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Rotarians Race to Finance, Implement Climate Action



Heeding warnings that global action is still far too slow to avert climate calamity, more Rotarians are racing to fill the gaps in funding and climate action. This issue reports how they are delivering funds and expertise to hard-hit communities, promoting climate resilience, equity, health, and economic development. ESRAG's Chair Pat Armstrong and Chair-Elect Yasar Atacik link you to ESRAG's growing trove of online resources. Conferences and webinars within and beyond Rotary highlight ethical, effective ways to move money to solutions more fair to all concerned.

Here are our April 2023 stories:

- Resources to Galvanize your Climate Action
- Rotarians Reviving Pakistani Villages
- Solar Saving Lives in Ghana
- April 19: Meet Transition Network Founder on Save our Planet
- Imagine Low-Carbon Energy Security: good news from Canada
- Teaching Climate Solutions in Türkiye
- Plant-Rich Diet Catching On!
- May 9 Sustainable Investment Europe Conference in Paris
- Simposio Latinoamericano del Medio Ambiente in Ciudad Juárez June 5-6

Photo: Rotaractors with the Istanbul Maslak Rotary Club welcoming and gathering travel information from participants at D 2420's first climate action conference on March 4. Tulip Sustainability used the data as part of its calculation of the emissions generated by the conference. Maslak RC, a carbon-neutral club, offset the omissions. Photo provided by Safak Ozsoy, ESRAG Zone 21 Chairwoman.

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Resources to Galvanize Your Climate Action

By ESRAG Chair Pat Armstrong and Chair-Elect Yasar Atacik

Pakistan's catastrophic 2022 floods, Europe's deadly wildfires, and the titanic cyclones slamming Africa are just three of the rising toll of disasters justifying the urgency of the [Synthesis](#) of the Sixth Assessment Report (AR6) of the UN's Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), which made worldwide headlines in March. Our [April blog](#) shares key findings from IPCC-AR6, and links to exemplary ways Rotarians are working to mitigate climate change and help communities build resilience. Read more below for a summary.



As we mark Earth Day 2023, we're writing to share how [ESRAG](#) – the Environmental Sustainability Rotary Action Group - can help your club meet this crisis with life-saving action. We've been holding virtual international meetings since 2020, building a fast-growing set of online resources you can consult to find field-tested projects to fit your club's context and capacity.

If you're attending the Rotary International Convention in Melbourne, come a day early for ESRAG's Environment Action Summit on May 25. Gain hope as you learn about projects on rivers, mangroves, solar power for community development, and more. [Register here](#).

Photo: Last October, RI Trustee Faiz Kidwai took RI President-Elect Gordon McNally through the vast region of Pakistan flooded by the unprecedented monsoons of 2022. They're outside a tent about to visit a family whose home was destroyed.

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Rotarians Reviving Pakistani Villages

By Ariel Miller, ESRAG Newsletter Editor

As the catastrophic 2022 floods devastated the homes, health, and livelihoods of over 33 million Pakistanis, the [United Nations Environment Programme](#) and the [OECD](#) warned that the growing gap in climate aid is accelerating humankind's existential danger. The [Brookings Institution](#) reported in February, 2023 that 90% of the flood recovery aid committed at the January international donors' conference in Geneva is in loans, a crippling additional burden for a national economy that was already reeling before the flood. But Pakistani Rotarians, led by RI Director Muhammad Faiz Kidwai, are demonstrating how Rotary's unique combination of local knowledge and international aid and support can speedily deliver and effectively administer grants to impoverished communities, creating hope and transformation.



Launched in March by Pakistani clubs who are each sponsoring a destroyed rural village, Kidwai's Smart Village program embodies best practices by combining climate resilience, sustainable development, and gender equity. The benefits will endure and grow. By leveraging local skills and resources, the plan is thrifty and financially sustainable. Its multi-year, modular design is perfectly sized for overseas Rotary clubs to sponsor a specific number of households as the project works in

partnership with local people to build a vibrant future.

Photo: District 3271 PDF Executing Committees Chair Raees A. Khan, who is monitoring execution and quality control for the Smart Village initiative, helps a child organize bamboo his community will use to build flood-resilient houses.

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Solar Saving Lives in Ghana

By the Rotary Club of Accra-Spintex

In 2021, the [Rotary Club of Accra-Spintex](#), in partnership with the Rotary Club of Rochester, Michigan, USA, installed a 5.2KVA solar power system at Alokpatsha Community Based Health Planning Services (CHPS) compound in the South Nkwanta district of the Oti Region of Ghana.



A nurse doing a sonogram at night for a woman in labor at the Alokpatsha rural clinic, thanks to solar power provided by Rotarians in Accra, Ghana and Rochester, Michigan, USA



This project exemplifies the win-win impact of climate action by advancing four of Rotary's Areas of Focus: disease prevention, maternal and child health, economic and community development, and environment.

The Alokpatsha CHPS had been one of three rural CHPS compounds in the area without electricity. Community members die of snake bites and other causes because the CHPS facilities are unable to store vaccines and other medical supplies that require refrigeration. When Alokpatsha CHPS lacked electric power, health workers posted to this clinic had challenges staying there.

How it began: In 2018, Abdul Malik Chantimah, who was then district director at Nkwanta Health Directorate, requested quotes to provide a solar system to power the facility. Nortse Amartey Amarteifio, a member of our club whose company, Nocheski, provides solar solutions, also received the request and sent a quote. It however turned out that the clinic could not afford it.

He followed up to assess the need, after which he began talking to other Rotarians and clubs in a bid to raise the needed funds. One of the people he reached out to was Rhonda Panczyk, former member of the Rotary Club of Rochester, Michigan, USA who organized fundraising activities with her club to partner with the Rotary Club of Accra-Spintex to implement the project.

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Imagine Low-Carbon Energy Security

By Joey O'Brien, ESRAG Director

Imagine if all the fears imbedded in the 6th IPCC report come true.

Imagine if winter did not come. I have lived this.

I grew up with my father building community ski resorts in Nova Scotia, Canada. I bought a resort called Ski Martock from him in 1979. Ski Martock is a mid-sized community ski resort with the base elevation only 30 feet



above sea level. We employed 278 staff, had over 100,000 annual customers and an

average winter season of 109 days. Despite our size we generated several Olympians and had a very strong clientele base.

As part of good operational practices, I installed a weather station in the summer of 1980, with equipment to measure rain, snow, humidity, cloud cover and depth of snow on the ground. The coldest 800 hours of the season (mean snow-making temperatures) determined the success of our human-made snow production, and therefore our ski season. During the 1980/81 season our mean snow-making temperature was -6.8C. By the year 2000, it was up to -2.3C. That means that for 50% of our snowmaking hours we were running the plant at temps warmer than -2.3C. This is very energy-intensive and inefficient. At peak, we were consuming 2 megawatts of power.

I sold the resort in 2003. Luckily it was before the warming temperatures had an effect on the fiscal performance. It was a good time to exit. Climate change has already had a huge impact on our family. As we moved from Nova Scotia to Alberta you can call us climate refugees. To try to secure a future for our grandchildren and young people across the world, I switched careers to immerse myself in climate solutions. I'm writing to share news of breakthroughs that give me hope.

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Teaching Climate Action in Türkiye

By Safak Ozsoy, Zone 21 ESRAG Chairwoman

Less than a month after the cataclysmic earthquakes of Feb. 6 – in the midst of organizing emergency shelter, health care, and other essential services to survivors - the Rotarians of District 2420 went ahead to hold a conference on climate action. Sustainability consultant Safak Ozsoy, ESRAG Chair for Rotary Zone 21, shares this news and joyful photos.

District 2420 organized a Climate Change Congress on 4 March 2023, the first event in our district on climate change. The Congress was hosted by Kadir Has University, with a magnificent view of Halic, Istanbul. The speakers emphasized the urgency of taking action on climate change, and that all stakeholders must strive to meet the ambitious target of keeping global warming below 1.5 C and reaching carbon neutrality by 2050. The main topics covered included COP 27 outcomes, climate change and resilience, and the sustainability framework. We talked about building awareness in Rotary clubs, including ways for Rotarians to contribute to mitigation, adaptation, and planning for carbon neutrality. The carbon footprint of the conference was calculated with a sponsorship of Tulip Sustainability Center, and offset by Maslak Rotary Club.



As one of the speakers for the afternoon session, I discussed how businesses and NGOs can implement sustainability, offering specific recommendations for Rotary clubs. I pointed to the necessity of energy transition and sustainable development as a framework for management implementation. ESRAG Chair-Elect Yasar Atacik presented the history of Rotary environmental action, an overview of ESRAG's role, and ESRAG's recent work on the Climate Road Map.

Safak Ozsoy the founder and general manager of Tulip Sustainability Center, with decades of industry experience in environmental safety, health, emergency response, and corporate social responsibility. She helps businesses incorporate global climate change into their planning through a framework of sustainable management, including collaboration between industry and civil society. In this photo, she's on the left, Dr. Atacik on the right, with fellow panelists Dr. Semra Baysan and Ozlem Tut.

Plant-Rich Diet Challenge Catching On!

By Kris Cameron, Confluence Rotary Club, Wenatchee, WA, USA



Project Drawdown lists plant-rich diets as the climate solution with the [second highest global potential](#) to reduce heat-trapping gases in our atmosphere. The ESRAG Plant Rich Diet Task Force has recently finished converting their original 15 Day Plant-Rich Diet Challenge, launched live in 2021, into a do-it-yourself project available from their [webpage](#). Anyone can sign up to take the Challenge as an individual or as an organizer for a club or group. Since the individual option has been available, 30 people from around the world have signed up to take The Challenge at their own pace. Half of those individuals did so in response to a notice shared in the Chelan County (WA) Public Utility District newsletter

that is sent electronically to all of their customers.

Lon Penna, Secretary of Nisacayuna Rotary, emailed me in March that he had signed up and was sharing the news of the Plant-Rich Diet with his club, District Governor, DG Elect, and DG Nominee. “Like the scientists at Project Drawdown, I am OPTIMISTIC that the human spirit will do what we need to do, and how easy is it to modify our diet! Thank you so much!” he wrote.

Nine individuals have signed up to organize a Challenge for a club or group. For example, the Chelan-Douglas Health District and Confluence Health (based in Wenatchee, WA) have sponsored The Challenge for their employees as part of their employee wellness programs. Fellow Rotarians have registered to host Challenges for their clubs in Singapore, Minnesota, California, and New York. The Rotary clubs of Canmore, Alberta, Canada, St. Thomas East Eco of the U.S. Virgin Islands, and London Hyde Park, Ontario, Canada, have challenged one another to an Earth Day Plant-Rich Challenge and have already registered over 150 participants. If you would like to join them and improve your personal and planetary health, you can sign up [HERE](#).

After discovering the Plant-Rich Diet, the Boise Metro Rotary Club in Idaho, USA switched their regular meeting venue to a restaurant that makes grains, legumes, fruit or vegetables the main course, with meat as an optional side dish. Club member Jeff Larsen shared the news of their action with Rotary's Projects team, together with this luscious photo of a recent club menu offering.

Sustainable Investment Forum Europe May 9

Hosted by [Climate Action](#) in partnership with the United Nations Environment Programme's Finance Initiative, the [forum will](#) "facilitate best practice for effective ESG risk management and disclosure to combat

Sustainable Investment Forum Europe 2023

09 May 2023 | Paris, France

governments need to set a more aggressive capital mobilization targets for public to private financing. Harnessing blended finance solutions in Europe to meet UN SDGs there will be much debate as to the delivery time frame for the COP27 loss and damage fund.”

Topics include the impacts of inflation on climate action and energy transition, risks from climate change’s physical impacts, why biodiversity should matter to investors, European sustainable finance regulation, and using public finance to leverage private capital.

Participants represent insurers, pension funds, investment managers, banks, multi-laterals, and policymakers, from Europe and beyond, who are “driving European and global action in support of a democratic and just transition in responsible and sustainable investing... The Forum focuses on advancing asset owner SDG and Net Zero measurement, alignment, and allocation, alongside providing latest regulatory updates and opportunities.

[Read More](#)

greenwashing.” [Register here](#) for in-person attendance. UN programmes, bodies, and agencies attend for free, and NGOs must pay £695.

The one-day conference will encourage collaboration “for a global, ESG-led transition” including “whether central

Simposio Latinoamericano de Medio Ambiente

By Carlos Iván Montoya Pérez, ESRAG Director



After the great experience of the World Environment Conference organized by ESRAG’s Latin American (LATAM) Chapter in 2021 on Zoom, we decided to have our own event, from Latinoamericanos to Latinoamericanos, on Zoom in 2022.

With pandemic problems receding, the Latinos have decided to have this event in hybrid format, hosted by a different city of the region each year, the first event of its kind for the region. This year’s Simposio

Latinoamericano de Medioambiente will be on June 5th and 6th at Ciudad Juárez, México, on the borderland with El Paso, Texas: just where Latin America begins. Follow our [ESRAG LATAM Facebook page](#) to learn more about the speakers and the whole event. It will be free!

Ciudad Juárez, famous for its industrial investment, is the economic capitol of its state, Chihuahua. ESRAG LATAM members chose the main topics and speakers to fit this setting in the middle of the North American desert:

- Climate Change financial mitigation strategies
- IRECs and Carbon Credits
- Green Entrepreneurship

- Green Law Panel : Comparison of México and Chile
- Water and its Management
- Sustainable Development Goals at business organizations
- Industrial Symbiosis - Circular Economy
- Green Building and Green Cities
- Citizen Participation in Climate Solutions

Just as with the 2021 World Environment Conference, this symposium is being led by Rotarators! One of them is me, the ESRAG board member born and raised in Juárez.

Some of the allied organizations and companies are CANACO, COPARMEX, Juárez´ Mobility Council, Green Chamber of Commerce México, Cámara Verde de Comercio de Latinoamerica, AIRAC, SUME, Tesa, Citizens Climate Lobby, Top Energy, Next Carbon Trading, The Earth Lab, Ban.CO2 de Carbono Mestizo, Chihuahua Green City, Juárez Circular Hub, EKOA Bioclimate Architecture, Petstar, Global Compact, ISS Integral Source Solutions, and Ordenamiento Territorial y Procesos Sustentables.

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