

## WEEK 36 FOUNDATION MINUTE – ROTARY’S PARTNERSHIP WITH USAID

An old piece of railroad track is laid across a pit toilet. The walls are crumbling. The stench is overwhelming. It’s the only toilet for a school in rural Ghana, and most children refuse to use it. They do their business outside instead — or quit school altogether. This is an all-too-common experience: Half of Ghana’s population lives in rural areas, and only 10 percent of those people have access to basic sanitation. Two-thirds can obtain safe drinking water — after a 30-minute round trip.

Since 2009, Rotary has been working to fix those deficiencies through a partnership with the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID). The partnership combines the business skills and local community leadership of Rotarian volunteers with the technical expertise of USAID. Rotary is contributing \$9 million to the \$18 million partnership; outside of eradicating polio, it is Rotary’s largest partnership effort. “We wondered how these two organizations could come together and exploit the synergy between them,” says Rotarian Ron Denham, a member of the Rotary-USAID steering committee.

Ghana was one of three pilot countries when the program kicked off. Projects were implemented in two phases: Phase 1 concluded in 2013, and Phase 2 will end in 2020. “As a result of this partnership, we’ve been able to reach out to some very deprived communities,” says Emmanuel Odotei, WASH management specialist for USAID/Ghana. “If USAID had tried to do this alone, or if Rotary had done it alone, we would never have achieved as much as we have today.” Throughout, the focus of the program has been on accomplishing three goals: improving sanitation and hygiene in schools and health facilities; increasing community access to safe drinking water; and advocating for ample government financing of WASH — that is, water, sanitation, and hygiene.

*Thanks to Northbrook Rotary for sharing this information in their club newsletter for this week.*