

Helping People

One Drop At A Time



Field Report From India

November 16, 2007

Dear Friends,

It has been a long time since we have written an update about our Bio-sand filter project. Since Mike returned from India in June we have been very busy with our accounting work and the water project.

We have made many presentations to Rotary clubs and other organizations in the US, written letters and e-mails and placed countless telephone calls to introduce and explain our clean drinking water program. We are extremely grateful for the support we are getting from organizations and individuals.

To date we have installed filters in 14 villages in Kolar district providing clean water for 11,000 villagers who had no previous access to good drinking water. We have sponsors for 10 more villages and we are working with a Michigan Rotary club on a Rotary matching grant to fund filters for an additional 6 villages.

Our school program with Rotary District 7980 in southern Connecticut called "Ernie's Filters" has taken off very quickly. Our goal is to put filters in all 411 government schools in the District, providing clean water for 120,000 children each day. We have the funding for 1/3 of the filters already and are confident that the generous support for this project will continue.

Support for our program is strengthening in India as well. We are working with Rotary District 3190 in India and the Rotary Club of North Haven Connecticut to provide 450 water filters and plastic receptacles in the Bangalore area schools. We met with the governor of the district here in India and hand delivered the matching grant papers to make this filter program happen. It is very gratifying for us to see people from the two countries come together for a common cause.

We also received a request from the governor to help fund a "Gift of Life" project to provide life-saving heart surgery for 40 poor children in south India. Cathy made contact with a gem of a Rotarian from home and thanks to the wonderful support from the Rotary clubs and Rotary District 7980 Gift of Life in the US, the commitment was made within 2 days!

For the first time since beginning the project we took some time off when we first arrived here to tour India. It was only 3 days but felt like a week. We saw the sights of Delhi and Agra. The Taj Mahal was the highlight of our trip and should not be missed on a trip to India. It is magnificent beyond words and was recently chosen as a world heritage site which affords it special protection.

giving

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

Adopt A Family: (Donation of one water filter to a needy family who is unable to purchase a filter)	\$ 25
Adopt A School: (Donation of two water filters to a school accompanied by a clean water education program)	\$ 100
Adopt A Village Partnership: (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)	\$ 2,500

Make Checks Payable to:

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



Our first days in south India were spent in Bangalore. We had a meeting with a Spanish engineer from the Rural Development Trust (RDT). We are trying to interest this organization in the Bio-Sand water filters to establish a manufacturing facility in a neighboring state of Andhra Pradesh. Among the many projects this organization is involved in is rural housing. They build 5,000 homes a year in villages. The Bio-Sand water filters would be a great addition to the kitchens of these homes. This transfer of technology would be a great opportunity to expand the use of Bio-sand filters in south India.

On Monday we had a delightful trip to Kolar with our friend Haroon and his grandson, Zayed, who is a pre-university student doing an economics project for school. He has chosen our Bio-sand filter project as a centerpiece to study the economic impact of non-profit organizations on the local and regional communities. He will be heading to Boston or New York for his college education. A ride in a plush Toyota SUV instead of an old, crowded and springless bus also made the trip more pleasurable!

As always we were greeted with smiles, garlands and hugs at the workshop. It is truly a family reunion. We had a long and productive meeting with our project director, RamaChandra Gowda and then ate lunch together at a local restaurant.

Tuesday we met with the Community Stewards at our workshop for their regular monthly meeting. There was a lively discussion and many interesting topics came up. The community stewards are villagers who are trained to be experts in maintenance and function of the water filters. They are our eyes and ears in the villages. They support the users so that filter operations are trouble free. These stewards are given a stipend for one year. As it turns out they are the ones who are most influential in getting neighboring villages interested in the water filters. We want to develop a program so that after their year of service we can compensate them on a commission basis for referring new villages for the program. As is the tradition we all moved to a local restaurant for lunch after our meetings. The stewards piled into our workshop truck for a ride to the bus stand for their journey home. It is a two hour ride each way for some of them over incredibly rough roads. It was a good day.

It is always a treat to go to an Indian village; they are unique and tranquil and are seldom visited by westerners. We had a triple delight because we were able to visit three villages in the Chintamani area of the Kolar district on Wednesday. This area is very scenic with hills of strewn granite boulders and plains of farmland in between. This area is famous for their ground nuts (peanuts). They also grow millet, mulberry and rice (in the wetter areas). We met with the village stewards and went in many of the user's homes to see the operation of the filter and ask how the user likes the water and whether their health has improved since they started using the filter. The results were very positive!

At Y Kurupalli, the first village we visited, we were treated to a beautiful prayer by the primary school children. They then sang and danced for us. It turned out that these children have won a district-wide dance competition for school children. They were simply fabulous and one small waif of a girl brought Cathy to tears when she danced and sang "Twinkle Twinkle Little Star" in English. We were fortunate enough to be able to hand out their dancing prizes and certificates. The teacher had held them until we arrived so we could have that honor. In the next village, Yeregarapalli, we were treated to lunch made by the community steward who is also the teacher for the child care center in that village.



After a visit to the third village we returned to Kolar to participate in a State-wide program to showcase business cooperatives. Among those represented were the dairy and honey cooperatives. We had a booth to display the water filters and the participants showed great interest in our clean water project. We arrived too late for the speeches by the dignitaries but returned in the evening for a cultural program of theater. We met all of the dignitaries at that time including the past minister of agriculture who is a promoter of the filters. We had to leave early because we were the honored guests of the Rotary Club of Kolar who had their meeting that night. We attended the meeting a bit late and were immediately invited to the dais to receive gifts of appreciation and to speak about the filter program. We were asked to donate 10 filters to a school with approximately 1,200 students in it and we agreed to visit the school the following day and consider the request. There will be a function on the 20th to donate computers to the school and inaugurate Rotary Interact and Kinderact clubs (Rotary-like clubs for youngsters). If we agree to donate the water filters they will be featured in the event.

All in all it has been a very productive week and we are satisfied with the progress and direction of the water filter project. We are learning to be patient because in India progress is measured in a totally different time frame than in America. What we think can be accomplished in a week sometimes takes months in this country. Our vision for Bio-Sand water filters in India is always years ahead of our current status. We must always look back at what we have accomplished in two years to gain perspective and assess our short and long term goals. We are never satisfied and that motivates us to do more of what we do and to do it better.

We have a busy week coming up with lots of dedication ceremonies, meetings and the usual unplanned events. Stay tuned for our next letter.

Thank you for your interest and on-going support. It means a lot to us.....

Cathy & Mike

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Taste The Healthy Difference