca Beyer, that is the whole film team, to Koggala to film some of the recently completed bio-sand filters, and later, Mushin and Pradeep from Malteser International's WASH Habaraduwa Project will take them to Kathaluwa (an area about 20km east of Galle) and show elements of their water, sanitation and solid waste management project. All seems to be a normal day until the team that has been to Kathaluwa – on their way back to the office - stops at a railway bridge and starts to film (the material should be part of the film's introductory scene). Waiting in the office, we suddenly get news that they have been arrested! A local resident has raised the alarm to the local police that some unknown persons are filming a strategic bridge – and given the current political climate has obviously caused some suspicion and concern. Fortunately the local police officer is very friendly about the incident, but explains that if the film crew wishes to take footage of such scenes again they shall inform the local authorities beforehand, and so avoid such an event happening again. So they return to the office with an interesting story to tell!

Another morning, another story to tell: We want to take the film crew to Hambantota District and see some Rain Water Harvesting (RWH) sites in Nakulugamuwa and Weeraketiya, so we leave early and start the two hour drive along the coast road.

We arrive in Nakulugamuwa and begin filming Malcha – our main character for the film – next to a RWH tank as she describes what she learnt about water safety and how to maintain the tank. We then move onto a nearby well and watch some women collecting water and chatting, catching up with the latest gossip. Then the last stop in the village is the potter, Mrs. Piyadasa's house at the top of the hill. It is interesting to see what things Martin and Bianca have to consider while shooting the film – things such as the position of the sun, sound, and how the light reflects in the faces of the

people they are interviewing. The microphone is quite amusing – it is like a little grey shaggy dog!.

In Weeraketiya, we film some tank construction and I have a little fun helping the Piyasena family make some cement. Here Martin also films the interviews with Suranga from UNICEF, Nuwan from Lanka Rainwater Harvesting Forum, and myself – it's quite strange talking to a camera and trying to make sure you summarise the important information in a short sentence. It takes a couple of takes, a few giggles, but we manage in the end!

After the long day we travel back to Galle. I really enjoyed the filming and showing not only the film crew, but some of our other project staff the new RWH sites and the families we are working with. I'm looking forward to seeing the final version of the film! And maybe, you also want to see it. In this case just send an e-mail with your address to [info@malteser-international.org](mailto:info@malteser-international.org) and we will provide you with a copy.