

# Olcott Memorial School, Besant Nagar, Chennai, TN – Site Visit Report by Anjana Mohan



## Olcott Memorial School

Anjana Mohan - Asha Site Visit - 27 February 2011

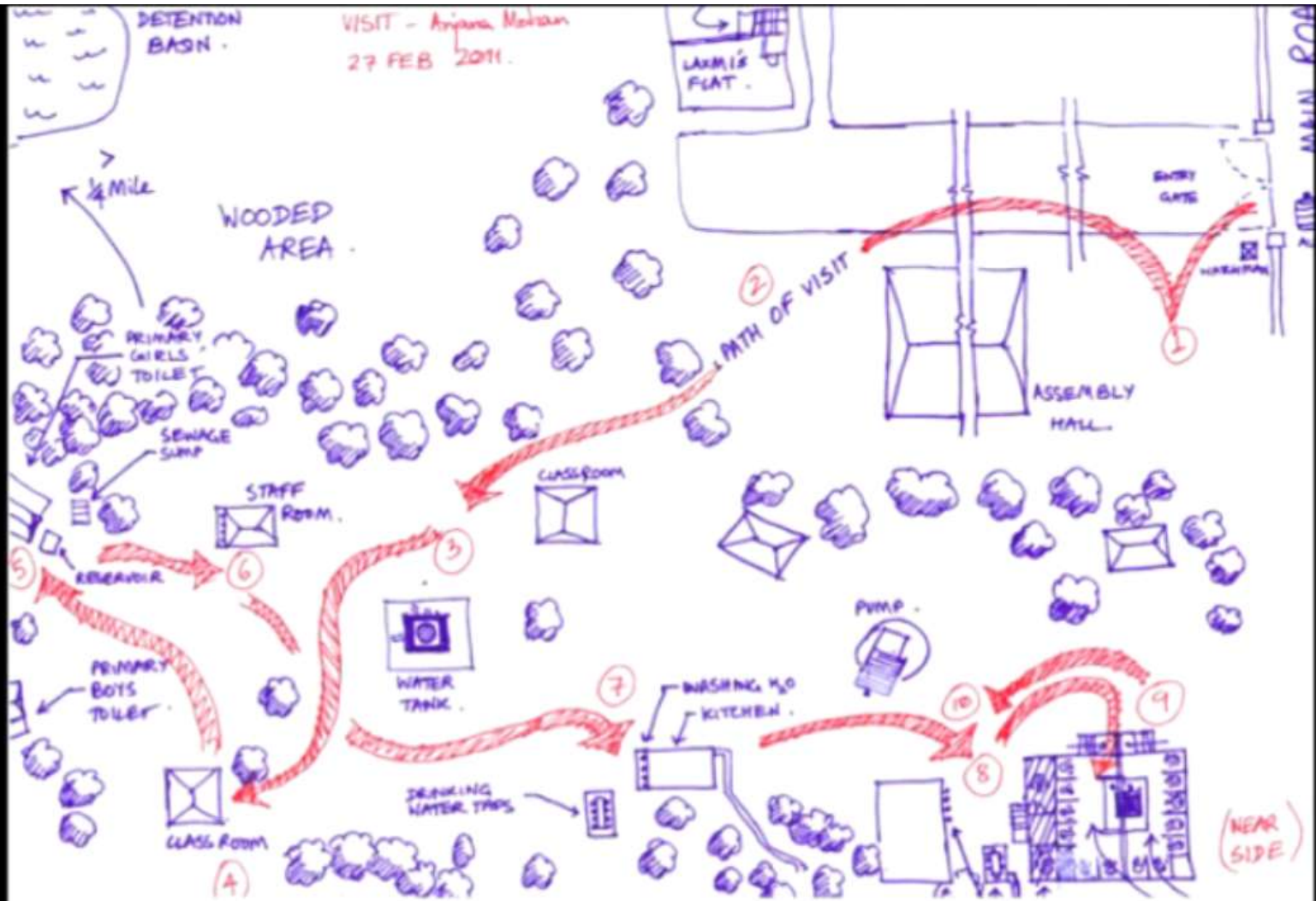
[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RoK\\_9ETQhOM](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RoK_9ETQhOM)



## Water Project Review

Olcott Memorial School is within the Theosophical Society grounds in Chennai, India. Founded by Annie Besant, the Society has trustees and sources of funding, a small portion of which supports the Olcott Memorial School. The School runs on funds from a variety of other sources.

Midday meals at the Olcott Memorial school are 80% subsidized by the Tamil Nadu scheme. The scheme provides for on-site cooks who arrange for the delivery of ingredients. The school has one cook on their staff to help prepare and serve the food.



This plan is only intended to orient the reader through the photos and sequence. This map does not accurately represent scale or density. Picture of the Assembly Hall is on the front cover. The 1st two pages give an overview of the project. After that, the book progresses as per the sequence of the path shown here.



[LEFT - BEFORE PICTURE]: Fewer taps, mounted high, children (typically without shoes) would struggle to wash, there was a lot of wastage of water as a result of the inefficient access, and splashing water made a mess.  
[RIGHT - AFTER PICTURE]: New taps are easy for children to access, foster a sense of hygiene & reduce waste.





[ UPPER - BEFORE]: Fewer taps to drink from, aging pipes and slow water flow, leaks.

[LOWER - AFTER PICTURE]: Washing taps in the background and drinking water island in the foreground. Both foster a sense of hygiene and invites children to keep the area clean. More taps allow more children to wash and drink with less of a mess. Concrete around these areas keeps the children's bare feet clean.







[ABOVE - CLASSROOMS]: The general feed of the school is like an open air courtyard with separate classrooms strewn around.

[LEFT - ASSEMBLY HALL]: Note the fiberglass roof covering the hall.



[LEFT - WATERTANK]: The centrally located water tank has a Reverse Osmosis pump. Water is supplied by rainwater collected in a detention basin elsewhere on the grounds.  
[RIGHT - TOWARDS FAR SIDE]: Looking towards the Primary School children's area.





[TYPICAL CLASSROOM]: Children store their lunch bowls inside their classroom. They take their bowls from the classroom at lunch, receive and eat food, and then wash and bring them back after lunch. Children do not typically have shoes, so their feet should be clean and dry before returning to the classroom.



[PRIMARY SCHOOL GIRLS TOILET] It's a long trek from the classroom to the bathrooms. This is the path about halfway between the classroom and the Primary School toilets.





[LEFT - TANK OUTSIDE TOILET]: Water lines underground feed the tank outside the girls toilet. Previously, the little girls used to have to collect water in a bucket too heavy for them and taken them to the toilet for washing.  
[RIGHT - SEPTIC TANK & WOODS BEYOND]: Sewage collects in the septic tank. Excess goes into the woods.





[LEFT - AREA OUTSIDE OF TOILETS]: Little children had to previously lug their buckets of water along this path (spilling and making a mess), and then use muddy toilets. It was hard to keep clean and used too much water.  
[RIGHT - TILED TOILETS]: The concrete stoop and tiles facilitate hygiene training & reduce water use for cleaning.



New piping has been installed between the tank outside the toilets, so that there is running water into every toilet. This allows the little ones to not have to carry water in, spilling and making a mess. It also makes it much easier to clean the toilets. Since there is only one pipe for all toilets, at full capacity, the water pressure is weak.



[ABOVE - TAPS AT THE STAFF ROOM]: This is the new washing area for the Primary School children. More taps have been given for the greater volume of children who all use this area for washing their bowls / plates.  
[LEFT - STAFF ROOM] . [RIGHT - LOOKING BACK TOWARDS THE WATER TANK]





[ABOVE - LOOKING BACK TOWARDS THE KITCHEN AND NEW TAPS] Children are from slums and city-ghettos. The education that these children are gaining may be of little use without sophistication / skills that allow them to penetrate the job market. Basic toilet training & hygiene are necessary even in blue-collar work.





[ABOVE - KITCHEN]: The kitchen is just past the watertank. Notice the new washing water taps along the right wall of the building, as well as the drinking water taps on the island to the right of it.

[LEFT - NEW TAPS]: Fostering pride, cleanliness and facilitating slum children to take these sentiments home.





Kitchen waste is allowed to drain into the woods.



Moving further beyond the kitchen and past the pump. (Kitchen on the left of the image above).





[OLD STYLE TAPS]: Inadequate number of taps are also mounted unproductively high. Children make a mess while washing their bowls, and have dirty legs from the spatter of food and water. More water is wasted in clean-up.





[STAFF TOILETS]: In front of the staff toilets is the old-style of drinking water island. Inadequate taps and old pipes. Difficulty in obtaining water to clean the staff toilets have led to only one being used.



[BOYS TOILET]: Pans have been replaced, but tiling is vastly preferable. Commodes are covered, but the area in front is open to above. Doors are old and worn out. Some pipes were replaced many years ago out of necessity. Note that both boys and girls have to carry buckets of water from the outside into the stalls, which is messy.



[GIRLS TOILET SINK]: Sink is connected to a pressure tank above. Ms. Suryanarayanan would like to cover this outside area with a fiberglass cover (Recall picture of the Hall), so that going to the toilet when it is raining is easier and less messy.





[BOYS TOILET]: Doors are barely usable. Pans are new, but note that toilets are tough to keep clean. This area being covered would be a benefit to their ability to effectively use the toilets.



[BOYS TOILET STALLS]: Concrete is starting to crumble in places, compromising the new pans. Note the age and condition of the pipes on the following page.









[GIRLS TOILET STALLS]: Shows renovations - new pans, AND new tiles provide great relief for ability to keep them clean. Doors are in better condition. There is no water supply into these stalls, which is still a problem.



Outside the High School Toilets - Pump with Water Tower beyond.







## Olcott-Memorial

Don't take clean toilets for granted!