



# EKTHA – UNITY

## Newsletter of SAVE A FAMILY PLAN (SAFP)

Issue 5

**Mission Statement: Partnering with the Poor for a Just World**

### **Water Crisis in India**

*by Dr. Sunny George*

It has been clearly proven that an adequate quantity of good quality fresh water will be the most important resource limitation of this century in India.

This growing perception of a looming water crisis has paved the way for numerous discussions and seminars, as 2003 was declared the

international year of fresh water. The common thread in these discussions was the projection of future water resource demands and development of projects that would supply solutions to such demands. Also discussed was the estimation of the massive investment funds required, limitations on available financial resources from governments and the necessary policy changes needed to effect change.

With a population that is 16 percent of the entire world, India has only 4 percent of its water resources. Presently, India is not among the most water stressed countries of the world, but the situation will change with its continued population growth. Alarmingly, India is moving up the list of water stressed countries and may join these ranks, if counter measures are not taken. Rivers are the most important fresh water source for the Indian subcontinent however, almost all of the rivers are either dead or on the verge of death. The reasons for this situation include massive deforestation, construction of



*This young girl demonstrates how the pump operates that provides clean drinking water for her family*

large dams across rivers, industrial, agricultural and domestic pollution, encroachment of riverbanks, and dredging and mining from the river beds. Destruction of rivers is directly affecting the economic prosperity of the country by negatively impacting the drinking water supply, agriculture, irrigation, hydroelectric power generation, industry, and fisheries, to name a few.

India has a favorable climate with tropical conditions in most areas. In particular, the southern regions receive an assured monsoon rainfall. But much of this rainfall occurs within a few short months of the year and even during this period, the intensity is concentrated within a few weeks. Specifically, there is a wide range in precipitation within India itself from 200 mm in parts of Rajasthan (northwest region), to 11,000 mm in Chirapunji, a city located in Assam (northeast region). It must be noted here that despite the very heavy precipitation, Chirapunji (known as one of the wettest places on earth), suffers from an acute shortage of water during some months of the year.



*The Vatarangil family of Kottapuram, Kerala, India proudly display their newly built Water Harvesting Tank*

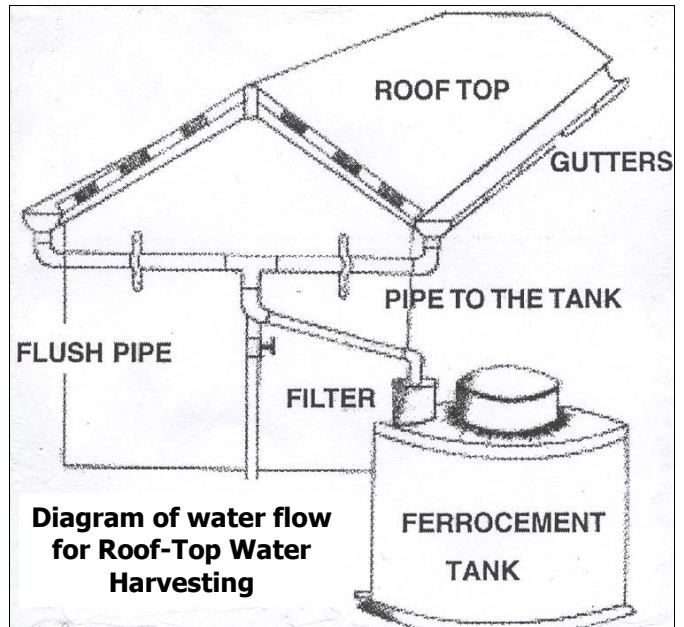
The standard engineering response to these temporal and spatial variations is to propose (a) the storing of river water in reservoirs behind large dams to transfer water from the abundance, to that of scarcity and (b) long distance water transfers from "surplus" areas to water short areas. However, past experiences implementing such large water resource development projects have resulted in widespread protests arising from social, cultural, economic and ecological damage. For example, during the last 50 years India has spent \$27 billion for the construction of 3,600 large dams to irrigate 50 million acres of land. The water use efficiency of these irrigation projects is only 25 percent. As well, several hundred thousand people have been displaced and have become refugees as a result of the leakages from canals, which has inundated 32.5 million acres of productive land.



*These water containers (foreground) represent the reality of many poor women in India that must walk up to 15 km daily to collect water for their families. In comparison, this water harvesting tank (background) provides a family easy access to a clean water supply for up to one year*

Water is a scarce and precious natural resource that needs to be planned, developed, conserved, utilized and managed in a sustainable manner. It needs to be used, keeping in mind the socio-economic needs. Planning strategies need to incorporate both short-term and long-term perspectives.

In the short-term, rooftop rainwater harvesting techniques are being adopted. Dependable monsoon rains allow rainwater to be collected and conveniently stored in low cost tanks. These tanks, commonly called "Ferro cement tanks", can be built in various sizes to meet the needs and financial capabilities of the families or communities constructing them. SAFFP has helped to spread this water-saving method to people who are facing



acute drinking water scarcity in the southern states of India. However, it should be noted, roof-top rainwater harvesting is primarily for household use and is a short-term solution for solving the drinking water crisis. On a long-term basis India has to ecologically restore its fresh water bodies, primarily the rivers. Ecological restoration means protecting and nursing back to health the life support systems in an area, which have been damaged by either misuse or overuse. This developmental process must be carried out by the people in a locality with involvement at all stages. Again, SAFFP initiatives have created a few replicable models in this regard for other NGOs, local administrative bodies and governments.

While creating a plan to solve the drinking water crisis in India, one has to keep in mind the country's alarming population that was about 1.065 billion in 2003. It is expected to reach 1.390 billion by 2025 and 1.650 billion by 2050. Accordingly, the policies derived from such a plan should guide all involved to conserve and preserve this scarce natural asset. Water must be carefully managed to ensure its existence far into the future.



*Anthirampally Falls in south India has a rare abundance of water which will need protection for the future*

*Dr. Sunny George is founder of the Limnological Association of Kerala, presently working with the Kottapuram Integrated Development Society (KIDS) and is an Environmental Consultant to SAFFP*

## **One Family's Story of Their New Water Well**

*excerpts from the Purachirayil's letter in India*

"... How are you? I do hope you are keeping fine. We would like to take this opportunity to thank you in a special way for granting us 12,000 rupees (\$400) for the construction of a drinking water well.

...Here, we are all keeping fine. Our children are busy with their annual examinations in school.



*The Purachirayil family (l-r, Sajitha, Sandhya, Saiju, and Shaji) enjoy the benefits of fresh water from their newly built water well in Changancherry, Kerala, south India*

...For a long time we have been struggling for access to water. There are so many families facing this same water problem. I am very grateful to you for helping us dig a drinking water well. We will share our well water so that it will be a great help for our neighbours also. My family and I will be forever grateful to you for this great help ... may God bless you abundantly."

Yours sincerely,  
Sandhya, Shaji and family

## **My Days in Canada ...**

*by Johnny A. O., Program Support Officer (PSO), SAFP India*

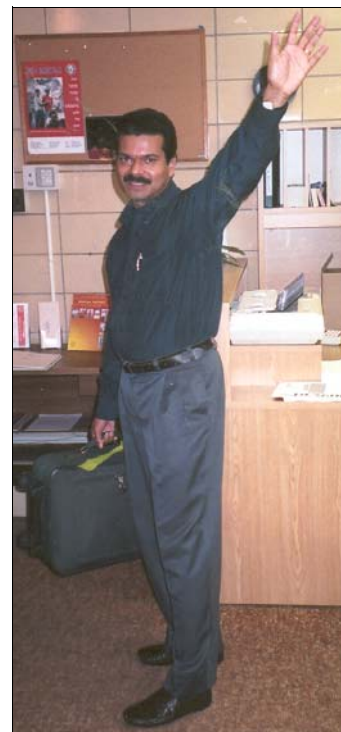
It was one of my long cherished dreams to go abroad particularly to Canada, the second largest country in the world. I've always had a special fascination for Canada as a pluralistic nation with its openness to multi-socio, religious, linguistic and cultural backgrounds. I have heard a lot about this great land and its people, especially the thousands of supporters, sponsors, and volunteers, as well as the staff supporting the poor in India through SAFP. It was my ardent desire to visit some of them and their families and to learn from them. This would truly benefit my work at the SAFP India office.

The training at Coady International Institute, Nova Scotia, was a golden opportunity for me to participate in an international forum, and exchange experiences, ideas, knowledge and skills with representatives from various countries. It was like "*the world coming together*" for mutual learning. The visit to a First Nation community at Eskasoni, Nova Scotia, was a great exposure tour for me. I am truly grateful to the committed personnel at Coady for making such an experience possible.

I remember with deep gratitude and appreciation the hospitality, friendship and care shown to me by SAFP staff, supporters, sponsors, volunteers, friends and close associates, with whom I had spent some of my working and leisure hours. My interaction and time spent with CIDA officials, Dr. Allan Kipp, Mrs. Angelina Comeau (both of whom are regional representatives for SAFP), Mr. Michel Taché, Mr. Ray Hillar, Mr. Kunjumon (who took care of my accommodations in London), and their families will always remain with me as some of my most memorable experiences. The warm hospitality and friendly behavior of the SAFP team in the Canada office also needs a special mention. I was very impressed by their deep commitment to the poor in India.

Among my days in Canada, a special mention must go to great moments spent at Niagara Falls, atop the C.N. Tower, visiting the Ford car production plant in Oakville, tasting Canadian food, walking on the beautiful, green lawns and driving on the broad highways. My experiences during this visit have given me new insights and have broadened my horizons. I consider this staff exchange program a very significant development initiative of SAFP as it is an opportunity for both offices to mutually exchange ideas, knowledge, and experiences thus nurturing a strong developmental and collaborative relationship.

I am very happy that my long cherished dream came true. I also hope that the time spent in Canada will help me in my work at SAFP to fulfill the future dreams of the poor.



*With a wave Johnny heads home to India in June 2003*

## A Contributor's Story

by Laura Mirzai



Laura with her parents, Denise and Taghi, in the livingroom of their home in Komoka, ON

My name is Laura and I'm nine and three quarters. My parents have helped families from India since 1993, and when I was four years old (1998) I began helping a little girl named Akitta. Today, I still help Akitta, who is deaf and living in an orphanage (*in India, orphanages care for special needs children of the poor even when they still have families*). Now, with my help, she is able to visit her mother and her sister back home regularly.

This year I've reached out to help another girl who is twelve years old. Her name is Meena David and she goes to a school for the blind where she is learning how to read Braille. Now we have five families and two girls, ages twelve and eleven! I pray every day that they will be safe and that everyone will help at least one family because if each of us gives a little, we might help a lot of families.



Meena, with Laura's help, can now look forward to a better future

***If you have a story you would like us to share, please contact us!***

## Just a Reminder...

- When writing letters to your family, please use only the address that appears on the profile sent to you by SAFP. This is located near the top of your profile as shown below with the shaded arrow.

**Please keep your family profile in a safe place for future reference**

### SAFP

#### APPLICATION FOR FAMILY ASSISTANCE

DIOCESE: <b>Marthandam</b>		Dio. No: <b>2634</b>			
Parish/centre: <b>Nagercoil</b>					
Name of the family: <b>Meletherukari</b>		Total Number in the family: <b>3</b>			
Name: <b>Mary Luciya</b>					
Address: <b>Meletherukari Mary Luciya C/o. NIDS, Christurajapuram, Marthandam - 629 165, Tamil Nadu, South India</b>					
Name of the family members	Relation	Age	Grade in school	Approximate monthly income (in dollars)	Property owned (in acres)
01 <b>Mary Luciya</b>	<b>Applicant</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>+2</b>		
02 <b>V. Jestus</b>	<b>Husband</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>VII</b>	<b>\$ 20</b>	
03 <b>Sahaya Libiya</b>	<b>Daughter</b>	<b>4</b>			

- Easter gifts should be received in our office by the last working day of February and Christmas gifts by the last working day of October. This ensures that your generous gift reaches your family in India in time for the holiday season.
- SAFP is complying with the Federal Government of Canada's Personal Information Protection and Electronic Documents Act (PIPEDA) to ensure the confidentiality of our benefactors personal information.



Kindly recycle this newsletter by sharing it with a friend!

## SAVE A FAMILY PLAN

P. O. Box 3622  
London, ON  
CANADA  
N6A 4L4

or

P. O. Box 611832  
Port Huron, MI  
USA  
48061-1832

Phone: (519) 672-1115  
E-Mail: safpinfo@safp.org

Fax: (519) 672-6379  
Website: www.safp.org



Canadian International  
Development Agency

*We gratefully acknowledge the support of the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) in the funding of this newsletter*

[www.acdi-cida.gc.ca](http://www.acdi-cida.gc.ca)