

Tech Talk



Newsletter of The Rotary Foundation Cadre of Technical Advisers • July 2013

2013-14 Technical Coordinators

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Message from the Chair

Michael Webb

May I first wish you all the very best in your endeavours for the new Rotary year, and say welcome to the cadre members who have joined since the last edition of *Tech Talk*. My thanks to the new technical coordinators for accepting this role, and I sincerely hope they will enjoy assisting their fellow cadre members in their assignments.

I was unfortunately unable to attend the cadre training seminar in Lisbon, as I was involved with the RI Board meeting at the same time. I understand that it was a great success, and my thanks to Vice Chair Tusu for running

the meeting so effectively. And we would all want to thank Meredith and Christian for the preparation, planning, and organization. The program included some of the suggestions made after previous seminars, and we look forward to receiving your feedback so that we may make the next training even more successful.

If you have any suggestions about how the workings of the cadre may be improved, please don't hesitate to share your thoughts with Meredith, Christian, or me.

Mike

Recent Cadre Visits



Johnson Agwu (far left) visits a 3-H project to provide water wells and health education in Uganda



Interactors welcome David Tettey during his visit to a global grant project that furnished an orphanage in Lesotho



Left: A clinical officer explains records related to a global grant project that is building a health care network in Kenya. Right: Lateef "Wale" Ogunbadejo, who evaluated the project, attends a meeting of village elders during his visit.



In Our Own Words

Undertaking an Interim Monitor Visit in Thailand

PDG Sylvia Byers, Rotary Club Mosman Park, Australia; District 9455



The director (*third from left*) of Omkoi Nonformal Education, a cooperating organization involved in this project, presents Past District Governor Sylvia Byers with a locally woven bag

Editor's note: Some identifying details, such as names of the project location and sponsors, have been omitted, to ensure confidentiality.

I accepted with enthusiasm an invitation to make an interim site visit earlier this year to a Future Vision global grant project aimed at addressing the health and nonformal education needs of hill tribe children in Thailand. I had the necessary technical skills as the result of valuable training sessions I had attended prior to Rotary conventions and because of my background in education, including basic health, project planning, implementation, and accountability. Also, detailed information and support were provided by The Rotary Foundation of Technical Advisers' stewardship staff.

Arrangements were made with the host organizing committee to visit at a time that was convenient and

before the monsoon rains set in. Several of the 28 sites with community education centers were in areas where travel was challenging in the dry season and potentially impossible in the wet.

The host sponsor club for the project had the interest and strong financial support of six international Rotary clubs from another country. The commitment to help improve education and language training and basic health of students in rural villages in northern Thailand also required the valuable input and expertise of non-Rotarians from cooperating organizations that had developed and implemented the training course for the 56 teachers.

From the time I was met at the airport by host club Rotarians, I was impressed by the thorough planning, dedication, and spirited way that jobs had been undertaken for this complex project. Meetings held with members of the host committee and cooperating organizations covered all aspects of the project as final plans were made for our site visits.

My request to visit one site was made possible because we camped overnight in one of the six community education centers we visited. Thanks to Rotary, we slept on floor boards instead of a dirt floor, and we had electricity because of the solar panel and a bathroom with running water for washing as well as a hygienic toilet. We saw children taught in small groups using the computer and flat screen, a medical cabinet stocked with basic medications that were

provided by the teacher to students and villagers, and a recording system.

As this was an interim site visit, I was able to reinforce the need to prove that the project would be sustainable. Baseline data showing proof of outcomes using the expertise of cooperating organizations will ensure that teachers continue to increase their skills through regular updates. Superintendents have been trained in identifying and fixing problems that may arise with the solar panel, satellite dish, or computer. All computer equipment has now been added to the district register so that maintenance will not be an issue.

At the community education centers, I saw proud teachers, villagers attending classes in the Thai language, and children who all knew that Rotarians helped them. The future of these people will be healthier as a result of the work being done, and the future assured as community groups are formed.



Schoolchildren view a Thai language DVD provided by the global grant project

In Our Own Words

Mobilizing Efforts to Combat Thalassemia in Morocco

Jean-Claude Piers de Raveschoot, Rotary Club of Ferney-Voltaire, France; District 1710



A young boy with thalassemia at a Rotary sponsored celebration for world thalassemia day in Rabat, Morocco

Editor's note: Some identifying details, such as names of the project location and sponsors, have been omitted, to ensure confidentiality.

When I got a message from Christian Pepera asking me whether I would carry out a post-project evaluation in Morocco about a project dealing with thalassemia, my first reaction was that, not being a doctor, I hardly saw what my contribution could be. Then, after his clear explanations about the goals of the evaluation (that is, to assess what has happened since the end of the project), I did some essential research to find out what thalassemia is. Wikipedia provided a start, and then I became more familiar with this terrible genetic disease. Some talks with World Health Organization people in Geneva and Morocco and further information from the Thalassemia International Federation based in Cyprus gave me some basic facts and figures.

In short, this disease that is widely spread around the Mediterranean coast (as well as areas in Asia) has a rather wicked strategy: It develops only if both parents carry the gene, in which case they have a 25 percent chance of having a child with the disease. The child, if untreated or improperly treated — either because of ignorance or lack of effective treatment — will die by age 10. In the absence of systematic statistical research, it is said that about 3 percent of the Moroccan population are bearers of the gene, and approximately 3,000 to 5,000 children have the disease.

The impetus for this project began in 2003 when a young mother and her child, who was close to death from anemia (caused by thalassemia), traveled from Morocco to a hospital in Genoa, Italy, which specialized in anemia and similar diseases. Rotarians from Genoa provided assistance to the mother and child and decided that a one-time treatment was not enough, as thalassemia is a lifelong disease.

Wanting to do more to solve the problem in a much broader way, they drafted a proposal for a Health, Hunger and Humanity (3-H) Grant that addressed thalassemia with a three-pronged approach:

1. prevention and information - by providing blood screening to identify carriers and building awareness of the disease
2. strengthening the medical network - by creating a National Centre of Excellence in Rabat and training hospital personnel
3. treatment – by providing therapy, medicines and the necessary blood transfusions

The original 3-H project that began as a US\$400,000 project in 2007 ended in 2011 as a complex, multifunded project valued at about \$1.5 million, and it continues today. Rotary International was recognized as an official partner in the national fight against thalassemia. The Moroccan government allocated large amounts of funding, and insurance systems began to allow for reasonable reimbursements. The Health Ministry of Morocco began planning a national strategy, and Rotary clubs have become involved in the campaign.

In retrospect, I must confess that if I were to evaluate the quality of this project as it was proposed in 2007, I would have had difficulties approving its feasibility. To persuade national authorities to commit themselves to multiyear planning and budgeting! To move national health

administrations to recognize that they had failed to respond to a disease, and to decide on a long-term strategy! To mobilize hundreds of doctors and nurses! All this in less than five years and with limited funds!

I went to Genoa to meet some of major project organizers. I then went to Rabat, Morocco, and visited medical authorities, government representatives, Rotarians who were supervising the project locally, and local people who were directly or indirectly affected by the disease.

In a way, it was an easy post-project evaluation. Ample public documentation was available to show the level and depth of the new commitments from the government and its administration. There was evidence of numerous awareness campaigns and the lasting support of the media. Specialized medical institutions had been reinforced and family associations created. Plans had been drafted and endorsed by Rotary clubs for assisting in other cities in the Morocco. Enthusiastic Rotarians were more than ready to explain the dramatic developments, as were shown in an exhibition at the convention in Lisbon.

But will this project, which is beginning to look like an ever-expanding program that may extend beyond the borders of one country, continue to develop? Will the first coordination team (with a few dedicated people) be able to go on for many years? How can lasting coordination between the numerous actors in Italy and Morocco be built, with each player knowing exactly how to play its part? This is my main concern: maintaining an active Rotarian coordination across borders to consolidate and expand a fragile structure that no one foresaw at the start.

Cadre Training in Lisbon, Portugal

Mark Zober & Marilyn Farber, Rotary Club of Jerusalem, Israel; District 2490



Project stakeholders prepare for the site visit exercise

Photo by Mark Zober (left) & Wade Nomura (right)

Approximately 80 Rotarians from nearly 30 countries gathered in Lisbon for another successful cadre training event. All of the presentations and training materials from Lisbon can be found on the cadre's shared site.

Training in Lisbon was held, as usual, on the Friday before the start of the Rotary International Convention. The training was moderated by cadre Vice Chair Francis "Tusu" Tusubira, and featured presentations from Past Trustee Sam Okudzeto, Past RI Director John Eberhard, as well as cadre members and Rotary staff. Today, there are over 400 members belonging to the cadre's seven technical sectors and more than 60 percent have received at least one assignment.

The cadre training format has evolved since the first full-day training at the RI Convention in Montréal in 2010. A useful addition to the last two training sessions is reports by cadre members on how to effectively prepare for a successful site visit. Two of our favorite tips in Lisbon came from Michael Barrington: 1) use a notebook made of waterproof moleskin, and 2) bring two cameras so that one can be used to take pictures of you in action, conducting the site visit.

This year's training emphasized 1) the importance of forming partnerships with cooperating organizations, 2) measuring the success of projects, and 3) monitoring and evaluating projects. We also learned about The Rotary Foundation's efforts to improve project sustainability by "ensuring that grants provide long-term solutions to community needs that the benefiting

community can maintain after grant funding ends."

Cadre member Maureen Duncan, who assisted with TRF's sustainability-check efforts, told us about her work evaluating five projects in Honduras. One of the most important lessons she learned was that local beneficiaries of projects are often not asked what they need before the project begins. She reported that the most successful projects involved a strong cooperating organization, a very involved host Rotary club, and strong community participation.

After a pleasant lunch, with time to catch up with old cadre friends and make new ones, we reassembled for the annual site visit simulation exercise. The case study this year involved a water and sanitation project, which included building toilet facilities, repairing old wells and drilling new ones, and developing a community health education program. The exercise was a combination of serious fact-finding and the occasional hearty laugh as the role players acted out their scenarios.

The simulation works this way: Attendees are divided into teams of 10, each with a group leader. Vice Chair Tusu and Rotary staff play the roles of project stakeholders, which include the primary contacts from the host and international Rotary club partners, a representative from the cooperating organization, and project beneficiaries. Each stakeholder has a scripted agenda that guides the information offered during the questioning phase. The results of stakeholder interviews and group discussion are used to complete a site visit evaluation form, and the designated reporter of each group shares what the group learned from the simulation.

The result is a list of conclusions based on the data collected. Some of the mistakes and problems identified this year:

- * The mistake of completely turning over the grant funds to the cooperating organization
- * Lack of participation by the host and/or international Rotarian sponsors; letting one member of the international club make all the decisions, with little or no involvement of the host Rotarians
- * Undisclosed conflicts of interest
- * Lack of financial documentation
- * Lack of or improper Rotary signage
- * Budget changes made without RI permission

Cadre training was an excellent learning experience — very enjoyable, and a fine kickoff to what proved to be another outstanding Rotary convention. We all look forward to a busy year of stewardship, and then . . . on to Sydney!

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