



Focus on Disaster Relief and Recovery

SHELTERBOX IN HAITI

LONG-TERM HELP AFTER THE TSUNAMI

Q&A WITH UN DISASTER EXPERT

GLOBAL OUTLOOK

When disaster strikes

Rotary helps bridge the gap between immediate and long-term recovery

The winds were vicious, reaching up to 180 miles per hour. But they weren't the worst of it. The worst part was the rain.

Hurricane Mitch, the devastating storm that hit Central America in October 1998, dumped nearly 3 feet of water on Tegucigalpa, Honduras. The hurricane filled the streets and turned mountainsides to mudslides.

David Beyl, an honorary member of the Rotary Club of Tegucigalpa, Distrito Central, remembers

watching through the unrelenting downpour from his home, perched a safe distance from some of the hardest-hit communities.

"We could just see houses sliding down the hill," recalls Beyl. "And, of course, it affected the poorest people because they lived in areas of higher risk, on the side of the mountains."



When the December 2004 tsunami struck Sri Lanka, the Rotary Club of Rockland, Maine, USA, led a collaborative project with Habitat for Humanity to help repair and rebuild homes along the country's devastated coastline.

By the time the rain stopped, approximately three million people were left homeless or otherwise devastated in Honduras, neighboring Nicaragua, and other Central American and Caribbean nations. Carlos Roberto Flores, then president of Honduras, estimated that the disaster had reversed 50 years of progress in the country.

Hurricane Mitch was the deadliest storm of its kind in more than two centuries. But it was just one

of hundreds of natural disasters that took place in 1998 and one of thousands since. According to the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), more than 300 natural disasters occurred worldwide in 2008, the most recent year for which statistics are available. These killed more than 235,000 people, affected more than 200 million more, and caused US\$181 billion in damages and losses.



Mark Pearson/ShelterBox

The devastation of the 12 January earthquake in Port-au-Prince, Haiti, was captured by ShelterBox response team member Mark Pearson just four days after the disaster, when ShelterBox, a Rotarian-led project, arrived in Haiti to distribute temporary shelters to house thousands of survivors (see below).

ShelterBox in Haiti

After 10 years of bringing aid to thousands of disaster victims, ShelterBox faced its most daunting challenge yet after a powerful earthquake rocked Haiti on 12 January, plunging the struggling nation into one of the worst humanitarian crises on record.

The quake, the nation's strongest in more than 200 years, killed at least 200,000 people and left more than one million homeless and in desperate need of food and shelter. The ground support that ShelterBox deployed days after the quake struck was unmatched by anything the organization had done before.

"This is the largest, quickest, and most complex deployment in our history. We organized across four countries to get ShelterBoxes to the people of Haiti quickly," says John Leach, head of operations.

With most of the capital, Port-au-Prince, flattened, hospitals were in dire need of shelter for victims. Hundreds of tents were used as emergency shelter for postoperative patients.

Founded by Tom Henderson, of the Rotary Club of Cober Valley Helston, England, in 1999, ShelterBox is a Rotarian- and Rotary club-supported nonprofit that brings shelter, water, and comfort to victims of disaster and conflict. Each 49-gallon box is packed with necessities such as tents big enough for 10 people, blankets, water purification tablets, cooking supplies, and tools.

At press time, more than 10,000 containers had been distributed in Haiti. In the last decade, ShelterBox has responded to more than 100 crises in over 60 countries, with support from Rotary clubs around the world.

— Ryan Hyland and M. Kathleen Pratt

In addition to immediate and obvious consequences such as property damage and death, disasters contribute to serious long-term economic losses. Over the past few decades, those losses have multiplied because of population increases and a rise in weather-related crises.

Because the majority of the people devastated by natural catastrophes live in the developing world, the poor are disproportionately affected. Data from the Centre for Research on the Epidemiology of Disasters indicate that from 1991 to 2005, the greatest number of people affected by disaster lived in Asia and Oceania, regions that encompass more than 30 percent of the world's least-developed countries.

The 12 January catastrophe in Haiti reminds us that, in the developing world, disasters worsen already diminished living conditions and exacerbate poverty. The aftermath can take years, even decades, to reverse.

"A number of effects are felt very early on that linger for many years,"

says Rigoberto Giron, associate vice president of strategic initiatives at CARE, the disaster relief agency. Previously, Giron was director of CARE's Emergency and Humanitarian Assistance Unit, which helps survivors of disaster and conflict through immediate relief and long-term rehabilitation. "The most notable are the loss of educational gains, loss of productivity, [and] obviously the impact on gross domestic product. A country could be set back many years."

Rotarians are uniquely positioned to provide immediate relief, whether they're working alone, with their clubs, or through large-scale initiatives such as ShelterBox (see sidebar) and Aquabox, which aim to meet basic needs by sending durable containers packed with essential supplies into disaster areas.

"The people who always respond to the emergencies best and fastest are the people who live there and the people in the next town. That's where most of the lifesaving work is done," says David Lynch, a senior recovery officer with the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC).

Equally important is the role that community-based groups, including Rotary clubs, play in bridging the gap between immediate aid and long-term recovery, says Lynch. "People from the outside will come and they will go, and obviously they will leave something behind. But those that are going to keep [recovery efforts] moving are the community and the organizations that grow up within that community."

When Cyclone Sidr struck Bangladesh in 2007, the country's then 152 Rotary clubs provided immediate relief in any way they could, distributing everything from water to blankets in hard-to-reach coastal areas. But even as they met short-term needs, Rotarians were



Members of the Rotary Club of Cedar Rapids, Iowa, USA, review a map of the damage to their community after a 2008 flood.

thinking beyond victims' day-to-day survival.

"There are many other volunteer organizations coming to build their houses, to give them the food to survive," says K.M. Zainul Abedin, who chairs District 3280's grants subcommittee. "But that is not enough. They shall have to have some sort of an income to survive." The solution: Rotarians have empowered fishermen to return to work by replacing the boats they lost in the cyclone (see sidebar).

In Honduras, Tegucigalpa Rotarians also began investigating long-term recovery efforts within days of Hurricane Mitch.

"We wanted to look at a way that people would be able to earn a living, build a life," says Beyl. The project they eventually embraced involved building an entirely new village for hurricane victims, 35 miles from the capital on land far less vulnerable than the surrounding hillsides. The new community is home to a computer center, library, and other resources that many residents lacked before the storm.

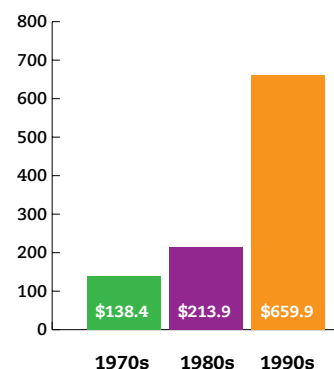
"That is the key: when you're moving from the response and relief phase to the recovery phase,"

says Lynch. "[You want] people to come out of a disaster better than they went into it — less vulnerable."

Sometimes a disaster creates unexpected opportunities to rebuild stronger and smarter. After a massive tornado ripped through Greensburg, Kansas, USA, in May 2007 and wiped out 95 percent of the town's buildings, community leaders decided to use sustainable construction methods, positioning their town as a model for environmentally sustainable living.

Economic impact

Average annual economic losses (US\$, in billions) caused by natural disasters worldwide



Source: UNDP Bureau for Crisis Prevention and Recovery



A member of the Rotary Club of Rockland, Maine, USA, greets tsunami survivor Surandi Madushani de Silva at the site of her new home in Sri Lanka, constructed by Rotarians with Habitat for Humanity.

Reviving livelihoods in Bangladesh

Disasters are a fact of life in Bangladesh, a country of vast river deltas and more than 350 miles of shoreline along the Bay of Bengal. Cyclone Sidr, which pummeled the coast in November 2007, was among the worst in recent years. The storm killed more than 3,000 people and injured at least 55,000. Beyond the human toll, it caused an estimated US\$1.7 billion in damages to property, livestock, and crops.

“In the coastal region of Bangladesh, you cannot believe how the people are suffering,” says K.M. Zainul Abedin, chair of the grants subcommittee for District 3280.

Residents of Bangladesh, one of the world’s poorest, most densely populated nations, are particularly vulnerable to natural disasters. Many homes are simple thatched structures that collapse easily in strong winds. Livelihoods tied closely to agriculture and fishing are also tenuous. When Cyclone Sidr uprooted crops, brought saltwater into fields, and destroyed fishing boats and nets, many residents lost their incomes.

“They have no other means to support their family. This is the only profession they know,” explains Abedin, a past district governor.

Local Rotarians acted quickly. Within five months, the Rotary Club of Dhaka North West was approved for a Matching Grant from The Rotary Foundation, in partnership with the Rotary Club of Newport, North Carolina, USA. The \$24,536 project provided boats and nets to 80 fishermen on the southern coast.

In a similar Matching Grant-funded effort, the Rotary Club of Dhaka New City teamed up with the Rotary Club of Tower Hamlets, Greater London, England, and other organizations to lead a multidistrict effort to address losses sustained by fishermen, farmers, and rickshaw drivers in the country’s southwestern region. The club replaced \$60,750 worth of equipment and livestock lost in the cyclone, including dozens of boats, nets, and three-wheel rickshaws.

Like many rural communities in the United States, Greensburg had a shrinking population even before the storm. Focusing on environmental sustainability has created economic opportunities and helped the town emerge more vibrant than ever, says Darin Headrick, superintendent of schools and a Rotarian in the 12-member Rotary Club of Greensburg.

In the chaotic aftermath of a disaster, there is strength in numbers. Solid partnerships are critical. In addition to drawing on networks of Rotarians and community-level contacts, Rotary International works with established global relief agencies and groups such as UNICEF, IFRC, and CARE, as well as local and national governments.

“The value of having those types of collaborative approaches is that you do not duplicate,” says Giron. “You don’t go to communities three or four times asking for the same information. You don’t compete for resources.

“It’s a little bit more than co-operation. It’s moving toward a different stage in a partnership, where people collaborate in a way that complements. To me, the value of partnering is the fact that you can build on each other’s strengths.”

In Greensburg, Rotarians worked with other organizations on nearly every project they tackled. After collecting more than \$225,000 from Rotarians in nearly every U.S. state and two foreign countries, the club offered to reconstruct the town’s water tower. It was the first major piece of infrastructure rebuilt, and because other community groups came forward with donations after Rotarians took the lead, they were able to construct a tower nearly twice the size of the original.

“With everything else being devastated, all of the houses being gone, and all of the trees being lev-



A Sri Lankan mother and her sons stand in front of the remains of their home, destroyed during the 2004 tsunami.

eled, the fact that we put up a tower, we illuminated it, and there was actually something that said Greensburg on the side, kind of gave you a return [to something] that was a little bit familiar,” says Headrick. “It was a sign of progress.”

Over the next year, Greensburg Rotarians took on one project after another. They teamed up with the local Lions club to erect a digital billboard on the main highway. They partnered with Habitat for Humanity to build homes. Most recently, they lent support to Kiowa County United, a local nonprofit organization, leading to a \$1.3 million effort to rejuvenate Greensburg’s main street and bring nearly a dozen retail storefronts back to the center of town.

When Tegucigalpa Rotarians began planning hurricane recovery efforts, they investigated many potential partners before choosing

You want people to come out of a disaster better than they went into it — less vulnerable.

— David Beyl

the Nueva Esperanza Foundation, a group whose enthusiasm, community-focused approach, and commitment to transparent financial practices aligned with their own.

“As members of the Rotary club, most of us are managers or owners of companies, so our strengths are in management and financial management,” says Beyl. “We realized our own limitations.” Though Rotarians could handle the project oversight, they needed a trustworthy partner with on-the-ground

experience to oversee day-to-day operations, says Beyl.

The Nueva Esperanza Foundation had already planned to help hurricane victims relocate, so it was easy for the Tegucigalpa club to get involved and fund the first homes. They called the settlement, like the foundation, Nueva Esperanza, or “New Hope.”

Alliances between Rotary clubs were key to the next stage of the project. In 2001, Tegucigalpa Rotarians connected with Rotarians from District 5220 (California, USA) who visited Honduras with support from a Discovery Grant from The Rotary Foundation. Honduran Rotarians then teamed up with the Rotary Club of Manteca, California, and applied for a Health, Hunger and Humanity Grant to continue their work. The effort exceeded \$470,000 and stretched over five years, outfitting a com-

puter center, library, and nearby health clinic with supplies, books, and medical equipment. Rotarians supplemented the grant-funded work by constructing homes in the community. The project also branched out to provide new water systems and scholarships for students in a second community, Marcala, where Tegucigalpa Rotarians worked closely with the local Rotary club.

After the 2004 tsunami, which killed about 180,000 people in Indonesia, members of the Rotary Club

of Bali Ubud also reached out to other organizations. They teamed up with a group they had supported in the past — the Bali-based community health foundation Yayasan Bumi Sehat — to construct a clinic in one of the country's hardest-hit areas.

"We knew they were doing good work and were reliable, and so when they started something in Aceh, it wasn't very difficult to make a project together with them," says Bali Ubud club member David Küper, who managed the effort (see sidebar).

A clinic for tsunami survivors

The Rotary Club of Bali Ubud, Indonesia, thinks big. "We have a policy that we only do big projects," says 2005-06 club president David Küper. "We don't do little things here and there."

So when the opportunity arose to help the local nonprofit Yayasan Bumi Sehat establish a permanent health clinic in the tsunami-ravaged Aceh Province, it was an obvious choice.

"The tsunami devastated the infrastructure and the villages," says Küper, who served as project chair and technical adviser. "Most health institutions were just washed away."

Yayasan Bumi Sehat, which translates to "Healthy Mother Earth Foundation," has operated a Bali clinic specializing in maternal and child health since the mid-1990s. The organization responded to the December 2004 disaster by dispatching emergency response health teams to Samatiga, one of Aceh's most damaged areas. Working from a makeshift clinic, volunteers treated wounds and skin conditions caused by the tsunami, as well as tropical diseases and a host of other illnesses, many brought on by the trauma of disaster and subsequent decline in living conditions. They also maintained the nonprofit's original mission, offering birthing services and prenatal and postpartum care. But resources were slim. More than a year after the tsunami, medical teams still operated out of little more than a bamboo shack.

With US\$120,000 from the Solidarity in South Asia fund, established by The Rotary Foundation to support long-term tsunami recovery efforts, the Bali Ubud club built a clinic large enough to serve all 12,000 of the survivors who lived within walking distance. The earthquake-resistant structure is equipped with an independent energy supply drawn from solar panels, and a wind and backup generator to weather the region's frequent blackouts. Bayer donated \$30,000 worth of equipment and furniture, and the Rotary Club of New York funded an ambulance. In 2008, the facility supported 7,748 clinic visits, 1,136 prenatal visits, and 75 births.

"Many people say it's one of the best projects in Aceh they ever saw," says Küper.



A Sri Lankan student arrives at one of 22 schools that Rotarians helped rebuild in response to the 2004 tsunami.

But not every effective partnership comes with a contract or a major financial commitment. Sometimes partnering is simply offering a helping hand in a time of chaos.

"There's another sort of 'softer' element to partnerships, and that's the idea of rebuilding the fabric of the community, which will have been ruptured by the disaster itself," says Lynch.

For Rotarians, that part often comes naturally, say those with firsthand experience.

"Emotionally, it's been tough for people. There are highs and lows; there are all kinds of struggles," says Headrick. "If you ask me, after these years, where do I feel like Rotary has made a difference, it's with the human contact, with the willingness of people to take the time out of their day or their jobs to come assist in any way necessary. They come and take care of it, and do it with a smile and a willing heart."

— M. Kathleen Pratt

Q&A with UNDP's Jordan Ryan

Since 2001, the Bureau for Crisis Prevention and Recovery, a part of the United Nations Development Programme, has been a center for leadership in conflict and disaster situations. The bureau works through about 100 country offices to promote an agenda of risk reduction and build the capacity for nations to respond during disasters. When disasters occur, staff members expedite recovery and ensure effective transitions between short-term and long-term efforts, with an emphasis on creating opportunities for victims to reestablish their livelihoods.



Jordan Ryan

“We come in early, and we’re certainly there for the longer term,” says bureau director Jordan Ryan. “You want to have a transition out of the humanitarian emergency into what you could call ‘normal development.’”

He spoke with *Global Outlook* about the increasing impact of natural disasters and how Rotarians can best work with UN agencies, governments, and other organizations in recovery situations.

Global Outlook: Before we talk about disaster recovery, let’s talk about causes. Is climate change a contributing factor?

Jordan Ryan: The number of people in developing countries affected by climate-related disasters has grown steadily. From 1975 to 1979, it was about 50 million. [From 2000 to 2004], it was 250 million. So there’s a dramatic increase.

One just needs to look [at the events of 2009] in the Asia-Pacific area: tsunamis in Tonga and Samoa, huge typhoons in the Philippines, earthquakes in Indonesia, and typhoons affecting people in Vietnam, stretching into Laos. Climatic hazards such as drought and floods and storms are continuing to threaten lives, affect livelihoods, and basically make poverty much worse.

GO: What does that mean for victims, particularly those living in communities that are already vulnerable economically?

JR: Disasters often disrupt lives significantly: schools damaged, hospi-

tals out, issues of access to social services. Of course, the underpinning of all of it is the effect on the economic well-being of people. Economic losses from disasters are significant. Farmers’ lives are disrupted. Smaller marketeers — often women, who sometimes are the sole source of income for their family — have no access to products to sell. The disaster has many disasters, and they’re often felt in the lives of individuals.

GO: When a disaster occurs, how do you identify long-term needs?

JR: There are now international guidelines in place to assess the needs in a post-conflict as well as a post-disaster situation. It’s normally done at a governmental level, with the World Bank, regional banks, the UN, the European Commission, and others involved. There’s an effort underway to make those processes as inclusive as possible, often reaching out in the local context to civil society organizations to make sure that the damages and the needs re-

sulting from those damages are understood. If you have an understanding of what the needs are, then you can channel the resources so that you don’t have duplication. You can make sure that there are not any huge gaps and the resources get to where they really matter: the people who have been affected by the disasters.

GO: Where should Rotary look for cues and partnership opportunities in a disaster recovery situation?

JR: There are government actors that are often involved to coordinate the range of assistance. In most countries, certainly in the developing world, the United Nations has what’s called a resident coordinator, who has the capacity of bringing the UN systems together. In some places, they would have a dual function: They’d also be called the humanitarian coordinator. They have the ability to convene groups who work very closely with international nongovernmental organizations [NGOs], service organizations, and local NGOs.

Increasingly, I think the UN family is more coordinated in reaching out to humanitarian actors and working shoulder to shoulder with them. There are opportunities for that kind of partnership that focus on the short-term of making sure human lives are saved, but then increasingly making sure that you get beyond the immediate emergency and help communities really restart their lives.

GO: Are there aspects of recovery that are best left to governments or other agencies?

JR: It's very important in many situations that the government take the lead. The government needs to establish a national recovery plan or an emergency recovery plan, and action needs to be aligned with those plans so that it's not duplicative [and] not working across or against purpose.

Where there are natural disasters occurring in places where there's also been violent conflict, one has to be very careful that as you rebuild, as you recover, you're not favoring the factors that led to the conflict. One needs to be very context specific, especially if there's a situation where there's been an imbalance or inequities.

GO: Short-term relief is something that Rotarians have proved again and again that they can do. But why is it also important that groups such as Rotary clubs stay around for longer-term projects?

JR: It's wonderful that we've got such a commitment to humanitarian principles. The lifesaving nature of humanitarian action makes a difference in all of these situations. But as important as it is to have that additional food to make sure your child is fed or a blanket

to keep you warm, you need hope to be able to know that your life is going to go on. And that, often, is the commitment to help local communities get back on their feet. It means, in some places, that idea of really focusing on making sure that they can get back to work.

That's why the link between humanitarian action with longer-term development work is so important, especially for local groups like Rotarians, who live in those communities or who might be in the community next door. They could be very much engaged in creating longer-term economic opportunities so that there's recovery.

GO: Knowing that Rotary clubs are made up of business professionals with strong networks in their communities, are there particular strengths that they can bring to the table in a crisis?

JR: It would be just that: that sort of business know-how. The real understanding of what local communities are, what local communities need. The ability to reach out with that helping hand, both in the immediate provision of assistance but also looking at how you can rebuild shattered lives. It's not just the emergency that matters; it's recovering from the emergency that will keep people out of trouble.

GO: Why else is it important that Rotary cooperate with governments and other organizations?

JR: There's just so much that needs to be done. Partnerships bring a strength of commitment, of passion, of an approach that only can be attained through collaboration. I think we're long done with the day of the lone cowboy who thinks he can come in and do everything. The world is too challenged now.

Building a stronger future

In Sri Lanka, where the December 2004 tsunami severely damaged or destroyed more than 187 coastal schools, Rotary clubs took the lead in rebuilding. More than five years later, Sri Lankan clubs have worked with



other organizations to reconstruct 22 schools, each bigger, better equipped, and more technologically advanced than the one it replaced. Get the full story at www.rotary.org/go.

More online

Learn about Rotary's response to the Haitian earthquake and read more from the interview with Jordan Ryan at www.rotary.org/go.

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Global Outlook: A Rotary World Magazine Press Supplement is published quarterly by Rotary International. Copyright © 2010. **Managing editor** Joseph Derr **Features editor** Barbara Nellis **Reporting** Ryan Hyland **Designer** Avery Mamon **Production coordinator** Candy Isaac **Photos** Rotary Images/Alyce Henson unless otherwise noted **Editorial advisory panel** Bob Aitken (*Rotary Down Under*), T.K. Balakrishnan (*Rotary News/Rotary Samachar*), Carlos Henrique de Carvalho Fróes (*Brasil Rotário*), Andrea Pernice (*Rotary*), and Matthias Schütt (*Rotary Magazin*).