



Summer Newsletter 2011

For those of you that know me well or have briefly met me, you may be aware that I dislike the use of the word 'charity'. To me, charity symbolises giving something to others with no consideration for long-term sustainability. To highlight this point, an online dictionary defines charity as:

The voluntary giving of help, typically in the form of money, for those in need; help or money given to those in need.

There is no consideration as to how the 'help or money' will beneficially impact on the long-term wellbeing of the recipient(s).

Take the situation in Karamoja, Uganda. The World Food Programme (WFP) has been handing out food to local people since 1963 and now, almost fifty years later, is trying to work out how it can stop. The trouble is it routinely gives food to 200,000 people per year, sometimes many more. The WFP say it costs at least \$60 million annually to keep this programme going. So it is introducing livelihood programmes that, in 2010, needed \$25 million. The problem is, as one Ugandan MP noted, "They have destroyed the energy and commitment the people used to have to sustain their livelihood".



At Wherever the Need, our aim isn't just to give 'help or money', to offer some short-term, quick fix solution, it is to invest in people and their communities. We believe this is the only way to ensure independence from aid, and the only dependence is on one's own ability to provide for oneself and family. It may take a little longer to work through the system and it may cost a little more in the beginning, but in the longer term it is the only sustainable way forward.

The steps are quite simple: good health through sanitation and water, followed by some form of income generation opportunity. Frequently this work is done with the aid of local women and women's groups as they are most open to positive change in their lives. We calculate that 80% of our work is the empowerment of women.

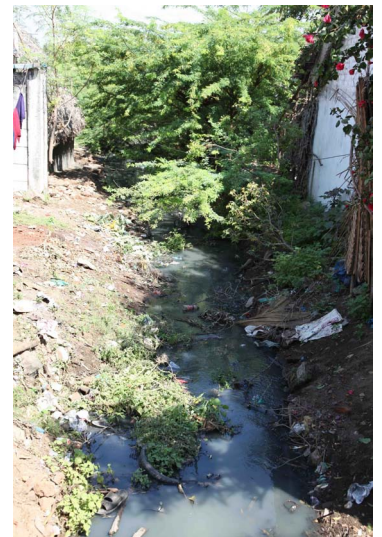
Similarly, over the coming months and years, I will be continually stating that our long-term objective is for Wherever the Need to be in a financial position where it is self-sufficient. The plan is for us to become what could be labelled a social enterprise and the later section on the mobile unit will give an indication to a key part of this strategy. Although this is in its early stages the first responses are more than just encouraging.

The following information all relates to India, and is based on our trip there in July 2011.

Sanitation

If there is a holy grail with regard to sanitation, it is finding a solution to the needs of the billions of people who live in inner cities. Many live in slums and the cost of infrastructure would be astronomical as water based toilets are often regarded as the only option – although where the water will come from is rarely explained satisfactorily!

We started to think about the issue several years ago. Our ecological sanitation (ecosan) units have been incredibly successful in the rural and semi urban areas where the bulk of our work was focused. Urban areas present a different set of problems. It wasn't whether people would use our separation toilets (from experience we knew they would), but how complicated were the logistics in collecting, storing and treating the 'human output' safely and with a minimum of fuss.



In India in late 2009, we started working on a mobile sanitation unit that proved to be very successful but too large to manoeuvre through inner city alleyways. We ended up placing it in a fixed site just to begin to understand the logistics involved. We then started to look at ways in which it could be broken down into individual cubicles and wheeled into place wherever it was required, with the flexibility to be moved if needed.



In the summer of 2011 we were able to complete the first unit of this new design and put it in place. Again, we opted to use a location that was classed as semi-urban, but instead of a single site we had chosen six and within each of these would be several individual units.

Having secured the funding for this particular module in Cuddalore we now need to expand the trial to two further locations, both in Chennai and both offering different challenges. Once we have three trial locations up and running, each as a standalone system, we can collate data on users and monitor the benefits of the system. As importantly, we can gain experience as to the problems we encounter and how they can be overcome. No two locations will be the same. We are looking for substantial donors for these next two modules to be put in place.

Interestingly the major trusts and funds have a real problem grasping this concept, and it is more business minded donors who can see the long term viability of such a project.

Finally, the most exciting thing about this project is that it can be offered free to the end user. Because we

are collecting and treating the 'output', we can sell this as a valuable fertiliser and compost, and this in turn will pay for running costs, including maintenance, rent and salaries. There can be a substantial profit from these units and generate self-perpetuating models.



We envisage that this operation and similar modules in other cities will be the cornerstone to our future sustainability.

Water

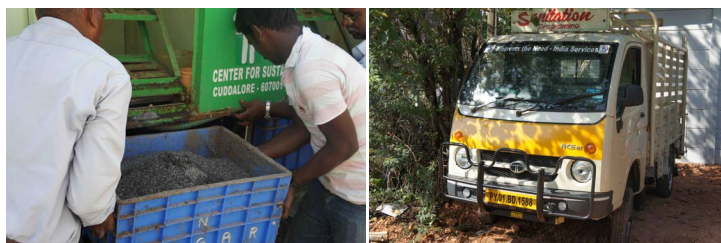
For us the flip side of the sanitation coin is water. They have to go hand in hand. Most of the time our projects start with a project title of 'sanitation and water...', but sometimes you just need to put the word water first.

This is the case in the small village of Sengal Odai, a few kilometres outside of Pondicherry. As we walked into the hamlet of fifty families we approached a small pool in which was contained a liquid that resembled the color of mud and the consistency of a thin custard.



It doesn't matter how often you see water like this that people have to drink, it still sends a chill down my spine. One of the women held a jug to her lips and drank the water straight off, while another used a muslin cloth to filter some of the particles. We asked about illness. "Often we are ill in the stomach", came the reply.

Fortunately for this village it appears that we have a corporate sponsor and its staff members who would like to provide them with water filters



(there is no bore water), ecosan toilets and a livelihood/micro finance scheme. This time next year I hope to be reporting a very different story.

We also visited the newly installed reverse osmosis system that became a partner to the sixty ecosan and bag making livelihood project for the people of Villapalayam. No more salty water for them. The toilets are well used and the women are moving forward on their livelihood bag manufacture and expanded training programme.



Livelihoods

Previously I mentioned the women of Villapalayam and their continued training, but there are several other livelihood programmes we have been coordinating.

The most remarkable is that of the costume jewellery manufacture in the village of Ennanagaram, supported by one of our donors, PKCF. When we first met the women, they were earning somewhere in the region of 120 rupees (£1.70/\$2.75) per day for perhaps three months of the year. With investment in new machinery and stock the women are now achieving an income of 200 rupees (£2.85/\$4.55) per day – and they have a full



order book for the year ahead. To put this in perspective, the approximate cost in kilos for certain items is: Rice, 45 rupees; Carrots, 40 rupees; Flour 85 rupees. Therefore you can see what a difference the increased income is making to their lives.

The other women's groups in this village are also thriving, through loans given by PKCF and managed by WTN, and the new school building, also built by PKCF via us, is hosting many of their meetings.



Another livelihood success is the women's sanitary towel manufacturing project that has been sponsored by the UK bathroom franchise Ripples. This business not only supplies many of the schools where we build new sanitation facilities, but has built its confidence and reputation so much that they are now bidding for Government contracts! The Just Need ball being held on our behalf in December is raising money to expand this project (in both instances also providing sanitation and water).

It is really pleasing to see such endeavours being so successful, which further underlines our core philosophy that if we can get people healthy through effective sanitation and clean water, then they are able to work, and can manage their own way out of poverty.





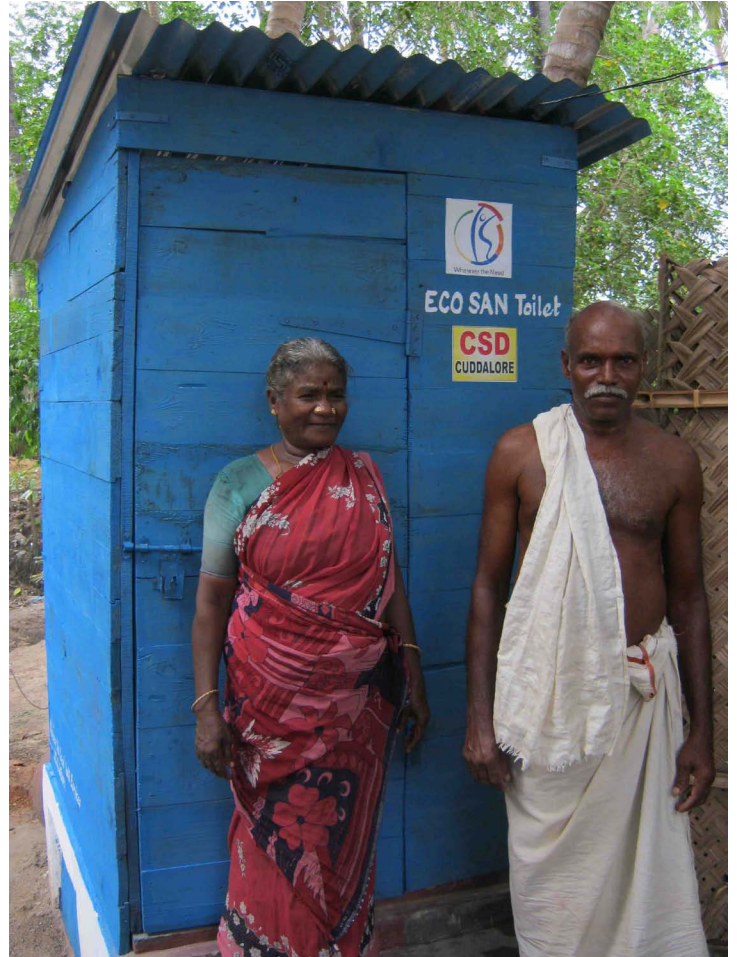
Summary

I could continue about the other projects we are running – numerous school sanitation projects, the village sanitation, water and livelihood projects and a variety of direct educational support we have given (developed once a village is ready to make sure its children can go to school, rather than put to work at a young age out of necessity). But I only really wanted to give you a snapshot of what we are doing, through your support.

I hope you will continue with this support when you are deciding where your philanthropy budget will be allocated.

We believe that we are not just at the leading edge of development work, but are using your donations wisely and effectively to positively impact on the lives of many thousands of people.

David Croweller & Beverly Visty-Doman



Keep an eye out for our Autumn newsletter, which will look at the progress on our projects in Sierra Leone and Kenya



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