

## WEEK 37 FOUNDATION MINUTE – CLEAN WATERWAYS – CLEAN WATER

Many Rotarians have had opportunities to travel to communities throughout the US and in countries around the world. When done by car, the disparity between the clean, leafy suburbs of large cities contrasts starkly with debris-filled backyards and vacant lots of communities whose residents struggle to make a living. Priorities are different – and having a tidy garden isn't one of them. In some communities, public funds aren't available for garbage pick-up and residents aren't in the habit of safely dealing with trash.

What really jolts the viewer driving through many areas is the proliferation of trash and debris alongside riverbanks. As spring rains and snowmelt combine into rivers in flood, the inevitable happens – the trash ends up in the river – and taints the water supply. In some overseas communities, residents get their drinking water from the same dirty stream which in the dry season was concentrated into a toxic brew. The rainy season brings not only flooding, but water tainted with whatever ended up in the river – a dangerous situation with the potential to spread disease to those who drink it.

What can Rotarians do to assist communities to clean up their communities, their waterways, and eventually their water sources? How about starting with simple trash cleanup projects – engaging Rotarians, Interact Students and local residents to help nearby communities who might need help dealing with a problem their residents cannot address. Sometimes the example we set is enough to change minds and make a change for the better.