



# INNER WHEEL DISTRICT 331 JOINT CLUBS WATER PROJECT



## GIFT OF WATER, GIFT OF LIFE– The Kampung Palak Water Project (Phase 1)

### BACKGROUND

A mother, with her three boys in tow, make their way along a dirt track to an uncovered deep water well, some distance away from a wooden shack which they call home. At the well, the mother drops a bucket and scoops up the water. She does this several times, thrice a day, filling her containers to the brim with the much needed water, while her younger sons play beside the other open wells. Such is the life of the villagers in Kampung Palak on the island of Pulau Banggi, Sabah, in Malaysian Borneo.



Pulau Banggi lies to the north of Sabah and is two thirds the size of Singapore, but with a population of about 30,000 inhabitants. Unlike the folks on the “mainland” of Sabah, these villagers, who are mainly into hunting and small scale farming, lack ready access to the government electricity grid and piped water. For their water needs, they rely on make-shift rain water harvesting structures and deep ground water wells built more than 15 years ago for their daily water consumption and washing needs. Unfortunately, the wells are uncovered and this has led to many water borne diseases befalling especially on the children.

### INVOLVEMENT OF INNER WHEEL CLUBS OF DISTRICT 331

Inner Wheel was alerted about the needs of the villagers of Kampung Palak by PACOS Trust (“PACOS”), a community based non-profit organisation dedicated towards supporting the local indigenous communities in Sabah. The villagers had indicated their desire to embark on their own community mitigation measures to address the water supply problem and to contribute their sweat equity in the construction of a proper water system. However, the lack of opportunities on the island rendered them incapable of raising the necessary funds required to construct a proper water system.

In view of this, the Inner Wheel Clubs of District 331 agreed to rally together to raise the funds required to purchase the construction materials through their fund raising activities as well as donations from well-wishers. With Inner Wheel’s involvement in this Project confirmed, a proposed water system was then designed by the team from PACOS. PACOS also agreed to monitor and supervise the construction work, and train the villagers in the maintenance of the water pump and filtration system that were to be installed. With this arrangement between Inner Wheel, PACOS and the villagers in place, it is hoped that the villagers will take ownership of the completed Water System and undertake the maintenance and upkeep thereof.

### THE WATER SYSTEM

The new Water System will involve the reviving/ upgrading/ improving of the ground water wells, the construction of a permanent rainwater harvesting structure and covers for the wells, and the installation of a water pump and filtration system.

## THE WATER SYSTEM (cont'd)

Work on the first Water System for the village commenced during the week leading up to **Inner Wheel Day 2021**. However, all work came to an abrupt halt shortly thereafter, when a lockdown was imposed in Sabah following a spike in Covid-19 cases in the State. Work recommenced in late February 2021 when the situation improved, and the first Water System was completed on 22 March 2021 to mark **UNICEF World Water Day**.

We are delighted to report that sufficient funds have now been received to support the construction of a second Water System for this village of over 600 inhabitants. Any surplus funds unexpended at the completion of this Project will be used to purchase bags of rice and other basic necessities for the villagers. Although this joint effort by the participating Inner Wheel clubs is only a tiny “ripple in the well”, it is hoped that our Project will be the first of many water systems to be constructed for the villagers on the island in the coming years. *“Alone we can do so little; together we can do so much”*.

## CONCLUSION

This Inner Wheel District 331 Joint Clubs Project will not only bring much needed relief to the villagers of Kampung Palak, especially during the dry season, but also give them and their children a better and safer future.

As for the participating Inner Wheel Clubs, this Project has shown us the positive synergy that can be achieved from not only working together as a District, but also with other like-minded organisations and even the beneficiaries themselves. All it takes is a change in our mind-set and the will to **Lead The Change!**