



ROTARY

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Rotary and Water

The challenge

About 97 percent of the world's water are oceans -- and saline. More than 2 percent of the rest of the water is frozen in icebergs and glaciers, leaving less than 1 percent of all water available for human use. If it were possible to fit all the water on Earth into a gallon (4 liter) jug, the relative quantity of water available would be about one tablespoon (4 fluid drams).

Fresh drinking water and water for food production and waste disposal are essential and increasingly threatened. Population growth and megacities have increased demand six times since the beginning of the 1900's. Pollution contaminates available supplies. Today, almost half of the world's countries have severe water problems.

Rotary Solutions

Recognizing the vital importance of safe water, Rotary International policy encourages all Rotary districts and clubs to support efforts which help people to provide themselves with safe water. The safe water projects are to be reasonably close to homes using simple sustainable technology. This policy is reflected in projects of all sizes in all parts of the world.

Indicative of Rotary activity are the number of Matching Grants awarded by The Rotary Foundation for water-related projects. The trustees of The Rotary Foundation have made clean water as one of three priorities for major Health, Hunger and Humanity (3-H) Grants.

In recognition of Rotary's work to provide safe water in communities around the world, the International Water Resources Association presented the **1997 Crystal Drop Award** to Rotary International. Rotary was cited for its projects in Senegal, Haiti and Thailand.

The Rotary Foundation awards Matching Grants to projects coordinated by Rotary clubs throughout the world for wells, water tanks, school or hospital water systems, and lavatories.

Multi-Continental Efforts

The **Rotary Safe Water Project** has resulted in the construction of 710 wells --565 in India and 145 in Guatemala. The project was initiated by three Rotary International Directors from India, Guatemala, and the United States, to increase Rotary awareness and support for providing safe water to communities in developing nations.

African Solutions

Supported by a \$300,000 Rotary Foundation grant, The Rotary clubs of Massachusetts, USA, and Kisumu, Kenya, sponsored a project to develop a supply of clean drinking water for some 500 families in Kenya. The project is designed to create a system of village level water management cooperatives, with trained participants including school and church leaders.

A Senegalese Rotary member created a device which forces tree roots to tap water well below the saline surface of the Sahel. Supported by French Rotary clubs, the device is being used to fight desertification throughout Senegal.

Americas, including the Caribbean

Haitian villagers celebrated the renovation of Tapion Dam. The Rotary project, designed with the counsel of the Food & Agricultural Organization, has restored a source of water, with provision to prevent flooding and erosion. Local farmers are trained in soil conservation and area villagers are working together to develop irrigation policies.

Rotary members in Colorado, USA and Montero, Bolivia, with additional support from the Rotary Foundation's Matching Grant Program, worked together to develop and distribute water vessels designed to prevent the spread of cholera and over 50,000 containers have been distributed to Bolivian households.

Asian Projects

In Rajasthan, India, Rotary members devised a way to capture the monsoon rains, holding them long enough to increase the water table. This makes safe water available year-round. As a result, crop yields have increased, villagers' health has improved and local children do better in school.

A group of Philippine Rotary clubs used a Matching Grant to help provide 70 rainwater reservoirs for farming purposes in Thailand. In the Philippines, a Rotary Village Corps worked with local agencies to create an artificial coral reef to restore the ecology of Davao City Gulf. The project was based on the artificial reef built out of used tires created by the Rotary Club of Tagbilaran.

European Environmental Projects

Belgian Rotary volunteers worked with Smurf in the World Foundation to develop an educational program on water and the environment for 43,000 primary schools in that country.

Rotary members in England developed an "Aquabox" to provide water purification and medical supplies to disaster victims. The boxes benefited earthquake victims in India, refugees in Croatia, Bosnia and Albania, and schoolchildren in Gambia. In Scotland, Rotary volunteers organized an army of 9,000 volunteers to clean the banks of the Clyde River from its source to mouth.

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