

Rotary clubs join with USAID to provide clean water and improved sanitation in developing countries

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Collaboration merges Rotary's grassroots strength with agency's technical expertise; First up: Dominican Republic, Ghana, Philippines

ISTANBUL, Turkey (March 18, 2009) -- Rotary International and the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) are teaming-up to save lives by bringing clean drinking water and basic sanitation to communities in the developing world.

The partnership was announced today at the World Water Forum in Istanbul, Turkey, in advance of the March 22 observance of World Water Day.

The public-private alliance will leverage the resources of both organizations to implement sustainable, long-term water supply, sanitation, and hygiene projects in three countries: the Dominican Republic, Ghana, and the Philippines. Alliance activities in each country will be funded jointly by USAID and Rotary, with an expected minimum of \$2 million per country in the initial phase.

The countries were selected based on need, as well as the ability and experience of local Rotary clubs and USAID missions to address the challenges. Other countries will follow based on the success of these pilot experiences.

"We intend this joint effort to be a model for future alliances with other strategic partners and in this way to enhance our contribution to world understanding, goodwill, and peace," said Past Rotary International President William B. Boyd, chair of the collaboration's steering committee.

"The service ethic and commitment of Rotary clubs in these countries will be complemented by USAID's development expertise and technical leadership," noted USAID Acting Administrator Alonzo Fulham. "This partnership will yield a significant, sustainable increase in water supply and sanitation coverage for the planet's poorest and most vulnerable populations."

Worldwide, more than one billion people lack access to reliable sources of safe water, and twice that many lack access to sanitary human waste disposal systems, creating an environment that allows the disease-poverty cycle to thrive. Each year, more than 1.8 million people --most of them children -- die of diarrhea alone. Economic development also suffers as women and girls forgo education and occupations to spend hours a day fetching water for their families.

Rotary, a global humanitarian service organization, and USAID see the collaboration as an effective, resource-efficient way to contribute to the United Nations Millennium Development Goals, which call for a 50 percent reduction in the proportion of the world's population without access to safe water and basic sanitation by 2015.

The past several Rotary presidents have emphasized the need for sustainable water and sanitation improvements in developing countries. In 2007-08, the Rotary Foundation, Rotary's charitable arm, awarded 561 grants totaling \$8.6 million for water and sanitation projects throughout the developing world.

For more information about Rotary, visit www.rotary.org. For more information about USAID, visit www.usaid.gov.

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Rotary is an organization of business, professional, and community leaders united worldwide to provide humanitarian service and help build goodwill and peace. Rotary has more than 1.2 million members in over 33,000 clubs in more than 200 countries and geographical areas. Rotary members initiate community projects that address many of today's most critical issues such as poverty, violence, disease, hunger, and lack of clean water. Rotary's top priority is the global eradication of polio.

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