

Providing Water to Oholi Village

Global Grant project 2016-17

R.I. Districts 3132 (India) & 6650 (USA)

Every morning, even before the sun rises behind the beautiful mountain peaks of Raireshwar, hard work starts for the residents of Oholi village. The villagers have made those mountain tops their home for several generations for over 400 years. Today the village is deprived of nearly every resource like water, food, live stock, fertile soil to sustain life. This mountain range is located near the town of Wai in the state of Maharashtra, the state totally depends on few months of monsoon rains to sustain water needed throughout the year.

The hard life for women, men and children has not deterred the villagers of Oholi from loving those mountains they call their home, with pride, grace, dignity and loyalty.



And there is a reason for that pride and loyalty!

Oholi village has very important place in the history of that State of Maharashtra in India, and in the history of Marathas where a young Maratha leader named Shivaji Bhosale took an oath in the temple of Oholi, at the age of 16, in the year 1645, to establish separate independent State for Marathi peoples.

During that period of 17th century, India was at cross roads between diminished influence of Mughal Dynasty (of Islamic influence), and rising power of British Empire. Shivaji, the young Maratha leader fought both the powers and carved a separate Maratha State called Maharashtra within India. Maratha community of Oholi village is very proud of this history and would bear all the hardship and face insurmountable challenges of living in those mountains, instead of relocating themselves.

---- Domino effect of lack of water is quite obvious.

---- No water, No livestock, No milk and milk products for growing children, unable to grow food.

2.

---- Poor nutrition resulting in health problems and more illness. Men, women and children all struggle, even today, just to go through the day with less than a bare minimum.

---- Exhaustion of women have lead to disturbed social structure of married life, turn men towards polygamy and young girls unable to attend schools thus sacrificing better future for themselves..

When the surroundings of these exquisite mountains are adorned by beautiful valleys and plentiful water bodies, one would wonder, why that has not translated into the availability of water to the mountain tops where the villagers' homes are.

The simple answer is the villagers are powerless. They needed dedicated, concerned and resourceful well wishers like members of the Rotary Club of Wai. Those Rotarians have made it their mission to provide water to every home in those mountains, 121 to be specific.



Lot of water surrounds the mountains, but no water for those who reside in Oholi village.

A meager water source was available to them at the lower levels of the mountain, leaving no choice for the women and young girls but to make several trips in a day, up and down the mountains, balancing water filled containers on their heads and around their waists, completely exhausted at the end of the day, and young girls unable to attend school quite often.



women are waiting with the containers to be filled with water to carry up the mountain.

3.



Carrying the water over long distance and climbing the steps to get to the homes, several times in a day, is exhausting. No time for the girls to go to school.

The community cannot not keep live stock even if any organization is willing to donate it because of lack of water. They cannot grow vegetables for the same reason. The life is extremely hard but they all endured till the Rotary club of Wai in R.I. District 3132 decided to change their life for better.

The first step was to get water to their homes.

The community Of Oholi welcomed the proposal wholeheartedly! And promised to contribute towards labor in order to keep the project cost reasonable. Under the leadership of Swati Herkal, past president of the Rotary Club of Wai and past assistant governor of District 3132, the project materialized. Global grant of The Rotary Foundation was the best way. Members of the Wai club put their resources together and designed the project in consultation with the project engineers and the Oholi community. They needed an International partner for this global grant. They approached Dr. Meena Patel, Centennial Governor and past District Foundation Chair from Ohio R.I. District 6650.

The project was very appealing, cost was reasonable, timeline was attractive and the results would have been tremendous, life changing for the whole community of Oholi.

It was no brainer to come on board as International partners. Within 8 hours of request, the foundation team of district 6650 came on board. The total cost was a little over US \$ 33,000.00. The labor was provided not only by men but by women and young girls as well, because they would have been the main beneficiaries. It would free them of daily chores of carrying the water for hours, giving them more time to do other things to better their lives. The excitement of getting a faucet with running water at their individual homes was parallel to none. The project was completed in 3 phases.

Phase 1. Construct a large well at the bottom of the mountains in the vicinity of a water body.



Early stages of well construction where the ground was saturated with water.

When the well construction started it was a great site to see the water seeping through the Rocks at 10 feet depth, and within few days the well was full of water. It reminds one of what Mr. Rajendra Singh, known as a Water Warrior of India, is professing all over India,. He says, " Let the water seep in the belly of Mother Earth and when you need it the mother earth will give it back to you".

5.

Mr. Singh gives the simple explanation of Rain Water Harvesting with tremendous life changing implications. Within a month the construction of the well was completed.



Rotarians are proudly displaying Rotary banner near completed well standing among villagers



With the aid of electric pump the water will be pumped through those pipes laid in the second phase of the project.

6.

Phase 2. To lay the pipeline from the well to the new reservoir at the mountain top.

This work needed more hands, more sweats and extreme determination. Villagers, men, women and young girls volunteered as the benefits from the project they could not have imagined just a few months early.



Rotarian Swati and the village chief, who is a lady, are visiting the work in progress.

7.

Laying the pipes was a hard job, daily temperatures in 90s and at times above 100 degree Fahrenheit was a norm. It was done in a record time because of the intensive labor from the Oholi community.

Newly constructed reservoir for water at the top of the mountain.



Second step completed when water could be pumped into the reservoir.

Rotarian Pramod, invaluable member of the Rotary team is signalling the completion of the second step of the project. Photo below shows great flow of water at certain height.



7.

Phase 3. Lay the pipes from the reservoir to the individual homes where gravity would play excellent role in transporting the water right up to the water faucets.



**The pipes are being laid from the top reservoir down the mountain towards the homes.
The kids are thrilled to collect water just outside their homes.**



8.



After over 400 years, for the first time the women do not have to climb the mountain with water containers on their heads. Another Rotary club from the neighboring Rotary district 3131 is going to donate live stock to every family in Oholi. Rotary club of Wai is donating medicinal plants to be grown there. Villagers can grow food now. Women will have many hours in a day to learn and pursue different vocations in order to support men who are already bread earners. Girls will go to school to improve their future. And health benefit will be for the whole community.

Which other Win-Win situation one can think of? The villagers are grateful to Wai Rotarians as well as Rotarians from America. When Dr. Meena Patel PDG from district 6650 visited the project site almost at its completion, the community wanted to express their gratitude and thank Americans. As a token of their gratitude they presented to her hand made quilt, made in just 2 days, depicting the Rising Sun in their life with water facility.





An artist's depiction of the project.

121 taps with good flow of water.

Serving 731 people in Oholi Community.

The Rotary Wheel has again done a marvel.

So that Oholi Community can rejoice.

There are mountains at the top. Blue center represents well full of water, surrounded with festive colors. People rejoicing. Water pipes and taps with flowing water. A water pump in redspokes on left, Rotary wheel on right. And Oholi village in the background.

Forever live The Rotary Foundation, Rotary clubs and Dedicated Rotarians all over the world.

Within 5 months life changed for many in remote mountains of Maharashtra, India.

By Dr. Meena Patel Dist. 6650 & Swati Herkal, R.C. of Wai Dist. 3132