



### WATER - FRIEND OR FOE? – August, 2017

On Boxing Day, 2004 Gnanaka Jayasinghe, who is a member of the Rotary Club of Colombo Central, Sri Lanka, went next door to see his friend, Trevor Barton, who is a member of the Rotary Club of Astley, to discuss the breaking news about the terrible Tsunami and its impact on Jay's place of birth, Sri Lanka.

Over the next few days the two friends and their respective Clubs discussed what was the best way to help in the light of massive donations being received from all around the world. Through local intelligence the RC of Colombo discovered that a Tamil community on the east side of the island at Trincomalee had been badly affected. This deprived community is heavily dependent upon fishing and most of their boats had been thrown inland and the outboard engines rendered useless through salt water and sand.

With help from colleagues in Japan, the two clubs of Astley and Colombo amassed funds sufficient to repair 58 boat engines by using skilled local labour as well as buying a brand-new boat and engine for the Fishing Co-operative. The whole Fishing Co-operative was able to go back to sea and start to earn a living again. Rotarians Trevor Barton and Tony Roberts visited Sri Lanka in June, 2005 and saw for themselves how the collective support had impacted and were present at the launch of the new boat.



With some money that was left over, the Fishing Co-operative bought two boxes of tuna fishing hooks. Tuna is a very valuable catch and the idea was that any monies that the Fishing Co-operative received over what they needed to live on would go back to the Rotary Club of Colombo for investment in other projects.

Amongst its many other projects, the Rotary Club of Colombo Central became aware that the nearby Weerasekara Children's Home was having problems in obtaining clean water. Using the profits from the fishing project the Clubs invested in the drilling of a bore hole and the erection of a water tower, tanks and pumping facility, which has transformed the quality of the water that the children drink.



The project was completed in 2006.

In 2016 the Rotary Club of Colombo Central embarked on another water project because the Sooriyawewa- Meegahajandura villages had made it known that both adults and children were suffering from an unknown kidney disease thought to be from chemicals found in their water. There have been some wonderful technological developments in the world of water purification and using the process of reverse osmosis through graphene filters, the conversion of poor quality water into high quality drinking water is achievable on a large scale.

This process is well-known to Rotary organisations worldwide but it is more difficult when trying to produce large amounts of drinking water. However, working on the same principles of co-operation, the Rotary Clubs of Astley, Colombo Central and Suita West amassed some money between them, which allowed for the Colombo Club to procure the equipment locally for the project, thereby obtaining best value.

Additionally, the Colombo Club was very successful in obtaining the services of the Sri Lankan navy in building the infrastructure that could house all the filters and associated equipment.



It can be seen that the clean drinking water on the left can be converted from brackish, underground water using the plant shown in the middle photograph and you can also see the banner of the Opening Ceremony, which took place in July 2017, which involved the navy, religious leaders and the Rotary Club of Colombo.

The Suita West Club summed up the project by saying, on its website, “With Money raised from a Kidney walk along with the Rotary Club of Suita West (Japan) and the Rotary Club of Astley (UK) and the engineering expertise from [Sri Lanka Navy](#), our signature project of building a Water Purification Reverse Osmosis (RO) plant worth Rs.1.2Million which can deliver up to 10,000 liters of clean drinking water every day was finally constructed and opened to the public which will now benefit around 500 families living in the area who previously had no access to clean drinking water in Sooriyawewa Meegahajandura area and were prone to a chronic kidney disease.”

Since the 2004 Tsunami Gnanaka Jayasinghe became a Paul Harris Fellow and President of his Colombo Club and Trevor Barton MBE followed the same path. Trevor said, “It is very sad to report that my friend Tony passed away in September 2014 but our families are still very close and they are incredibly proud of the part he played in this project.”

Trevor added, “It is somewhat perverse that water causes so many problems and yet clean water also solves so many problems and allows man to earn a living and prosper.” Alan Prescott, Chair of Astley’s International Committee said, “It just shows what three Clubs from across the world, working together, can achieve.”