



The reach of community action

Water connects us all. From a river in a remote forest to a stream running past a city neighborhood, freshwater ecosystems sustain humanity. Yet these waters are increasingly under strain.

Pollution, overuse, and climate pressures remind us that protecting freshwater is a global challenge.

Rotary has always believed change begins within communities. Now we are working to see how far the impact of community action can travel. When local service is connected, measured, and shared, it becomes a force that extends beyond geography and borders.

A water project led by the Rotary Club of Panamá Nordeste exemplifies this idea. The project served Indigenous communities in Panama's Darién province, a region accessible only by canoe and small boat. With no roads, limited electricity, and reliance on untreated river water, families faced serious health risks.

To reach these communities, Rotarians had to rethink how supplies and services could be delivered. Working with a partner club in the United States and a specialized water organization, they introduced solar-powered water treatment systems for an area without access to an electrical grid. Local leaders were trained to operate and maintain the system, ensuring that clean water would continue flowing long after installation crews departed.

The results were immediate. Children who once missed school due to illness returned to classrooms. No longer needing to haul water from rivers, adults gained time and strength to work and support their

families. What began as a water project became a foundation for healthier, more resilient communities.

This is how we extend our reach: combine local leadership with global partnerships, technical expertise, and long-term thinking.

That same spirit is at the heart of Rotary's partnership with the United Nations Environment Programme through the Community Action for Fresh Water initiative. Around the world, Rotary and Rotaract clubs are restoring waterways, protecting wetlands, and safeguarding vital freshwater sources. By collecting data to map and measure this work, we can better understand its impact and show how local service contributes to worldwide solutions.

Data is not an end. It is a tool that helps us learn and improve so that Rotary's service delivers real, measurable change. Each project entered and each waterway restored adds to a shared story of stewardship and responsibility. You can learn more and get involved at communityactionforfreshwater.org.

As we observe Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene Month, I encourage you to reflect on the freshwater systems that sustain your community and the role Rotary can play in protecting them.

When we connect local action to a global vision, we strengthen Rotary's ability to make lasting change. Together, by extending our reach and working side by side, we truly *Unite for Good*.

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