

Helping People

One Drop At A Time



Field Report From India

June 17, 2007

Dear Friends,

I have been in India for only a few days but it seems like I have been here for a month so much goes on in a day.

In June of 2006 I tried to get in contact with UNICEF in the city of Hyderabad, State of Andhra Pradesh, one of the largest States in India. We have 10 times more fluoride in the water in this district than is within healthy limits. The problem came about because of the Indian government's push to put bore wells in rural communities to discourage use of contaminated drinking water from ponds and rivers.

Now that the water table and thus the bore wells are 600 to 1200 feet deep, fluoride naturally leaches out of the rock at those depths and into the water supply. Children are most affected by the abundance of fluoride which causes damage to teeth and bones. I had heard that UNICEF was working on a solution to the problem and I wanted to mate their technology to our bio-sand filters for a complete drinking water solution in this area. Nothing came of that call although I had a promise of a visit from one of the Program Directors.

I called again a couple of days ago as a follow up to an email I had sent before I left and received an enthusiastic response from the same person. She was driving from Bangalore to Kolar as we spoke so she stopped in to the workshop to see us. She was very enthusiastic about our filters and wanted to take 3 of them to their laboratory in Hyderabad for testing. She said UNICEF is investing heavily in rainwater harvesting from the roofs of schools. It is stored in tanks but there is lots of debris in the water that also washes off the roofs and contaminates the water. The marriage of the rainwater harvesting and the bio-sand filter technologies would be a terrific solution to that problem. If our filters pass their water quality tests, we are talking thousands of filters for schools in two large States in southern India. They will also publish our technology in their journal which is highly regarded in this country and around the world.

Fluoride, however, remains a problem here. The UNICEF removal technology was not sustainable. It was too complex and costly for individual household use. By the way, rainwater is distilled, it has no fluoride!

My friend Basha from my Peace Corp days stopped in at the workshop and took me to his hardware store in the predominantly Muslim section of town on the back of his new motorcycle. The busy, narrow streets, with small shops and choking traffic are a part of India I love. I have been

giving

**U.S. dollars go a long way
in India.....for example:**

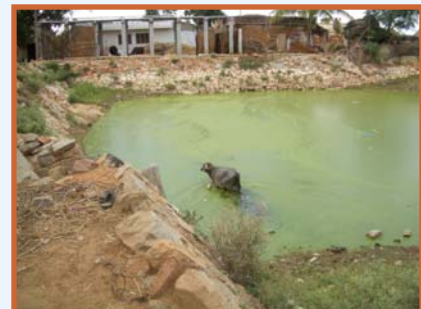
Adopt A Family: \$ 25
(Donation of one water filter to a needy family who is unable to purchase a filter)

Adopt A School: \$ 100
(Donation of two water filters to a school accompanied by a clean water education program)

Adopt A Village Partnership: \$ 2,500
(Donation of up to 60 filters to a needy village, subsidy of up to 30 filters purchased by villagers, soap & educational program for village children, community steward for one year)

Make Checks Payable to:

**South Asia Pure Water Initiative, Inc.
2832 Whitney Avenue,
Hamden CT 06518 USA**



there many times before so I got reacquainted with all the folks I had met before including Basha's son Nadeem and his nephew who runs the lumber supply store nearby.

Soon we left for his home to see his wife and two daughters, have a cool drink and eat a dishful of fresh sliced mango. Yes its mango season and you haven't tasted anything quite so good as a fresh Indian mango in the height of the season. There are many varieties but the most prized is called the King of Maharashtra. I have had them and they are to die for. These were a local variety and were quite tasty. Basha brought me into his bedroom to show me about 100 mangos ripening under his bed. He is as nuts about them as I am!



I have promised Basha to donate 4 filters to his new Mosque being built across the street from his shop if the Trustees will build a water stand and roof tank to house them. We have a similar installation at a women's college in town and it works like a charm providing clean drinking water to the 500 students who attend the college.

I was supposed to go to two villages today for the installation of their water filters but most of the day was spent helping RamaChandre get some permits signed. That means hours of waiting in and outside of government offices in Kolar. Red tape is really red here. India is well known for its inefficient and swollen bureaucracy. "Official" business is maddeningly slow and is a large drag on the economy and development. I was hoping my presence would somehow speed up the process as well as be a source of moral support.



Friday, Chalapatthi, our driver, Stanley, our sales coordinator and Soumya, our assistant director and I drove to three villages in the next Taluka (township), Chintamani. I had a lot of stories to tell about Chintamani from my Peace Corps days. One of my recollections was of the cook, Devanatham, who was very old and resourceful. Once a year the flying ants swarm in huge numbers covering everything in sight and the swarm only lasts for one day. The well blasting crew, Joe and Jim who worked out of that town would enjoy a delicious flying ant curry on that day.



After a long drive over really bad roads we stopped in the village of Hosahudya. We first went to the school and low and behold, they had a UNICEF rainwater harvesting system attached to one of the buildings in the school complex! The system was not being used before we delivered the filters because the building it was attached to was in a grove of trees so the leaf litter clogged and contaminated the system. The water was full of mosquito larvae and who knows what else. Fortunately the headmistress of the school understood the science of our filters and put one to good use providing safe, non fluoride contaminated drinking water from the harvested water to the school children. The water they took from the bore well by the school was used for cooking and washing after being filtered with our second filter at the school. Wow – she got it!

I passed out bar soap to the children and got to see the harmful effects of fluoride on these kids first hand. Their teeth were brown and pitted. Who knows what damage was done to their bones! Soumya gave the kids the importance of hand washing with soap speech in Kannada and Telegu, the two languages spoken in this village.

We visited with many of the beneficiaries of the filters, snapped a bunch of photos and went to the villages of Vempalli and then Kappalli for more



of the same. The village of Kappalli's filters were installed a few months ago and the villagers were feeling the effects of better health from the clean water. We were treated like heros and people were offering us food and drink everywhere we went. These villagers, on their own, had gone to the other two villages to convince people to get the filters for their own villages.

This was a truly gratifying experience.

Cathy & Mike

CONTACT US

South Asia Pure Water Initiative, Inc.

2832 Whitney Ave.

Hamden, CT 06518 USA

Phone: 203-281-0747

Email: info@SAPWII.org

Web: SAPWII.org

Co-Founders

Mike Lipman

Cathy Forsberg



Taste The Healthy Difference