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SRI LANKA: CLEANSING TOXIC WATERS

VIDEO	AUDIO
	NARRATION
BEACH / WHITE SANDS	Kalpitiya Peninsula, on the west coast of Sri Lanka, is home to the country's largest shallow aquifer. (7")
WELL	Lying just a couple of feet below the white sand, the underground water, known for centuries for its pristine quality, feeds into thousands of wells. (9")
POLLUTED WATER	Today, its water is heavily polluted. (3")
NANDAWATHIE ON CAMERA	NANDAWATHIE: (Sinhala) **F** *"There was sediment in the well, and the water tasted funny and was red in colour."* (5")
	NARRATION
NANDAWATHIE FETCHES WATER FROM WELL	P. Nandawathie is one of the many people in her village suffering from respiratory and skin problems, cancer and birth defects. She has asthma. (11")

NANDAWATHIE: (Sinhala) **F**

NANDAWATHIE ON CAMERA

"I feel tightness in the chest and numbness in my two hands." (4")

NARRATION

FIELDS / FERTILIZERS

The main cause of this environmental disaster is the excessive use of chemical fertilizers and pesticides. Since the 1980s, with the help of

IRIGATION SYSTEM / VILLAGERS PLANT

water pumps and chemical fertilizers, villagers began cultivating large sandy fields with mono crops such as tobacco, chillies and onions. (21")

ANIMATION

Because the sand is porous, water washes down easily, carrying chemicals to the water table below, spreading contaminants across the land. (9.5")

KURUPPUARACHCHI IN OFFICE

Dr. D.S.P. Kuruppuarachchi is the Assistant Representative of the Food Agricultural Organization in Sri Lanka. (8")

KURUPPUARACHCHI: (English) **M**

KURUPPUARACHCHI ON CAMERA

"And when this concentration of chlorides, nitrates, and potassium keep on increasing due to their addition to agriculture, definitely there will be a problem." (10.5")

NARRATION

LAB TESTING

Repeated studies found that many wells contain pollutants six times over the safety level set by the World Health Organization. (8")

MELVANI STUDIES MAP	In an effort to clean up the water, the Sri Lankan government turned to Kamal Melvani, a scientist and an advocate for reforestation, for a solution. (9.5")
WELL	KAMAL: (English) **F** *"When I first came here, there was absolutely nothing here except this well."* (3.5")
OLD STILL OF WELL	NARRATION A test revealed that the water in the well had nitrates six times over the safety limit. (5.5")
DENSE VEGETATION AROUND WELL	Kamal began planting in the area. Using native species and a variety of fast- and slow-growing trees, the idea was to create a mini-forest. (10.5")
KAMAL BY WELL ON CAMERA	KAMAL: (English) **F** *"What you are getting is this dense mat of roots around the well. So when the water in this shallow aquifer moves into the well area, it actually passes through the roots – through the mat – and gets filtered and comes into the well."* (16")
KAMAL FETCHES WATER FROM WELL VEGETATION	NARRATION Her experiment is working. After nine years of continuous testing, the well water is now safe to drink. And the trees also provide other benefits. (10")

KAMAL: (English) **F**

KAMAL ON CAMERA

"Everything has a use in this landscape design. Either a use for medicine, for timber, for fuel, for food. And this plant, particularly the fruit of this plant, is used as remedy for coughs and bad throats." (15.5")

NARRATION

STUDENTS ARE SHOWN PROJECT

Supported by the Global Environment Facility's Small Grants Programme, Kamal began a project to teach villagers and school children about this method. (9.5")

Shireen Samarasuriya is the national coordinator of the Small Grants Programme. (6")

SAMARASURIYA: (English) **F**

SAMARASURIYA ON CAMERA

"Now, even in schools and other places, even if the project is over, they have the capacity to take it forward, and replicate it so people have better quality of water for drinking, as well as for other purposes." (15")

NARRATION

STUDENTS EXAMINE WELL

The programme has helped villagers plant nearly 6,000 trees around wells in schools, public areas and private homes such as the one in P. Nandawathie and her husband's home. (11")

	HUSBAND: (Sinhala) **M**
P. NANDAWATHIE'S HUSBAND ON CAMERA	*"Now we can drink the water. Before it was not possible."* (3")
	NARRATION
P. NANDAWATHIE AND HUSBAND FARM	Through the project, the couple has also learned about organic farming. (4")
WORKERS IN FIELD	While trees can help solve the contamination, the long-term solution would be for farmers to stop using excessive chemicals and turn to sustainable farming. (12")
	KAMAL: (English) **F**
ORGANIC FIELDS AND PRODUCE	*"So if these poor farmers can practice organic agriculture well and be certified and get a premium price for their products, then, yes, the best is yet to come."* (10.5")
KAMAL ON CAMERA	
	NARRATION
UN LOGO	This report was prepared by Patricia Chan for the United Nations.