

Vikasana Trip Report - Bio sand filter project (current) and Tree Plantation Project (Completed)

Mr. Varghees met us at the bus at Birur on January 22nd and we went to Manjunathapura village as it was close to Birur. About 20-25 villagers had gathered at the village and they had a ribbon cutting ceremony (for our benefit) along with Sujathamma, a village Panchayat member for the initiation of the bio sand filters. The women were very happy and enthused about the clean drinking water from the filters. They said it tastes better than the bore well or tap water. We also went to a couple of houses (Sarojamma and Rathamma families) that already obtained the filters. So far, Vikasana has distributed 8 filters each Kalkere and Manjunathapura villages and is charging Rs. 400/filter. It was the amount recommended by David Albert (in one of e-mails) as the villagers would take care of the unit if they paid for it. Mr. Varghees said more than 50 filters are nearly completed.

Then we went to the Vikasana's orphanage bridge school site near Tarikere, where the filters are being made. They got two steel molds from LAFTI and are currently using them to make the filters. The pictures show sequentially the process of bio sand filter preparation. These are model #9 filters, with the new model #10 recently developed by CAWST, Canada being efficient being even more efficient in purifying the water. Model #10 is 3" longer, uses finer sand and a diffuser box (with smaller holes) instead of a diffuser plate. While the Vikasana cannot build a longer filter (as the steel mold is of model #9), they can get similar benefit by using finer sand, diffuser box and/or putting a mosquito net over the diffuser plate (per recent e-mail conversations with David Albert). I have asked Vikasana to get the water tested by the district water supply committee and also invite the local community leaders to get more visibility of progress being made.

Overall, I am very happy with the progress made by Vikasana and the interest shown by the villagers in using and caring for the filters. I think we can safely revisit Chintana Foundation's bio sand filter proposal that we put on hold last year. If we approve their proposal, Vikasana is willing to help them get started and will give the steel molds to get them going. More on this in my Chintana visit report.

At the bridge school site, I also took some pictures of the model farm and the tree plantings a couple of years ago. AS you can see from the pictures, the trees have grown bigger and look quite healthy.

Shim