

RAWCS Rover Nov 2023



Absolute Poverty Edition

The Rover aims to support RAWCS project teams to form, learn, grow, share, collaborate, and succeed!

Rotarians are winning some huge progress for humanity: defeating polio, malaria and absolute poverty.

Of the 9 billion people on our planet today, fewer than one billion live in absolute poverty. There are 10 of us to help each one of them. We can do it!

The Eastern Region General meeting will be next Sunday 12th November commencing at 9am. The zoom link is [HERE](#).

We hope to see you there!

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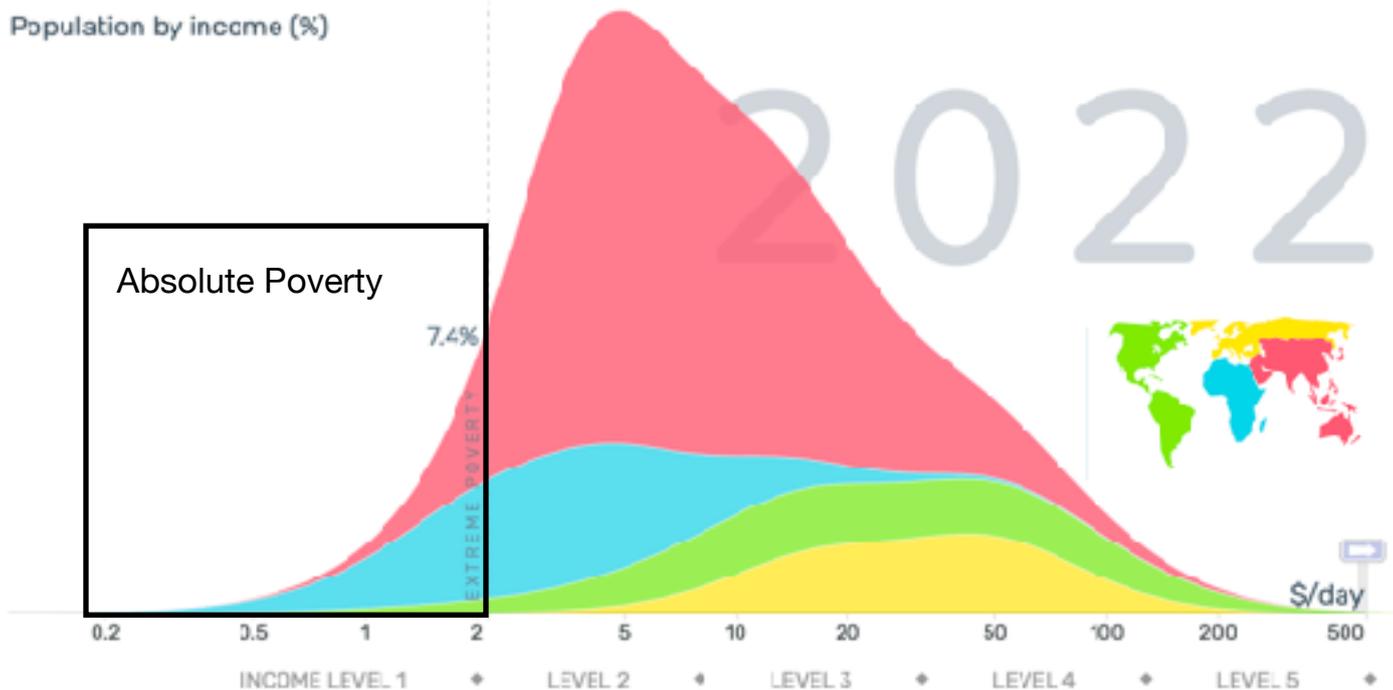
Banishing Absolute Poverty

It's a joy to be part of a winning team, even more so when the things we are defeating are an appalling waste of human life and potential.

Whilst relative poverty will probably always exist, unless some global political regime abolishes inequality, absolute poverty is the unreliable supply of the basics that sustain human life. We have the power to eliminate it, and are doing so.



The World Bank defines Absolute Poverty as less than US\$2.15 per day. The measure has some limitations because in some places, it is possible to live “off the land” to some extent, without the exchange of cash. Still, it is useful for giving us something to count and to monitor. Huge inflation in the price of grains due to the war, and other factors, have contributed to the revision of the limit from \$1.90.



The graph above shows how most of the world has now emerged from extreme or absolute poverty. Watch it in action [HERE](#), it's fascinating!

We can see how Australia, Korea and Japan inhabit the thin pink tail to the right, and that most of the poverty-stricken tail to the left is in Africa (blue) and Asia.

RAWCS projects are directly and efficiently addressing that poverty, finding sustainable pathways to a decent standard of living for all.

The Law of Diminishing Returns

All who would do good in the world face decisions about what good to do.
No-one can do everything!

One way to maximise our impact is to consider that scarcity and deprivation add value to just about everything. A glass of water is much more valuable than usual when you are dying of thirst. Subsequent glasses are less valuable until a point is reached where another glass would have negative value - even causing harm.

Money can buy a lot of different things, so most of us rarely get to the point where more seems unattractive, but even money is less transformative, the more the recipient already has.

Your gifts mean most to those who have the least.



Aimee cries with joy because \$300 will allow her 4 children to go to school 6 days a week for a whole year. This gift changes everything for them.

The ER Co-ordinator's Report



In the recently published RAWCS Annual Report for 2022-23 it is pleasing to observe that Eastern Region continues to punch significantly above its weight.

RAWCS Projects - Eastern Region had 171 of the 408 registered projects representing 42% of the total RAWCS projects. The figures were similar for each of the funds. Out of the total of 316 Overseas Aids projects 136 (43%) were Eastern Region projects. For Rotary Australia Benevolent Society (RABS) projects there were 20 (36%) out of 55 projects and for Rotary Australia Compassionate Grant (RACG) projects there were 15 (45%) out of 33 projects. This year RAWCS has 445 Projects of which 175 (39%) are from Eastern Region.

RAWCS Volunteer Teams - The percentages were similar for volunteer teams with a total of 51 teams comprising 267 volunteers working in 16 countries undertaking \$1.4 million worth of work in 2022-23. This year 18 Teams have travelled to date involving 72 volunteers. Five more teams will travel before February. Eastern Region Rotarians can be very proud of our continued contribution to overseas development.

RABS Projects

Eastern Region has also made significant contribution to various disasters through the Rotary Australia Benevolent Society (RABS) fund.

1. The Flood Relief for Central West and Southern NSW communities' RABS project distributed \$161,000 donated funds to people affected by the floods in Central West & Southern NSW communities.
2. The Hunter Valley Bus Tragedy RABS project provided benevolent relief and support to survivors, victims, and their immediate families from the events of the fatal bus accident near Greta in the Hunter Valley. The Rotary Club of Singleton Sunrise with the NSW State Government raised over \$1.1 million.
3. The Rotary Club of Sydney Cove established a RABS project to support Ukrainians. The project is a partnership with the Rotary Club Northern Yorke Peninsular and the Rotary Club of Karrinyup and with Australian Federation of Ukrainian Organisations (AFUO), Caritas Ukraine, Rotary Club of Kyiv International, Rotary Club Kyiv Capital, NGO "New Dawn" and Rotary District 2232 (Odesa). They have distributed over \$7,6 million assisting displaced persons, providing medical equipment, and humanitarian aid.

Partnerships

During 2022-23 the commitment RAWCS has to maximizing the impact of Rotary projects has led to significant partnerships being established. We worked closely with several National Government agencies to engage the Rotary network in drought relief projects totalling \$14M and helping 16,450 families across Australia.

Regarding international projects RAWCS entered into a partnership with DFAT's Australian Volunteers Program to support long term volunteers with overseas postings. and also entered into a partnership with the Global Fund to Fight Aids Tuberculosis, and Malaria which further continues the focus on elimination of malaria in the Asian and Pacific neighbours through Rotarians Against Malaria (RAM).

Partnerships with other Rotary entities are also providing greater scope to projects and include the Rotary Foundation Australia, RYLA Oceania, and Rotary New Zealand World Community Service.

RAWCS & RYLA Oceania Elevate Partnership is a partnership with the community of RYLA Alumni across Australia, New Zealand, and the South Pacific Islands. It is an advanced leadership program for RYLA alumni who seek to take their leadership potential to the next level. Over 12 months, the program builds upon the experience of a district RYLA program by advancing skills and embedding systems that will help participants achieve their personal and professional goals. At the beginning of 2023 the RYLA Oceania Elevate program began a partnership with RAWCS involving six RAWCS / Rotary projects. The participants complete elevator pitches, project plans, risk registers and a communication plan.

Of the six projects chosen for the pilot with RYLA Oceania Elevate Partnership half are Eastern Region projects.

The six RAWCS projects are:

- Housing for Homeless people in the Blue Mountains (RACG) - D9685
- Sepik Dental Clinic - Korogu Village, Papua New Guinea (RAOAF) - D9685
- Shelterbags for the Homeless (RACG) - D9685
- FORaMEAL (RABS) - D9800
- Kyebe Maternity Clinic, Uganda (RAOAF) - D9800
- Lift Every Malagasy Up Rotary (Relief for the People of Madagascar 2022) (RAOAF) - D9790

Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) for RAWCS Overseas Aid Projects

RAWCS is responsible for the Rotary Australia Overseas Aid Fund (RAOAF) in ensuring that all projects comply with the legal obligations & requirements under the Australian Charities and Not for Profit Commission (ACNC), Australian Tax Office and Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade rules and regulations.

As part of this compliance, RAWCS is expected as part of the ACNC External Conduct Standards to have an agreement in place, particularly for projects that are implemented through non-Rotary overseas organisations and / or overseas Rotary Clubs or Districts.

This agreement for RAWCS is to have a standard Memorandum of Understanding (MOU).

The RAWCS Executive have directed that it is now mandatory for all RAOAF Projects to have a MOU attached to the project. Project Managers are requested to submit the MOUs by 31st December 2023.

If project managers have good reasons because it is not possible to submit by that date, they will need to seek an extension from National Manager - Projects & Volunteer, Merv Williams. If MOUs are not received, payments will be halted to the relevant project until an MOU is in place.

The ER Co-ordinator's Overview

Funds Transfer Request Form

This form has been updated, please discard the previous form. The new form is available on the RAWCS website on the Documents page under Donations & Transfer of Funds, click [here](#).

Please make sure that it is completed in full including the Project Number and Date at the top and the Brief Description of what the funds/payment is to be used for.

This description must be in line with your project criteria and you must provide full details of how the funds are going to be expended, also including any invoices/quotations or relevant attachments to your payment documentation.

Unless the form is completed in full, all boxes ticked, signed and dated at the bottom, your payment may be delayed in getting processed until this has been rectified.

Pauline Lane is now the RAWCS Payments Contact, she is taking over responsibility from Belinda Griffen for remitting all Overseas and Domestic Payments.

All RAWCS Funds Transfer Request Forms, duly completed and signed plus any attachments, should be emailed to Pauline, pauline.lane@rawcs.org.au. Please also copy Belinda on these requests.

Belinda's role has changed to Operations Manager with responsibility for project orientated duties.

Applications for RACG

The RAWCS National Manager for Projects & Volunteers, Merv Williams has advised that applications for Rotary Australia Compassionate Grant (RACG) Projects are open.

The aim of the RACG Program is to help disadvantaged members of the Australian community. RACG Projects must provide specific, direct relief to people in need and not simply be a general funding donation to an organisation even though that organisation may provide assistance to people in need.

The RACG application and information documentation are available on the RAWCS website, click [here](#).

I would like to express my appreciation to everyone for their ongoing contribution through their various RAWCS projects.

Brian Goldstraw
RAWCS Eastern Region Coordinator
November 2023

The SchoolKit Story

SchoolKit is a brand new RAWCS project designed to link Australian school children with peers in DR Congo - one of the poorest countries on Earth.

In 2012 I built a website for a small local charity in Goma DRC. I was asked because I speak Esperanto, and they do too. Goma is a large town, or small city, tucked between the Nyragongo Volcano, beautiful Lake Kivu and the Rwandan border, right in the middle of Africa. The charity was seeking sponsorship of orphans and very poor children who could not otherwise go to school. There was and is no free education in Goma.

In 2018 I gave a talk about the charity and was invited to join Rotary. We heard about RAWCS and the Pink Ribbon Foundation grant for best new project, and rushed to register with RAWCS. We called the project "Mama Wimbi Buntings for Education and Independence".

Mama Wimbi means "Mother Wave", because empowering the mothers of our supported children to sew for a living would have ripple effects that would benefit many other members of the community.

The women learned to sew buntings as it was a good beginner project, and I sold them in Australia. Sewing a product that relied on me to sell it wasn't ideal for independence, so the team used their access to machines and a bright workspace to upskill themselves and each other.

With the help of my club, they bought fabric for school uniforms and made and sold them. They were able to double the value of the fabric, and the income partially paid the school fees. This would have been an excellent self-sufficiency project except that the culture of Goma is that the market for uniforms exists mid-August to mid-September only.

While we were wondering what we could do about that, I met Luke Simon, the founder of School-in-a-Bag in the UK. His charity distributes red school backpacks full of school supplies, all around the world. On 2 occasions we distributed 100 bags for SIAB. It was beautiful! Children who had never received assistance of any kind from anyone but their struggling parents, often singular, were so very excited and delighted to receive their bags.



The SchoolKit Story

Schoolbag distribution did not make any income for our team, as the contents and bags cost us the same to buy as was provided by SIAB. We donated the labor of shopping, packing and distribution. The bags we bought came from Uganda, but may have actually been imported from China, knowing what we now know about local availability of components.

It occurred to us that our team could make schoolbags for free distribution by SIAB, all year round. The bags would be already in the centre of the poorest part of the poorest continent and would provide work in a place where paid work is extremely scarce.



We developed a proposal called “Heart of Africa”, which asked SIAB for a regular contract for 2500 bags a year, and SewAid for industrial machines, training and continued use of the workshop. I was so nervous making the proposal, because giving 8 families a constant livelihood that would keep them housed and fed and educated was such a big thing.

Luke agreed, and we were over the moon! He was very busy with his music festival, but he was on board and would soon get onto it.

We went ahead with sourcing equipment and materials that were not available locally. Shopping on Alibaba, in China, was an experience! So many suppliers and so many variations and minimum orders and all the rest.

Simon Castley of SewAid and the Rotary Club of Kowloon Golden Mile let us send the goods to his warehouse to be packaged and sent to Africa. This turned out to be a much bigger undertaking than I realised at the time and we're very grateful for his help.

Transport cost twice what purchase did, but was faster than I expected. We learned never to send screenprinting ink again! Aargh!

We organised the team and set in place processes to make sure that the work was fairly shared.

While we were waiting, we thought about the SIAB model. I loved the UK school involvement: children helping children. The supervisor of my Masters research is a leader in research into the importance of giving as a habit for the giver, in terms of mental and physical health and general happiness, and I was keen to promote that in Australian schools.

On the other hand, the SIAB process for helping UK children and corporate donors to feel involved in the giving is to ship all of the bags and contents to the giving group, who pack the bags and then ship them to the recipients. This has resulted in sending shipments from China to England to Botswana, which is just not economically, or environmentally, sound. It would not work at all for us: imagine making bags in Congo, sending them to Australia for filling and then back to Congo!

So we thought of an alternative, a small addition to the bag that could be made in Australia. SIAB bags contain blank books and maths and writing implements, but nothing to read. The poor children of Goma do not own books or have access to libraries or books in their classrooms. There are no newspapers or magazines. Printed pictures are so rare that a calendar picture stays on a wall for years.

There is a lovely site called Global Storybooks, which offers stories set in various cultures and which can change languages at the touch of a button. Poor kids in Goma don't have access to the internet to enjoy those stories but I got permission to use two stories in French and two in Swahili, to use as a kind of personalised "gift card" for Australian children to give to their Congolese peers.

At first I thought the books would be posted by snail mail, but that would be very unreliable so I modified the books to fit a format that allows for the book to fold flat for scanning and printing on one A4 sheet, then be folded back into a book with turning pages at the other end.

The cover and last page of the story are blank for the Aussie kids to illustrate and sign. When the Congolese child holds up the book for a photo, the giver will recognise the cover and know that their gift has been received.

So we were doing all that and waiting for SIAB to finally respond, and they didn't. With retrospect, an MOU would have been helpful, but it seemed rude to ask at the time.

So, eventually we rejigged the concept to not rely on SIAB, but to leave the door open, should Luke ever reappear. We decided that we loved the idea of helping the poorest while also maintaining the momentum of our sustainable development initiative. We would put uniforms in the bags instead of school supplies, and call them SchoolKits.

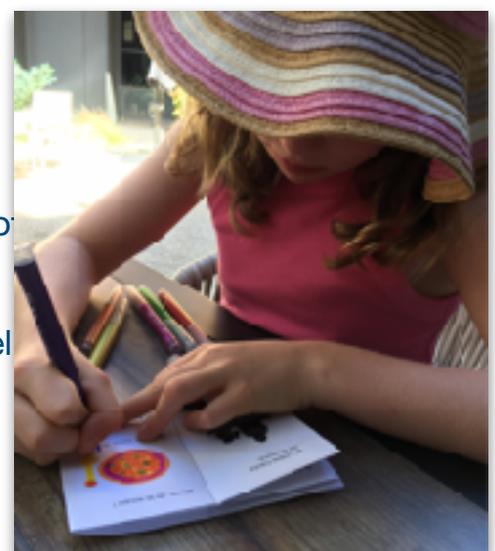
We made a website, a donation page, teacher's guide, minibook download, and connected them all to each other.

I've shared these with some teachers for feedback, and we did some small distributions to get photos for promotion. The team are easily able to make the 100 SchoolKits a month that our business plan proposed. They would prefer to make 200 a month, to be able to cover all of their rent and other expenses.

Now the challenge is to get the word out to schools, scouts, and clubs and maybe ask school suppliers to include advertising with their catalogues. It would not conflict with their profits as the charitable giving would not be coming from the supplies budget.

Well, that's where we're up to, a part where all sorts of help would be so very welcome!

Penny Vos, E-Club of Greater Sydney
<https://www.bonvolo.net/schoolkit>



Malaria - Another Good Fight Continues

The WHO Global technical strategy for malaria 2016–2030, updated in 2021, guides and supports regional and country programmes as they work towards malaria control and elimination.

The strategy sets ambitious but achievable global targets, including:

- reducing malaria case incidence by at least 90% by 2030
- reducing malaria mortality rates by at least 90% by 2030
- eliminating malaria in at least 35 countries by 2030
- preventing a resurgence of malaria in all countries that are malaria-free.

Rotarians Against Malaria (RAM) is a RAWCS Program which supports projects that aim to control and ultimately eliminate malaria. We work with government health programs in our partner countries, and follow the recommended WHO guidelines on the best strategies for control and elimination.

Most of the projects RAM supports are in the area of vector control i.e. reducing the mosquito population and the opportunity for mosquitos to bite humans and thus spread the malaria parasite.

The main RAM expenditures are for the provision and distribution of Long Lasting Insecticide-treated Nets (LLINs); Indoor Residual Spraying (IRS); and environmental improvements such as through the Healthy Villages project. RAM also trains community health volunteers to participate in mass LLINs distribution and malaria education.



Stay in Touch

Got a Question or Suggestion?

You can find the right person to ask here:

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Thanks!

To readers for bearing with your editor sharing a story this quarter.

We didn't have other proposals and I'm too engrossed in the process to think of much else!