ENSURING ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY

THE CASE FOR AN INDEPENDENT, UNIQUE AREA OF FOCUS FOR THE ENVIRONMENT

Karen D. Kendrick-Hands, RC Madison, WI, Communications Director & Co-founder of ESRAG

ESRAG TRF Environmental Issues Task Force
February 3, 2020, Evanston Illinois
Environmental Sustainability Rotarian Action Group (ESRAG)

Assists Rotary clubs, districts and multi-districts in

- planning and implementing service projects
- building awareness
- building global and local networks
- inspiring action for sustainable solutions
- supporting RI in environmental initiatives
The environment sustains all life on Earth and Rotary cannot effectively or sustainably serve humanity if Rotary does not focus on supporting the wellbeing of planet Earth.

ESRAG’s Position Paper on adding Environment as Unique Area of Focus. January 2020
We Rotarians are all citizens of the world, and we must take the lead in facing this greatest challenge in human history, the survival of our planet.
FIVE ORIGINAL GOALS OF Preserve Planet Earth 1990-93

• Promote greater environmental awareness locally, nationally and globally.
• Increase the number and diversity of environmental service projects.
• Incorporate environmental components in all Rotary service to ensure sustainable development.
• Develop worldwide the image of Rotary clubs as environmental advocates.
• Identify reputable environmental groups for effective partnerships.
Council on Resolutions: 92-287
from the Rotary Club of Jönköping, Sweden.

...clubs shall be encouraged to ... make it possible for our earth to survive as a good place for mankind and give emphasis to the protection and improvement of the environment in their community and World Community Service projects.

It is the responsibility of every Rotarian to support action directed at improving the environment and protecting animals and plants from extinction.

Article 42 Community Service
42.020. Environmental Protection
42.020.1. Protecting the Environment
1998 RI Code of Policies, present until 2010
There is another aspect of sustainability that underpins all … which we can no longer put aside as not our responsibility. That is sustainability of our planet …

Today, environmental degradation and climate change threaten us all. They are having a disproportionate impact on those who are most vulnerable . . . [E]nvironmental sustainability … is, and must be, everyone’s concern.

RIPE Ian Riseley’s Theme Address to the 2017 International Assembly.
President Riseley challenged all 1.3 million Rotarians to plant a tree.

ESRAG documented at least 4.7 million trees, likely many more.
Rotarians must acknowledge some hard realities about pollution, environmental degradation, and climate change.

With sea levels projected to rise two meters by 2100, “my country is going to be gone in 50 years, along with most of the islands in the Caribbean and coastal cities and low-lying areas all over the world.”
By helping to protect our natural world, we support all of our areas of focus.

And take action to create positive, lasting change across the globe, in our communities, and in ourselves.

We increasingly need to recognise the environment’s elemental role in creating truly sustainable and lasting change.

https://www.esrag.org/esrag-unep-handbook
Q: How Do we define Environmental Sustainability?

The harvest of renewable resources, creation of pollution or depletion of non-renewable resources is only environmentally sustainable, if it can be continued indefinitely.

If an activity cannot be continued indefinitely then it is not sustainable.”

https://www.stockholmresilience.org/research/planetary-boundaries.html
The Sustainable Development Goals are the blueprint to achieve a better and more sustainable future for all. They address the global challenges we face, including those related to poverty, inequality, climate change, environmental degradation, peace and justice.

The 17 Goals are all interconnected, and in order to leave no one behind, it is important that we achieve them all by 2030.

THE UN’s 17 Sustainable Development Goals mostly align with directly with Rotary’s Six Areas of Focus: Promoting Peace, Fighting Disease, Providing Clean Water and Sanitation, Saving Mothers and Children, Supporting Education, Growing Local Economies.

Only six UNSDG Goals do not align – Those that relate to the Environment.
Opportunity COSTS –
Projects – declined, deferred, discouraged.

A Few Examples

- Cleaner Cook Stoves in Malawi and beyond
- Powering schools with Solar
- Reforestation Projects – everywhere.
- Wildlife and Conservation Education
None of us were happy about trying to distort the function of the project to conform to the AOF (Maternal and Child Health) although it indeed was peripherally related to this. So we did not proceed with a Global Grant …”
Keith Tovey, RC Norwich England
In July 2016 Rotary Global Grant GG1636707 to provide solar power to eight schools in Uganda was declined. The education AOF does not allow solar installations, a flaw not caught in district review. It was disappointing after spending close to two years working on it.

Our second global grant effort (GG1983680) though, the focus was different. As A WASH project, we drilled three solar-powered boreholes but the environment was not the main focus.

Relying on Club and District Funding, we have completed more than 30 schools.

Nathan Thomas
Rotary Club of Raleigh Midtown, DGN
“[We] regretfully find that the project as presented does not fit into the Rotary AOF for peace and conflict prevention/resolution (PCPR). While we think this is a very worthwhile and well thought-out project, currently, PCPR does not include projects which deal with wildlife conservation or animal/human conflict.”
Discouraged from Even Trying

I have not pursued any environmental Global Grant Projects because there was no Area of Focus. I did not get started because I thought the odds of success were so low. I think there are many Rotarians that have been in the same position as me all these years.

I have done large Water & Sanitation and Maternal & Child Health projects in East Africa and Central America, so I do have experience. Over the course of the past 10 years I have thought a great deal and had a desire to pursue large environmental projects but never did so. I was interested in doing large environmental projects in Western Tanzania, Eastern Congo, Ecuador or Brazil.

Steve Solbrack, Founder Twin Cities Eco-Club – ESRAG BOD
Lost Opportunities Beyond Global Grants

Without an AOF for the environment:

• TRF’s Cadre of Technical Advisors doesn’t support worthy environmental projects.

• It’s more difficult for Peace Fellows and Global Grant Scholars to focus on the environment.

• Arch Klumph Society Members can’t dedicate their gifts to the environment.

• Staff members feel constrained to support initiatives relating to the environment.

• Rotary may not budget to expand staff expertise, e.g. an Environmental Sustainability officer.
Our last three presidents made a strong case for Rotary doing more to preserve the environment. … We are already building environmental protection and sustainability into our service projects, but we have to make these issues more of a priority.

HOLGER KNAACK, RIPE 2020-21

… one way that we can listen to younger generations and make existing club membership more appealing to them is to focus more on the environment. Recent disasters — such as the bush fires in Australia — underscore the importance of taking strong action.

Our last three presidents made a strong case for Rotary doing more to preserve the environment. … We are already building environmental protection and sustainability into our service projects, but we have to make these issues more of a priority.
Rotary’s Young Leaders Inspired to Act

Rotary Youth Exchange students (current and returned), Interact, Rotaract and RYLA, are inspired by their Rotary experience to serve Rotary through environmental projects. They are both the beneficiaries and the future of Rotary.
Environment Ranks High within the Rotary Family

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ideal Organization’s Causes</th>
<th>Rotarian</th>
<th>Rotaractor</th>
<th>Alumni</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Basic education and literacy</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>43%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Economic and community development</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Water and sanitation</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hunger and food scarcity</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>22%</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Environment</strong></td>
<td><strong>23%</strong></td>
<td><strong>32%</strong></td>
<td><strong>29%</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disease prevention and treatment</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peace and conflict prevention/resolution</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>30%</td>
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<td>Polio Eradication</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>7%</td>
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<td>Human Rights</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>23%</td>
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<td>Disaster Relief</td>
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<td>Maternal and child health</td>
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<td>Women’s empowerment</td>
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<td>16%</td>
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<td>Refugee crisis</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>14%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Human Trafficking</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>9%</td>
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ESRAG Recommends

• Add the Environment as a separate Area of Focus in its own right, and not combined with any other Area of Focus.

• Consider naming the new Area of Focus and Cause “Ensuring Environmental Sustainability”

• Place Environmental projects on an equal footing with all other projects in every other Area of Focus.

• Revise the Mission Statement of TRF to include the Environment
An updated Mission Statement . . . .

The mission of The Rotary Foundation of Rotary International is to enable Rotarians to advance world understanding, goodwill, and peace through ensuring environmental sustainability, [or ensuring planetary health] the improvement of health, the support of education, and the alleviation of poverty.
Pollution in the River killed my older sister, one I will never know, because she died before I was born, from Polio contracted from a contaminated River where untreated sewage still flows today. The influence of Rotarians is huge. The moral authority of Rotarians can play a leading role in bringing positive environmental action. We must stop pollution and Rotary MUST make the environment a unique area of focus: to prevent more deaths and sickness, to stop those mothers from losing their children, To make sure our future generations live in a better world. 🌍

Salvador Rico, Cleaning the Rivers of the World, RC South Ukiah, CA, USA
Our planet is in a climate emergency and Rotary is in a membership emergency. Take it from a 27-year old who will be a DG in two years - new generations will continue to avoid Rotary if environmental sustainability is not in our purview.

Nathan Thomas, DGN
RC Raleigh Midtown, NC, USA
Environmental Sustainability as a unique area of focus will:

• Incorporate the final six SDGs into TRF ...

• Enhance Rotary’s image as a global leader in civil society.

• Help us grow membership for the next generation of Rotary.

• Attract new sources of funding
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- Communications Director, Board member & co-founder of the Environmental Sustainability Rotarian Action Group (ESRAG)
- First ever Observer Delegate sent by Rotary International to the UNFCCC Climate Talks, attending COP24 in Katowice, Poland December 2018.