

Water and sanitation human rights for stone quarry communities at Wagholi, India

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ABSTRACT: *Santulan is an Indian Non-Government Organisation (NGO) working to provide education and health options to those working in stone quarry communities in India. Engineers Without Borders (EWB) volunteers help Santulan deal with water and sanitation issues. This study focused on five communities located near the Wagholi Township. The study also looked at the current water sources and sanitation options available and checked if these practices were against human rights. An in-depth research was completed and it was found that stone quarry communities do not have access to clean, safe and reliable drinking water, nor do they have good sanitation options. This causes health, financial, environmental and social problems in these communities.*

KEYWORDS: WATER AND SANITATION, HUMAN RIGHTS, STONE QUARRYING, ENGINEERS WITHOUT BORDERS, SANTULAN

INTRODUCTION: Santulan is an Indian Non-Government Organisation that provides education and health options for stone quarry workers. Stone quarry communities normally move from site to site because of low income and lack of land options. For these reasons, the stone quarry communities are often taken advantage of.

These communities do not receive money from the government nor do they receive ration cards for food. Quarry workers are exposed to occupational health and safety risks, low wages and no job security. The housing structures near the quarries site are built very badly and provide no basic services such as good water or sanitation.

The aim of this project was to work with Santulan for 12 months to research into stone quarries communities. Part of this project was to test samples of water and to examine sanitation practices used. Also this project aimed to determine whether the practices were against basic human right laws, and if so what improvements can be made.

METHOD: A study was done to compare the international laws and treaties against the national state policies that are practiced in these communities. The five quarries that were studied near the Wagholi Township are as follows: Dabhade Khanwasti (160 people) Wageshvarnagar Khanwasti (700 people), Gorewasti (200 people), Shindewasti (200 people) and Suyog Nagar (1500 people).

FINDINGS: Because Santulan fought for the right of clean water for the stone quarry communities, it was found that there were already many measures put in place since 2006. However due to illegal practices, such as water loss between the pumping station and the stone quarries, these measures are not upheld. Even though the local government has taken the responsibility for this, and does not charge the stone quarry community a fee for providing them these services, it has been seen that these issues have not been fixed.

The main form of water for these communities comes from wells that have extremely bad water quality issues and require treatment to be suitable for drinking. Some people within the community use boiling methods to clean the water but the majority of people do not, which causes large health risks.

A study has been completed that showed that the quality of the water is below the standard set by the World Health Organisation (WHO). Besides the issues regarding water supply, sanitation is also a major issue causing health problems within these communities. The following lists issues that have been raised due to bad sanitation practices:

- Toilets have been placed in locations far away from the communities; also people tend not to wash their hands after they go to the toilet. When hands are washed, soap is not commonly used.
- Waste from the house is disposed in open fields; in the case of the Wageshvarnagar community the household waste is placed at the entrance of their community.
- There are no stormwater drainage practices installed. This makes it hard for vehicles to enter and exit these communities and creates many locations for mosquitoes to grow.
- This causes malaria amongst much of the community. The community tries to burn the waste, but the smell is so bad that it causes health and environmental problems.
- Hygiene practices are taught at school and followed by some children and adults, including nail cutting, hand washing, bathing, combing and wearing clean clothes.
- At schools and mines there are no water or sanitation options available for students or workers.

CONCLUSIONS: It is clear that communities near Wagholi do not have clean, safe and reliable drinking water options nor do they have good sanitation options. The organisations most responsible for these issues are: Gram Panchayat, Municipal Corporation and the mine owners.

The ways to fix this is by: taking control of how the water is being supplied to the stone quarry communities; providing a minimum of 20-50 litres/person/day of water for drinking; having a representative from the stone quarry at the next Wagholi Water and Sanitation committee meeting; providing at least 1 toilet to be built for every 20 people within these communities; and by building a storm-water drainage system that will be maintained.

The study also demands that the Municipal Corporation should carry out weekly waste collection from the Wagholi quarry site. Additionally there are demands that the mine owners should provide at least 2 litres of water, per person, per shift; and provide toilets at easy to reach locations on the mining site. There should be a greater awareness and education of water, sanitation and hygiene practices. With funding, Santulan has the ability to undertake these activities.

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