**Rotary Club of Melbourne**

**Lubang Island Water Project Site Visit 17-21 September 2011**

**Background**

RCM in conjunction with the Rotary Clubs of Brighton Beach and Lubang Island and supported by District and Rotary Foundation funding ( North Brighton and a Japanese club also contributed), have contributed $5500 towards a water project which will bring water to faucets close to clusters of houses, where the residents previously had to walk up to 3 kms each day to get water for domestic use.

The project entails the construction of solar and wind-powered facilities which pump water from 2 existing wells to elevated storage tanks from which water is distributed via HDPE pipes to a number of faucets serving clusters of up to 5 households. There are 2 wells, one located on Cabra Island (Buli) and the other on Lubang Island (Pulili). Construction is being undertaken by Sibat an engineering NGO, who also train and supervise a People’s Organisation who lay the pipes.

The purpose of the site visit was to inspect progress to ensure objectives were being met, and to scope a further project in that area.

RCM was represented by Spencer Bock (Director International Services) and Trevor Nink and Garry Fowler who are both members of the International Programs Committee. They were accompanied by Ruth Carlos-Martinez who is the project leader from the host club of Brighton Beach and Persie Torregoza the current President of RC Lubang Island.

**Rotary Club of Lubang Island**

We met a number of members of RC Lubang Island, including the current president, the president nominee and several past presidents. They are all resident in Manila, where the club meets, but were all born and raised on Lubang Island. They are high quality group of Rotarians motivated by a common goal to improve the quality of life of the residents of Lubang Island.

Persie Torregoza is personally responsible for ensuring that the project goals are met and that all finances are accounted for, and does this in an extremely competent manner.

Our unanimous conclusion as a team was that we had full confidence in the Club to manage this and future engagements, and that we would recommend to the IPC and the Board that we partnered with them on future engagements.

**Community**

We met with the Mayor, Sanchez, a number of his staff and the local community in all locations. Mayor Sanchez is extremely efficient and motivated towards the community he serves, and we could not hope for more commitment and involvement by the people. The have a People’s Organisation who have arranged for the laying of all the pipes, and this has been done efficiently, with the only cost to the project being meals for those members working on the project.

We had several opportunities to meet with the local people, and they are all extremely grateful, and we are confident they will continue to maintain the system.

The community of Lubang Island is poor, per capita income of $400 pa, but committed to a high quality of life, with no crime and excellent schooling (they are trialling a one computer per child program). The island is an ideal environment to trial projects that can lead the way for other communities, and we recommend continuing to work with that community.

We also met the mayor of Looc ( the other municipality on Lubang Island) and were given a presentation on a potential project to bring clean water to households in that area.

**Findings - Cabra Island**

We inspected the water distribution system at Cabra which is basically complete. The solar, wind turbine and control room are complete and the pipe distribution system virtually complete. We were able to inspect the pumping station and pipes, and conducted a test from one faucet. We visited the furthest location, although this was not yet connected, as the final pipes can only be connected when the rice has been harvested. We also reviewed and were satisfied that a decision to change from rigid PVC pipes to flexible HDPE pipes was a correct scope change. We also satisfied ourselves that the POs were being trained to both operate and maintain the system after Sibat leaves.

It was anticipated that the distribution system would be available to the community from 24 September.

There is an outstanding question about the water quality, and the Mayor undertook to have samples tested, and the results will be made available to us. If necessary, a filtering system may have to be installed.

**Findings - Pulili**

We inspected the site at Pulili, where construction has commenced recently. The stand for the storage tank has been erected, and work will commence soon of the pumping station and power sources and the pipe distribution. It is anticipated that the project will be completed by January.

There too we met with the local community who are extremely grateful.

**Rotary signage**

Wherever we went, signage acknowledged the contribution of Rotary and the clubs involved.

**Future projects**

2 potential projects were identified and presented to us.

**Looc** is located on the other end of Lubang Island, and they presented a proposal to provide clean water to their community. The proposal needs further development, in conjunction with Sibat, the engineering NGO doing the other project, and RC Lubang Island will review this, and put forward a recommendation for consideration, hopefully before the end of the year.

**Cabra/Libis** This would be a project servicing the remainder of Libis and the other half of Cabra Island, and the concepts are well developed. The problem currently being addressed is that the well is privately owned, and the rights need to be transferred to the people before it can proceed.

We unanimously support the concept of doing a further water project in this area, and in conjunction with RC Lubang Island. RC Lubang Island have been asked to further develop the proposals to their satisfaction and then to submit them to Ruth Carlos-Martinez and ourselves for further action. Ideally we would be seeking Future Vision funding, which will require final documentation by March next year.

**Conclusion**

IT was a most worthwhile visit, and confirmed our hopes that we have excellent partners in the project, which will deliver our objective within budget.

It was a privilege to be able to represent the Club, and it proved to be a wonderful example of how the quality of life of people around the world can be enriched by Rotarians working in conjunction with local communities.

Garry Fowler

28 September 2011