



# SOURCE Bulletin

water and sanitation news review



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Local residents fear they will lose access to their water sources due to pressure from tourism development.

## Household level arsenic removal technologies tested - Bangladesh, page 2

Of the seven that were tested in the second phase, four were consistently good in removing arsenic.

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## Note from the editor

To enliven Source Bulletin we started a new column on page 2: *Daily realities from....* We are looking for short interesting quotes and a picture or drawing from the field. We are kicking it off with realities from ... community water supply management.

Readers are invited to submit maximum 100 words and an illustration to Editor, Dick de Jong.

## Tourism threatens watershed La Lorena, Costa Rica

La Lorena in the Guanacaste peninsula, in north-west Costa Rica, is renowned its beautiful sandy beaches, sunny climate and turquoise blue sea. Tourism is booming, concentrated on the beaches and the little villages on the coast. Life the interior apparently continues as in the old days. However, beneath the surf there are disturbing changes. Local residents fear they will lose access to their water sources due to pressure from tourism development.

This peninsula is considered a dry zone, with the lowest annual rainfall in Costa Rica. Cattle farming is important to the local economy, although the dry period from December to April affects the herds.

The villages of Huacas y Lorena, in the county of Sta. Cruz, escape this problem as they are located in an area that stays green the whole year round, due by the underground water sources of the river Canas. The population of these villages lived peacefully without disturbance, until August 2000 when all of a sudden a construction site appeared on agricultural land close to the villages. A pipeline was being built in the direction of the Pacific coast. Local people discovered that the hotel complex of Meliá Conchal was starting to drill very deep wells into underground water sources with the intention of bringing the drinking water from La Lorena to their hotel complex to guarantee the greenness of the gardens and the golf links.

Investigating further, the community learned that the company Meliá Conchal does not have all the necessary permits. Instead of starting at national level, the company started by obtaining permits at local level. Possibly the company wanted to cause a precedent, which would be difficult to stop at other levels.

The community also learned that the permits mentioned a maximum of 60 litres per second, while the pipes in the construction area have the technical capacity to transport 350 litres per second.

The concern of the local population for their water sources and the environment was demonstrated last December when they closed down a bridge on the road from La Lorena towards the Pacific coast. In this way local people succeeded in paralysing the construction of the pipeline until local and national government agreed that for any further building all permits would be legal and up to date.

### *But the struggle is not over yet*

Twenty grass-root organisations from the communities of Lorena, Huacas, El llamo, Cartagena, Portegolpe, Brasilito and others joined forces to organise a committee, supported by the NGO, FEDEAGUA. They put together a case, pointing out that communities in the area were used to suffering in the dry season and still managed to keep drinking water supplies going through small aqueducts. They could not understand how representatives of local and national government could extend permits without analysing the impact on the local population, the environment and on local income sources.

They put forward a number of legal strategies to stop this construction:

- opposing the commercial use of aqueducts was presented to the Ministry of Environment and Energy;