

A Rotary Project Group visit to the island of Sumba, Indonesia.

by PDG John Kevan

The Rotary Club of Mandurah Districts is partnering with NGO *Fair Future Foundation* in Sumba, Indonesia, to advance their Water Connections and Malaria prevention programs.

In East Sumba, where the financial capacity to support water and health requirements for villages in remote areas is severely limited, *Fair Future Foundation* has been successfully providing materials and training, to allow villagers to build their facilities for over 15 years. The eastern part of Indonesia still has high levels of malaria, (and other diseases), and remoteness, lack of funding and poor basic community infrastructure prevents complete eradication of this debilitating disease.

In April 2024, a Rotary Project Group from this club flew to Sumba for eight days, to inspect the many activities being carried out by *Fair Future Foundation*. These water, sanitation, medical and health education projects have been supported by Rotary Clubs around Australia and other international resource groups, targeting fresh water supplies and the elimination of malaria. The project budget is \$125,000, to assist six remote village centres, and we are half-way there. The Rotary Project Group paid for their own airfares, food, and accommodation.



The Rotary Project Group comprised PDG John Kevan, a retired senior project manager, Rtn Peter Smith, human resource consultant, Rtn Adrian Russell, retired hospitality manager, Rtn Bridget Jones, small business owner and Rtn Mandi McGrath, a mortgage and business broker. These diverse skills were definitely beneficial in assessing the impact and progress of the project. Four of the group have been in Rotary for less than two years.

We flew from Perth to Denpasar (Bali) and onto Waingapu, the main town on Sumba, and stayed in an adequate hotel for A\$35 per night. One night we stayed in a remote village in natural surroundings, giving us a very raw concept of how these people survive. A most unique experience.





The Rotary Project Group visited villages, schools, water and sanitation installations, attended medical interventions and medical centres that Rotary Clubs and other donors have supported.

We were warmly greeted by Dr Alex Wettstein, a medical doctor, the founder of *Fair Future Foundation*, and his team of enthusiastic workers. He is from Switzerland, and a man of enormous dedication, whose practical, hands-on manner, enables so much work to be carried out by volunteers.

Alex coordinates medical interventions, construction works, malaria prevention strategies and the distribution of medicines.

Other local volunteers have a variety of skills, including technical, social media, graphic design, building construction and training the villagers in construction methods, and teaching health education.

Over the week, many schools, villagers, community centres and the Mahu Medical Centre were visited. Neatly dressed school children came out to sing and dance, and speeches by grateful school principals were translated, the appreciation for these supplies was apparent.

It was obvious the supply of clean water, toilets and septic systems, medical supplies and health education materials, have been a revolution to these small village centres. The rate of infections and deaths (from all causes), has decreased.

Children's excitement from receiving soccer balls we distributed gave us a great feeling, as they ran wild, showing exceptional ball skills, to the joy of their parents.



The Rotary Project Group also distributed 195 SolarBuddy lights, (*SolarBuddy.org*). There is no power in most of the remote villages and the students can now use this small light to study at night and charge it during the day.

These small lights, children's clothes and writing materials were carried by members of the group as extra baggage to Sumba.

We met with the Governor of the Eastern Regency and his wife. They were keen to support the immediate distribution of descriptive posters showing the choice of healthy foods, constant health awareness, including malaria prevention, to all schools and public buildings in East Sumba.

This is an essential, simple method of increasing basic public health awareness and required support to sustain the efforts being made.



One of the most positive and beneficial innovations by *Fair Future Foundation* is the provision of Primary Medical Care Boxes to remote villages.

Senior women from these villages are trained in First Aid and basic health education. They use the medicines, bandages, ointments, etc, to treat simple injuries and prevent infection.

The boxes are refilled when volunteers revisit the villages.

This Rotary project will continue to supply many of these medical boxes to provide immediate health support at the village level, where there is no other access to medical care.

Off the main highway that runs along the centre of the island, tracks are rough, very narrow, and require tough vehicles to traverse the rocky terrain.

All building materials, medical supplies, fuel and often water trucks must negotiate these tracks so infrastructure can be constructed, and basic health and education supplies delivered.



One typical area we visited was Laindatang, a village and school, where basic health data was collected from 75 students. Over the years thousands of villagers have been examined and diseases identified and treated. This data is sent to the Regional Health Service.



Water was found near this group of villages and pumped to a high tank and distributed by gravity to smaller villages, enabling toilets and septic tanks to be constructed. Over 50 ferro cement tanks have been built by experienced local villagers who pass their skills onto the next village. Over thirty kilometres of poly piping has been laid to distribute the water.

At this school hand basins were installed to encourage all students to *Wash Your Hands*.

Now, regular classes are being held in these schools to explain the various malaria prevention methods, general health care and eating nutritious local food. The resources for these programs are provided to *Fair Future Foundation* by Rotary.

However, there is still a lot of work to do in many remote areas.

- The number of people infected with malaria in East Sumba is extremely high.
- There is a low level of knowledge about malaria infection and how to prevent it.
- A lack of facilities and tools delay the early detection of malaria infection.
- No clean water and sanitation facilities; some villagers are still hand-carting water.
- There are extensive poor living conditions, and limited access to medical assistance.



The Rotary Project Group returned home with a better understanding of the ongoing critical needs of those villagers living in a poor subsistence environment, without basic services, in the remote areas of East Sumba.

The great work being accomplished by the *Fair Future Foundation*, through the professional and caring leadership of Dr Alex Wettstein and the many volunteers, is inspiring.

Clean water is the best medicine. Providing Water Connections, Malaria Prevention strategies, health education materials and training in a targeted approach, has achieved outstanding results.

Financial account summaries received showing source of funds and expenditure, indicate the project activities being completed are cost effective, given the access challenges, high freight charges and the irregular and expensive supply of building materials.

Rotarians will continue to support the *Fair Future Foundation* in East Sumba.

Donations can be sent to: - Reference Sumba and your name. Thanks

- **Rotary Club Mandurah Districts - Project Account** BSB 036 192 Account 283 213
- **Rotary Australia World Community Service RAWCS.** Project No **10-2023-24**
Search rawcs.org.au Donations. Look for the project name. (tax receipt will be issued)

You or your Club can be part of this positive, effective and life-saving project.

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