

# ‘Clean Water Means Life’ in the Philippines...

**It’s a basic fact of life – safe sanitation and water saves lives.**

**It’s also the title of a Rotary project to supply clean water and sanitation to desperate people in underdeveloped countries through planned water catchment, storage and reticulation.**



Two twinned Rotary clubs are doing just that in a region in the Philippines where there is plenty of water – but of the wrong sort for humans.

In 2003, the Rotary Clubs of Batemans Bay, N.S.W., and Intramuros, Manila, agreed to be Rotary twin clubs and, in so doing, launched themselves on a path of mutual co-operation in bringing drinking and sanitation water to schools and communities on the main island, Luzon.

The Manila basin has plenty of water. This basin is often referred to as an alluvial basin, with a water table only a few feet below the surface in some areas. So, there is plenty of water for fish farming and rice growing – but it is heavily contaminated and a health risk to those who drink it.

However, in ancient days, the lava from Mt Pinatubo and countless other volcanoes flowed across the land so that there is now an impervious

*A windmill installed by the Rotary Clubs of Batemans Bay and Intramuros towers over a farm house in the Philippines.*

sill of lava which lies anywhere between 40 and 60 metres down. Under that lava is fresh, pure water. The twinned clubs have learned that drilling wells through the lava can be hard work sometimes, but the water is sweet. A problem – someone has to plan the pumping and pay for the electricity to drive the pumps.



A banner proudly displayed on the water tank.



Members of the Rotary Club of Intramuros.

In the areas north of Manila, where fish and rice farming give a reasonable income, if the schools want to get fresh, pure water, the P&Cs can pay for the power needed to drive the pumps at the bottom of the wells. However south of Manila, the land - and the people - are very poor. They can't afford electricity for pumps, and their water has to be raised with hand-operated pumps in "village well" set-ups.

The twinned clubs, in their joint planning, have now supplied drinking and sanitation water to 18 schools, 15 villages, and one major hospital. Not



The locals are all delighted with their clean water supply.

only have they found the water by drilling, but also provided the power to pump it up.

Their most satisfying achievement was supplying water to a school for deaf children in the high country four hours' drive south of Manila. The school had neither water nor electricity. Each day, a bucket brigade carried water for the 400 children and 30 staff up from a muddy creek down in the nearby valley.

The twinned clubs discovered a spring at the foot of some hills with a reliable 120 gallons/minute flow, guided the water into a four-chamber filtering system, using activated charcoal in one of the chambers, then pumped the water up the hill to a 2,500-gallon holding tank, that had another activated charcoal filter at the top.

Power? It came from an array of 18 Grundfos solar panels. There was sufficient power to fill the tank in five hours, or 10 hours on a cloudy day.



Members of the Rotary Club of Intramuros.



A mother washes her young son in the clean water.

Total cost of the project was US\$26,000.

In all the areas where the twins have supplied water, infantile and juvenile mortality from stomach bugs has declined considerably.

The clubs are rightly proud of their work to help the people of the Philippines have clean, readily accessible drinking water.