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# Rowers circumnavigate Singapore Island to support The Mission to Seafarers

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The RASI team  
Photo Credit: The Mission to Seafarers

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[The Mission to Seafarers] The epic maritime endurance challenge 'Mission RASI' [Row Around Singapore Island], which took place 22 and 23 April as part of Singapore's 50th Anniversary [of independence] celebrations, was successfully completed in 23 hours and 15 minutes – within the tough target time of 24 hours.

The rowers survived a violent storm at sea overnight, and half way through the daring challenge, which threatened to halt the race altogether.

The RASI team rowing boats Singapore Spirit 1 & 2 were followed during the challenge by a large flotilla of support vessels with crew and volunteers including the spectacular Royal Albatross Tall Ship which carried families of the rowers, supporters and the press and media.

The event that started and finished at Resorts World Sentosa has raised over S\$750,000 for global charity The Mission to Seafarers who provide help and support to the 1.5 million men and women who crew the world's merchant fleet. Over S\$550,000 was raised in cash donations with a further S\$200,000 being given as gifts and services in kind. Fundraising continued at several post-RASI celebration events until 9 May so the final figure is expected to be higher.

Speaking at the finish line, Iain Anderson, lead rower from the RASI Organising Committee, said: "My most immediate thought post-event was – can someone please find me a new pair of hands because these ones are shot to pieces! I feel pretty shattered but immensely proud of how the team has performed and what we have accomplished. It just goes to show what you can do when you bring good people together and unite behind a worthy cause."

At about half way through the challenge, in the middle of the night, the rowers faced a furious electrical storm with rain and gales that made the going incredibly tough. The Maritime and Port Authority of Singapore at one stage had to halt the challenge due to the dangerous conditions caused by lightning and poor visibility in driving rain. Despite all this the rowers surged on through the night and finally reached the finish line within time - a truly stunning achievement.

Alison Carpenter, one of only three women picked for the final squad, said: "I feel totally ecstatic that we have all achieved what we set out to complete. It was very emotional at the finish... All the cheers from the Royal Albatross from friends and family... I had to hold back the tears. We did it, we rowed around Singapore Island!"

Ian Teare, rowing for lead corporate supporter Norton Rose Fulbright said: "Like everyone else, I was really quite emotional as we crossed the finish line. It is difficult to articulate where those emotions came from....certainly it was a relief that the physical challenge was over but much more than that was the realisation that we had done something great both in fundraising and in getting the community behind our challenge and the cause."

Lewis Hart, another lead rower, said: "At 3 am last Thursday, I was in a really dark place emotionally and physically which the thought of the cause and the encouragement of the team dragged me through. I was rejuvenated on the home leg with pure adrenaline and frankly almost in tears when we succeeded the challenge - drunk with happiness even before I had a beer!"

Nicky Wynne, Director of Development, The Mission to Seafarers, who worked in Singapore to support the project said: "Working with the Mission RASI team over the past 6 months has been a brilliant and unforgettable experience for me. I am humbled by what RASI has achieved for the charity. They are instrumental in shaping the future of fundraising for The Mission to Seafarers' work. I'm not often stuck for words but I am. Team RASI – you are amazing – it feels inadequate to say a mere thank you."

Over 65 prestigious corporate companies from around the world have supported the event and money has poured in – with the good news being that the fundraising doesn't close until 9 May. Every penny will go to help seamen and women who face storms, shipwreck and danger every day of their working lives to provide us all with 90% of all goods we use each day at home and are the foundations of maritime trade.

Speaking at the launch party, on board the Royal Albatross last week Chairman of The Mission to Seafarers Captain Lee Wai Pong said: "Loneliness and separation from family and loved ones have no respect for rank nor wealth nor health in that it hits home for everyone. In addition, sometimes seafarers face exceptional danger at their workplace though piracy and in some cases, slavery. Through the intervention of MtS, we bring relief, comfort, offer our prayers and we listen. Sometimes, when the ship is on the verge of departure and a seafarer is stressed out through circumstances brought on by isolation, we are literally the last stop for them before quite many days at sea."

The legacy of the project extends further for Singapore than just a row and raising money for seafarers. The legacy of these boats focuses on young Singaporeans, and Team RASI are working with Community Outreach Recreation & Development (CORD) with the aim of assisting young Singaporeans, giving them an opportunity to develop rowing skills, promoting teamwork and fitness through active inspiration. Mission RASI will assist less fortunate children and young adults from broken homes, low income families, troubled academic and lawless backgrounds in Singapore to turn their lives around.

The final thanks was given at a jubilant gathering of rowers for their RASI 'Smashed it' Celebration Event held on 24 April at The British Club in Singapore.

Andrew Wright, Secretary General, The Mission to Seafarers said: "As Secretary General of the Mission I add my profoundest thanks and my congratulations to all involved. It was a privilege to be with Team RASI last week. The rowers have been simply incredible - and organisers, accompanying flotilla, supporters, sponsors and families almost equally so. The money they have raised and the profile they have given the Mission, and far more importantly the seafarers we serve, is of incalculable value. The funds raised will be used for the development and expansion of our welfare work for 1.5m seafarers in Singapore and beyond. We will focus on strengthening our operations in Singapore, especially at Jurong Port, so that we can more than double the number of seafarers we currently interact with in the port. Plans are already going forward. We will also use the funds to invest in our wider development work, especially the strengthening of our ship-visiting volunteer programme in Singapore, East Asia and elsewhere in the 71 countries in which we operate. This money will make a massive difference to our ability to make a big contribution to the lives of seafarers.It feels to me like one of those potentially game changing moments. Truly in so many senses you have achieved something amazing. And you have a lifetime of stories to impress people with for many years, storms and all! Simply from all of us....thanks."

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'And what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?'

[Micah 6:8]

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