

21 Hours, 40 Feet and 1 Heartbeat



It's always enthralling to watch the Cricket World Cup, with India in the finals. On 2nd April, 2011 when Bhupendra Singh Sahni - Assistant General Manager of Grasim Nagda, watched the match with his family, filled with nervousness and anticipation, he had no idea that life had bigger, graver, nerve-racking news in store for him.

The phone buzzed. It was a panic call. Grasim is a big part of the community and the team is highly trusted for their skill and knowledge. The call was from the local authorities informing Bhupendra about a child who had fallen in a 40 ft. deep hole, in Piploda Village, near Ujjain. His heart sank but he instinctively leapt into action.

Even before he started to move for Piploda, his work had already begun. He had a detailed conversation with the local administrator, and his team of expert civil engineers to make sure that all the basic necessities for the rescue operation, like oxygen cylinders, ropes, and sustenance materials were in place. With years of knowledge and experience behind him he knew that without preparation the mission would not be a success. The team expected many hurdles and needed to be prepared for anything that the small rural village threw at them.

Bhupendra and his team were aware that Piploda is a small place with limited resources, but there was one resource he and his team had in abundance. A dedicated bunch of people, full of empathy and a commitment to rescue young Ayush, the child in the well.

As they reached the village a flood of emotion swept their way from the parents, family and the concerned community. The team finally saw a fragile and scared little Ayush, trapped timidly in the hole. His limbs were stuck between the narrow walls of the ditch. He couldn't move. It was difficult for them to control the surge of emotions, and keep a cool head. But this was no time to panic.

They quickly mobilized the workforce and dug a second hole, 45 feet in depth, to reach Ayush and get him out to safety. The team passionately worked through the night digging a 4 meter subway to connect their secure dugout to the distressed little boy. All the while consoling Ayush. Bhupendra recalls, that the whole village had gathered around the hole, praying for the

child's safety. They were willing to offer all the help and support that was needed to make the operation a success.

Twenty one hours of relentless effort later, the villagers burst into applause as the scared little boy was delivered to his relieved family. Finally, a smile broke from his innocent face and that's when Bhupendra and his team could heave a sigh of relief.

It takes a lot to understand someone else's pain and to go beyond your means to try and ease it as if it were your own. The village still greets Bhupendra and his team with open arms and warm smiles every time they visit. In the course of bringing Ayush back on ground they created a deep bond of trust and compassion that can't be broken for time eternal. The villagers now know that the Grasim team truly cares.