



We care about your climate future

January, 2024

Volume 8, Issue 7

Pursuing partnerships to scale Rotary's environmental impact

At the close of 2023, with its record-shattering heat and multiplying environmental disasters, this issue shares news of partnerships Rotarians are forging to scale up our impact in reducing suffering and building resilience. Our topic for January is pollution, including greenhouse gas emissions, with four news stories on how Rotarians are striving to provide safe water, and two first-hand reports on the networking Rotarians and Rotaractors carried out at COP 28.

As a global NGO of volunteers applying an array of expertise and solutions on six continents, Rotary has the potential to accomplish much more than we have so far. One great example: how Rotarians in three Central American

nations are catalyzing action to rescue a grievously polluted river. Our Latin American correspondent shares the story in Spanish in this issue and in English on our blog.



Read about the strategies Rotary environmental advocates are creating:

- COP28 blazes new paths to scale RI climate impact
- Rotary plans to scale up WASH
- Rotarios centroamericanos se unen para salvar el Rio Motagua*
- Transforming lives and land with Sand Dams Worldwide
- How a young Nigerian Rotary club swiftly raised almost \$41,000 to provide public restrooms sorely needed at Port Harcourt Airport
- At COP 28, giant breakthrough on sustainability reporting
- ESRAG nominates five projects for the 2024 Earthshot Prize

Plus actions you can take individually or with your club:

- Attend ESRAG January webinars on agriculture, conservation, and pollution solutions
- Choose your 2024 Pollution Solution resolutions
- Discover plant-rich recipes to renew your health and the planet
- Follow ESRAG social media (see widgets, below), and share our posts to get planet-saving project ideas to the widest possible audience!

Finally, here are the topics for our upcoming newsletters: **biodiversity in February** and **sustainable living in March**. Please [send your project news](#) to us by the 20th of the month preceding publication, or [write us](#) by the 15th if you would like to be interviewed. In the meantime, a happy and fulfilling New Year to you!* *The [English version](#) of this article appears on ESRAG's news blog, where you can translate it into several other languages.*

Photo: Rotarians from seven clubs and four districts gather at a 30,000 gallon cistern in Honduras, completed through one of the huge water and sanitation projects made possible by Rotary's collaboration with World Vision.

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COP 28 blazes new paths to scale RI's climate impact

By Ariel Miller, ESRAG Newsletter Editor



Rotary's dramatically increased participation in the 2023 UN Climate Conference (COP 28) opened major opportunities for Rotarians to help accelerate global action on the climate crisis. In their [Dec. 20 ESRAG webinar](#), ESRAG leaders who attended COP 28 put the spotlight on climate goals that Rotary is well-positioned to advance, including health, peace, renewable energy, regenerative agriculture, and food and water security.

Rotary sent its largest official delegation ever, including RI President Gordon McNally, Foundation Chair Barry Rassin, General Secretary and CEO John Hewko, and ESRAG Chair Yasar Atacik. Rotary's International President Nominee Mario César Martins de

Camargo also attended. In the Dec. 20 recap, Dr. Atacik and other ESRAG leaders referred to key COP 28 declarations and roadmaps which the Rotary family can draw on to maximize our leverage. This article includes hyperlinks to the resources they shared.

“Unfortunately we are not on track to limit warming to 1.5 or even 2 degrees Celsius,” things are much worse than that,” Dr. Atacik said. But RI has great potential as a humanitarian organization with members working at the local and regional level on six continents. He pinpointed several ways Rotarians can accelerate climate action:

- Adaptation “location-specific, sustainable food production and resilient water systems.
- Capacity-building, especially through working with municipalities.
- Mitigation “speeding the clean energy transition through our solar energy projects and our [million solar panel campaign](#).

“This is the third time I’ve led Rotary’s delegation to the UN Climate Conference, and the first time we’ve had ten theme days covering every aspect from health to energy,” said Judith Diment, MBE, Dean of Rotary’s Representative Network, which connects RI to the major UN agencies. “It is very important to have all the Rotary Action Groups involved.” Fellow Rotary delegate Dr. Chris Puttock, past chair of ESRAG, chairs the Council of Rotary Action Groups.

For the first time ever, Rotary had its own pavilions at COP “one in the Blue Zone (COP’s official plenary and negotiation space) and the other in the Green Zone open to the public. These meeting spaces provided an unprecedented opportunity for Rotarians and Rotaractors with multiple kinds of expertise to negotiate with other stakeholders. “This was a wonderful opportunity for raising Rotary’s profile on the world stage,” said Judith Diment. “We are building partnerships with other agencies that clubs can work with.”

“Our presence at COP has really grown,” said Chris Puttock, who played a central role in organizing over 20 programs at Rotary’s COP 28 pavilions. Those pavilions gave Rotary and ESRAG leaders the opportunity to meet “so many Rotarians we didn’t previously know who were there.”

Photo (clockwise from upper left) ESRAG Chair Yasar Atacik, Chris Puttock, Felix Kimani Kariuki, and Salvador Rico reporting key take-homes from COP 28 to the Dec. 20 Projects + webinar

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Rotary scaling up WASH

By Ariel Miller

“I have a dream on how Rotary can achieve impact and together we can change the future of Third World countries. Can we talk next week and hopefully change lives?”

Clayton Lee, Sacramento Rotary International Service Chair, sent this irresistible invitation in response to ESRAG's December newsletter. Working with World Vision and Honduran communities on an [\\$800,000 water and sanitation project](#), he wanted to know if ESRAG is also partnering with major global NGOs.

“Most people in the world have not heard of Rotary yet, but 100% of the developing world knows about World Vision,” he noted. “By collaborating with World Vision, we will have vastly more impact. It would be great to follow up with other global grant projects once the WASH projects are done, to advance multiple Rotary Areas of Focus like environmental sustainability and community economic development as we strive to meet the Sustainable Development Goals deadlines.”

Lee told me that soul-searching conversations were already under way on the future direction of Rotary's water, sanitation, and hygiene work, and sent the links to register. I listened to Zoom calls Dec. 12th and 14th as Erica Gwynn, Rotary's WASH Program Manager, facilitated discussions on whether Rotary's WASH investment of \$185 million to date has had lasting impact, and the changes we need to make to ensure that future work achieves the hoped-for good.

That same week I experienced a revelatory conversation with the world's leading social entrepreneur on public toilets, Jack Sim of Singapore, who had joined Gwynn's Zoom call and challenged Rotarians to try advocacy. To galvanize us, he described how his World Toilet Organization ([WTO](#)) catalyzed a pivotal legislative vote in Brazil in 2019 that opened the door to huge investments in sanitation. In our subsequent chat, he offered two powerful metaphors: think of poverty as a Swiss watch taken apart, its components scattered across a table, and prosperity as a thriving forest.

Can we use sanitation as a tool to transform poverty into prosperity? Here's what I learned from Gwynn, Sim, and Lee.

Photo provided by Clayton Lee: Honduran families meeting with Rotarians to discuss plans for the water delivery system being provided through a \$1 million Global Grant.

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Rotarios centroamericanos se unen para salvar el Río Motagua

Por Natalia Luque, Corresponsal ESRAG para Latinoamérica y miembro del Club Global Zipaquirá, Colombia-



Note: this [article appears in English](#) on ESRAG's news blog, where readers can translate it into various languages.

¿Qué convocó a Clubes Rotarios de Guatemala, Honduras y Belice, a diversos entes gubernamentales de las naciones y a más de 25 empresas privadas en un pacto común? La respuesta es un río con la cuenca hidrográfica más grande de Guatemala, que con aproximadamente 486 km de longitud, se ha convertido a lo largo de su cuenca y de sus playas circundantes en una cloaca o un relleno sanitario más que un río.

Las estimaciones que se han realizado calculan, que están llegando de manera consistente cerca de 15.000 TN de desechos por año al Río Motagua provenientes del Río Las Vacas y cerca de 3.500 Tn provenientes del relleno sanitario de la ciudad de Guatemala. Casi 6.000 Tn de esos desechos se van quedando en las orillas del río y el restante de los desechos (entre 10.000 y 12.000 Tn) viaja río abajo y desemboca en el mar Caribe y las playas circundantes; especialmente las de Honduras. La situación se vuelve más grave en la época de lluvias, durante las crecientes, una de las zonas naturales de inundación del río, que justo se encuentra en la zona 3 del relleno sanitario, socava los desechos enterrados, los cuales terminan en el río. Los análisis preliminares realizados a la fecha indican que este río está aportando casi el 2% de toda la contaminación oceánica por plásticos del mundo.

Al reunirme con un grupo de apasionados y comprometidos Rotarios de Centro América, que me explicaron la complejidad de la problemática del río, algo resonó más que nada en esas conversaciones y fue el lema Rotario de "Gente de Acción". Este gigantesco y ambicioso proyecto, es la clara muestra del poder que tienen nuestros clubes cuando aúnan fuerzas y conocimiento, se estructura un plan de acción concreto y por fases y se trabaja de la mano de diversas organizaciones y entidades gubernamentales por un fin común.

Estos Rotarios, de diversos Clubes y países, comenzaron por tomar la iniciativa de contactar diversas ONG y buscar apoyo para iniciar la colocación de un mecanismo de interceptación, que ha permitido retirar toneladas de desechos antes de que éstos lleguen al mar. Allí se dieron cuenta que el proyecto debía abordar la problemática desde la base, tener unas fases y unos frentes concretos de acción e involucrar a los diferentes entes gubernamentales para lograr soluciones a largo plazo, de allí nació la "Alianza por el Río Motagua". Los Rotarios comenzaron por registrar la magnitud de la problemática, convocaron reuniones tanto con las comunidades locales, como con diferentes entes de los gobiernos locales y lograron el apoyo de más de 25 organizaciones privadas dispuestas a aportar con dinero y tecnología, el convenio se firmó el 25 de Septiembre pasado en Guatemala, con el acompañamiento y apoyo de nuestro Presidente de Rotary Internacional Gordon McNally y la gobernadora del Distrito 4250 (Guatemala, Honduras, y Belice), María Price.

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Transforming lives and land with Sand Dams

By Duwain Lucktung, Communications Manager, Sand Dams Worldwide



Dedicated Rotarians and Sand Dams Worldwide are very proud to work together to promote peace, prevent disease, provide access to clean water and sanitation, enhance maternal and child health, improve basic education and literacy, and develop communities.

Sand Dams Worldwide is an award-winning UK charity, accredited to the UN Convention to Combat Desertification, supporting some of the world's poorest people to transform their own lives and land through water and soil conservation in drylands. Rotarians have advanced this work through a combination of Club donations and Rotary Global Grants.

About 25% of the cost of a sand dam is provided by the local community.

Thanks to over £1million invested directly by Rotary, over 70 sand dams have been built, giving over 130,000 people access to safe water.

"Kew Gardens Rotary led the first of these projects inspired by the simplicity of the technology and its effectiveness in addressing survival in times of drought," says James Onions, a member of the Club. "Sand dam technology can bring safe water to 74% of the world's poor people, and it is hard to find a more cost-effective way to enable such communities to have access to safe water and healthy food, improve their health and free time for children to be educated."

Photo: Uvilani Central Self Help Group with their completed Sand Dam, used by permission, Sand Dams Worldwide

[Read More](#)

Rotarians fill huge need at Port Harcourt Airport

By Chris Ugechi, PP Rotary Club of Port-Harcourt Rebisi Kingdom

It will surprise you that neither the domestic nor the international terminals of Port Harcourt International Airport have lavatory facilities for non-travelers, visitors, commercial drivers, etc. inside the main airport halls. The Rotary Club of Port-Harcourt Rebisi Kingdom succeeded in filling this serious humanitarian gap in a campaign that speedily raised US \$40,876 to fund the construction of an ultra-modern public lavatory outside the domestic terminal. The Federal Airports Authority of Nigeria (FAAN) has accepted responsibility for operating and maintaining the facility, which was completed and handed over on June 27, 2023 and won the Club the Outstanding Award for Most Impactful Project in 2022-23 from District 9141, as well as prominent media coverage.



History has it that the first service project of the first Rotary Club was to install public toilets in Chicago in 1907, making Rotary the world's first service club. The Rotary Club of Port-Harcourt Rebisi Kingdom followed the footsteps of the world's first Rotary Club and accomplished not only a service project but also a lasting public image enhancement for Rotary International. These lavatory facilities will provide clean and safe space for individuals waiting at the airport, ensuring their comfort and dignity.

Photo: PP Chris Ugechi, FAAN Regional General Manager Olatokunbo Arewa, and D9141 PDG Mightyman Aye Dikuro at the dedication ceremony June 27, 2023

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COP 28's giant breakthrough on sustainability reporting

By Rob Sisson, Rotaract Delegate to COP28



For the first time in history, humans are including sustainability information in financial decisions.

I cannot stress enough how amazing this is.

The International Financial Reporting Standards (IFRS) Foundation currently sets the [international accounting standards](#) which are mandatory for public companies in over 140 countries. In other words, this is the common language companies and investors use to compare the financial health of businesses across the world.

Pretty cool, if you're a number nerd and like to pour over financial statements. (Not that I know anyone who's like that.)

This same group, the IFRS, have recently announced the [International Sustainability Standards](#), which will run in parallel to the accounting standards.

That means companies will disclose sustainability information next to their financial information.

So there will be the standard cash flow, balance sheet, profit and loss, and additional information regarding things related to their sustainability - such as their scope 1, 2, & 3 greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions.

That's exceptional.

One will be able to look at how much money a business is making, and how much it pollutes to do so.

Just you try and convince me that's not phenomenal.

Now imagine how impactful it would be if a set of sustainability standards were adopted to the same extent as the existing accounting standards.

And it looks like that will be the case, based on a momentous commitment announced on Finance Day at COP 28.

Photo: Rob Sisson speaking about tipping points during a presentation in the Rotary Green Zone Pavilion at COP28

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ESRAG nominates five projects for 2024 Earthshot Prize

By George Spiteri, Rotary Club of Scunthorpe Pentagon



The Earthshot Prize was launched by Prince William and The Royal Foundation in October 2020 to [discover and help grow innovative solutions](#) to repair and regenerate the planet. Fifteen finalists receive a year's fellowship and support to accelerate their ideas and find new funding and partnerships so they can scale their innovations to reach their full potential. The winners in five categories each receive a £1million Earthshot Prize.

The Royal Foundation and Earthshot wanted to work with Rotary on Earthshot; they are aware of the values and ethics of Rotary, believing that this matched their own and provided a sound foundation for partnership working.

Earthshot has many partners in different fields and expertise in a wide number of roles across the globe. One might argue that Rotary International, too, has many members in different fields and expertise in a wide number of roles across the globe.

This is the story of how ESRAG's Board appreciated what a great opportunity Earthshot offers for environmental solutions and agreed to serve as an official Earthshot nominator on behalf of the Rotary family. In just a matter of weeks, we were able to announce this opportunity, review many applications, and nominate five which have been accepted into Earthshot's 2024 competition.

Photo: George Spiteri, who begins serving as a Board Member of Rotary Great Britain & Ireland in 2024, succeeded in getting ESRAG approved as an official nominator for the Earthshot Prize.

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January webinars showcase agri, conservation, and pollution solutions

By Laurie Zuckerman, ESRAG Director and Communications Chair

ESRAG's Weekly Seminars in January offer a feast of information on environmental solutions, including the vital importance of changing our food system to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, Global Grant scholars' adventures in conservation, and pollution solutions in Central America and Africa. Join our vibrant global group for excellent speakers and conversation every Wednesday. When you register, the link will give your time zone. 19:30 IST, 14:00 UTC, 8:00 CST (Evanston).

Jan. 10, Eating for Tomorrow.

Climate Scientist Gerard Wedderburn-Bisshop explains why it is critically important to significantly reduce emissions from the agriculture/food systems sector, especially emissions from animal agriculture, to maintain global temperatures below 2 degrees C by 2100. Register [here](#).



Jan. 17, Conservation from the Perspective of Global Grant Scholars. Alaina Eckert and Sophie Buchholz will inform us of the opportunities they have been given and the successes they have had in their professional lives due to Rotary scholarships. Register [here](#).

Jan. 24, Rotarians' multinational quest to save the R o Motagua: Rotarian Salvador Rico of Cleaning the Rivers of the World will describe how Rotarians in Guatemala, Honduras, and Belize created a multi-stakeholder accord to reduce the massive volume of plastic and other solid waste polluting the banks of the R o Motagua and the Caribbean Sea. See Natalia Luque's [article](#), and register for the seminar [here](#).

Jan. 31, Recovering and reusing plastic to prevent pollution in Africa. The Timao Group and Megagas will explain how they build houses and create cooking gas from plastic waste. Register [here](#).

Photo: Rotary International President Gordon McInally in Guatemala in September, 2023, signing the international accord to clean up the R o Motagua.

Your 2024 pollution solution resolution

By Laurie Zuckerman

Start the New Year right! Choose one simple action that helps the air, water, or land.

1. Eat more whole foods - grains, legumes, nuts, fruits and vegetables at home and at your club. It's better for your [health](#), [air](#), water quality, and [land](#).
2. [Reduce food waste](#) by "shoppping your pantry" before going to the market or supporting local groups that address food waste in your community. If food waste were its own country, it would be the [third largest polluter](#) behind China and the USA.



Save Food, Save Money

An average American could save about \$1,300 per year by saving food
(2020 study, US data)

3. Shop your closet and used stores. Repair items instead of purchasing new. In 2020 [human-made stuff outweighed](#) all life on earth - not sustainable since our stuff depends on living things.
 4. Help stop 10 million tonnes of GHG being released into the air by joining ESRAG's [Million Solar Panel Initiative](#). [Click](#) to add your panels to ESRAG's database! Then share the [1,000,000 Solar Panels](#) campaign.
 5. Use or support [regenerative agriculture](#) practices. These reduce air and water pollution as well as land degradation.
 6. No other options but to travel via air? Compensate for airplane exhaust with ESRAG's [Flight Carbon Estimator](#), support Rotary project that prevent or sequester CO2, and earn Paul Harris points!
 7. Invite your club to tackle pollution by using the [Green Events Handbook](#), hosting a [lithium-ion battery recycling](#) day, a [rivers or beach clean-up](#), or compensate for un-avoidable air pollution (GHG) by supporting [Rotary projects that prevent or sequester CO2](#).
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Post-holiday renewal recipes

By Dawn Angela Byford, ESRAG Plant-Rich Diet Task Force

Feeling the post-holiday slump? Here are some great recipes to help you reclaim your vibrancy and energy, and feel excited for Rotary Action in 2024!

One of the best ways to jump-start your health is with plant-powered foods, which help not only to rebalance your gut and provide critical nutrients you may need to replenish, but are also a great way to stay energized and do your part to help save our planet. Every whole food plant-rich meal, or as we like to say “planet-friendly” dish you choose makes a BIG difference.

Here are three Plant-Rich Recipes we love in our PRD Taskforce:

1. A fabulous [Nourishing Cilantro Bowl](#)
2. Easy and delicious [Black Bean & Corn Salsa \(pg 25\)](#)
3. Game-changing [Chia Overnight Oats \(pg 15\)](#)

- trust us, this one will keep you full and energized all morning and can be made in bulk at the start of the week for a super easy start to your day!

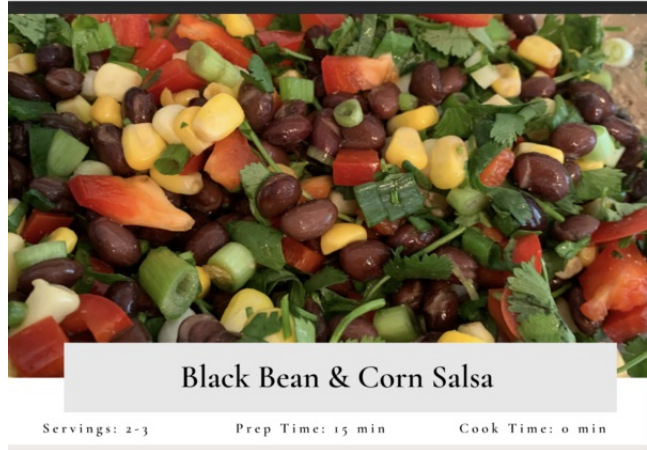
Want to level up even more? Join our [DIY 15-Day Plant-Rich Diet Challenge](#).

You will be nourishing your body, mind, and spirit while taking one of the most important actions to support our 7th Area of Focus, the Environment. Did you know that eating more plants supports ALL Rotary International’s Areas of Focus? It’s true - [click here](#) to learn more!

“Be the change you wish to see in the world.” Mahatma Gandhi

Here’s to an empowering 2024 everyone!

Dawn Byford is a member of the Rotary Club of Canmore, Alberta, Canada and an Operation Pollination Ambassador.



The Environmental Sustainability Rotary Action Group

operates in accordance with Rotary International policy, but is not an agency of, or controlled by, Rotary International.
