



Strategic Partnership and learning review Macro level analysis

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Partnership Review Headlines

- The H2O Collaboration (Alliance) has significant potential to take advantage of Rotarians vast reach and influence at the local level combined with the wide policy influence and operational competence of USAID. The continuity on the Steering Committee and at staff level has been hugely helpful in creating understanding between partners.
- Collectively water, sanitation and hygiene (**WASH**) are seen as a **key focus area for both organizations and are embedded in their current strategies**. For Rotary the **Future Vision** plan for the organization and projects in these areas are a **huge rallying point** for Rotarians around the world.
- The high level of ambition of the Alliance **requires a more integrated, systemic approach**. For Rotary, this requires integrating the Rotarians traditionally small, bottom-up, Rotarian-led, volunteer-based initiatives into a more comprehensive and sustainable approach.
- Partners see the Alliance partnership as not necessarily the most appropriate space for “innovation and experimentation” but rather for **larger scale investments with some standardized approaches**.
- The relatively flexible and open partnership with USAID has been a **useful testing ground** for Rotary to **get up to speed in a few procedural and process areas** that ultimately other new strategic and development partners will be expecting. The challenge for Rotary is to create a parallel set of systems for larger scale projects rather than trying to tweak processes and procedures currently used for the plethora of small grants and projects in which the RI/F are involved. Efforts should be made to link the range of different tools and processes that RI/F are developing with the Sustainability Check.
- A key challenge to date has been that the pilot projects themselves have **not truly been shaped around the complementarities of the two institutions**. In the future, **context analysis and resource mapping should be conducted first before any true discussions of finance** and transactions enter into the mix. This will also help overcome the significant risk posed at the project level by the different development philosophies and approaches of USAID and RI/F (framed around professional development workers vis-à-vis voluntarism). It should also help address the cases where funding gets out of step between partners, where perceptions of partner funding effectiveness are less positive, and where more systemic programming would have the greatest impact.
- **Documenting the learning will be critical as part of an induction process both for new projects but also for new Steering Committee members and new staff** that might come in to support the alliance. For Rotary, given the emphasis in the organization around storytelling as a mechanism for getting messages out to Rotarians, it could be hugely influential to find ways to shift the narrative through various outreach and speaker programs to focus more on the sustainability of projects and programs.

1 Alliance Overview

Rotary International and USAID began discussions in 2004 about opportunities for a potential strategic partnership in areas of mutual interest. Concept papers were shared and refined to further define the relationship. A formal Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was signed in April 2007 between the two organizations agreeing to engage in joint activities in a broad range of development sectors. Specifically for the area of water supply and sanitation, a Steering Committee with participation from both Rotary and USAID was formed in June 2008 and a Project Manager was hired by Rotary in August 2008 to move forward on specific activities in this sector.

The Alliance was formally launched 18 March 2009 in Istanbul, Turkey in conjunction with the Fifth World Water Forum. In addition to the formal launch, The Rotarian and Rotary World featured articles about the Alliance in their April 2009 issues, a web launch took place on rotary.org, and a press release was distributed to specific media outlets. Currently, the Project Manager and members of the Steering Committee are working to promote the Alliance and explain how to apply for Alliance-related grants to Rotary clubs and districts around the world through presentations, informational materials, and training.

In essence, the partnership applies a matching fund approach with the expectation that each side will dedicate US\$1 million to projects that are jointly developed. After some deliberation and a careful review of where there might be best fit between the two organizations in specific developing countries, Ghana, Dominican Republic and the Philippines were chosen in this pilot phase as the most logical. From the RI/F side, Rotarians may apply for grants in amounts from US\$100,000 to \$500,000 to carry out water, sanitation, and hygiene projects in any of the three countries. Health, Hunger and Humanity Grants (3-H) will support Rotary club and district involvement with these projects. Funding generally has not been made available from Washington for these activities, but rather USAID matching funding is provided through contributions from USAID Mission budgets. In this way, the expectation is that the funding will most closely be aligned with USAID Mission objectives in country.

“We intend these projects to be models for future projects with strategic partners and in this way to enhance our contribution to world understanding, goodwill, and peace.”

- Past RI President William B. Boyd, chair of the International H2O Collaboration Steering Committee

2 Background to this document

Three years after the formal launch of the Alliance, Rotary International / Foundation (RI/F) and USAID decided to carry out a strategic assessment of the program’s effectiveness in delivering sustainable services and the partnership itself. Recognizing that the overarching external and internal organizational contexts in which the Alliance is working have evolved in recent years and that the pilot phase of the original partnership projects has largely passed, both partners agreed that it made sense to revisit the approach to programming, the positioning of the partnership, and thereby the strategic possibilities and scope for the future of the Alliance. Described by both partners as “having significant potential”, this pioneering partnership seeks to build on project and partnership strengths and also identify opportunities to strengthen the reach and contribution of the alliance more generally. As part of this

process, the Alliance partners asked BPD¹ to conduct partnership reviews of the three country programs (in Dominican Republic, Ghana and the Philippines) to look specifically at the effectiveness of project processes and impacts.

Partnership reviews at the country level accompanied an assessment of the sustainability of the projects and programs based on a Sustainability Tool developed by Aguaconsult with some contribution from BPD. Efforts were made to relate the findings from the application of the Sustainability Tool to understand how sustainability aspects were affected by the relationships between the different stakeholders. This is an area that requires continued emphasis beyond this initial application through these Sustainability Check and Partnership Review exercises.

This document presents the findings and analysis from a series of interviews with key stakeholders primarily from RI/F and USAID as well as a review of relevant (largely governance-related) documentation of the Alliance. It also incorporates the discussions held in Evanston on 2-3 July 2012 where initial findings were put forward to the Steering Committee.

In terms of areas covered, over a three-four month period, BPD sought to understand three primary aspects of the overarching Alliance partnership as follows:

1. How does the Alliance align internally with the emerging priorities of USAID and RI/F?
2. What are the conversation stoppers – those areas where perceptions of each partner could cause problems for the alliance?
3. Are the mechanics of the partnership fit for purpose?

The following sections of this report address each of these areas in turn with insights woven in from the partnership analysis conducted at country level. (These are provided in full as annexes to this report.) The purpose of the report is not to delve too deeply into the mechanics of the partnership but rather to highlight the overarching findings where there is potential to build on current structures and opportunities. Primary findings are noted in italics throughout the document for easier reading.

Please note that the authors of this document assume that the reader is somewhat familiar with the Alliance. A more generic publication for a wider audience should be developed at a later stage. It should also be noted that the findings and analysis in this paper dovetail with and help further explain both the content and process recommendations found at the end of the *Sustainability Check – Global Findings* document (submitted under separate cover).

3 Brief Explanation of the Methodology

For the most part, the analysis in this report is based on a series of confidential semi-structured interviews with senior USAID staff and Rotary International / Rotary Foundation trustees, volunteers and staff. The aim of these conversations was not only to understand how the partnership has been working but also to understand the respective institutional contexts that shape USAID and RI/F's involvement with the Alliance. BPD also used its own networks and understanding of the water and sanitation sector

¹ Active since 1998, *Building Partnerships for Development in Water and Sanitation* (BPD) promotes more effective and efficient relationships among public, private and civil society stakeholders for the delivery of water and sanitation services in poor communities. (Please see www.bpdws.org for more information about the organization.)

to help ground the responses in a wider context. To some degree, less formal conversations with a wider set of stakeholders sought to shed light on external perceptions of the Alliance. In fact, these conversations did not really provide much as, by design in this initial stage of the relationship, the USAID-RI/F partnership has been kept somewhat under the radar, resulting in seemingly little external awareness of the actual work of the Alliance.

BPD used a standard format for the internal interviews. BPD relied on the members of the Steering Committee and the Project Manager to identify the most appropriate individuals to be interviewed from the different organizations. Interviews were generally 60-75 minutes each.

Throughout the exercise, as requested by the partners, BPD has framed its approach less in a spirit of passing judgment on the partnership's achievements through a strict "evaluation" but rather in a more exploratory, forward-looking sense of what could improve the effectiveness and impact of the partnership. Again the goal has been to uncover and frame insights that will help to shape a strengthened second phase of the Alliance.

4 Findings

Overall the spirit of the Alliance is still very much framed around the pilot nature of the relationship and the projects. In some senses, the partners are still in a process of getting to know each other and how the other operates and takes decisions as well as determining what reassurances each requires from the other. A vast majority of the interviews referred to the *"huge potential" that lay in store for this partnership given the vast reach and influence of the Rotarians and the wide policy influence and operational competence of USAID.* The working relationship at the Steering Committee level is professional, respectful and informal, which has helped enormously in shaping the way the partnership takes decisions, adapts procedures and learns more generally. Admittedly the two organizations are vastly different in approach and structure, but there is a clear appreciation for what each has to offer and the synergies behind their individual mandates and missions.

As discussed in more detail below, *the greatest risk revolves around a disconnect between the respective understandings (more on the ground than at headquarters level) of how development happens and thereby how projects are structured and contextualized based on the operating approaches of the two organizations.* This tension primarily refers to, and in turn results in, questions around the balance between the use of volunteer Rotarians alongside the need for skilled development professionals. Other key risks (around managing perceptions and expectations and ensuring institutional buy-in within the partnership and to some extent the turnover and succession planning within the Steering Committee and staffing of the Alliance) all relate back to this difference in approach.

Project Learning: Volunteerism vis-à-vis contracting – the inherent tension (and sometimes resulting resentment) between USAID’s approach of contracting local implementing partners to manage their activities under the H2O umbrella and Rotary’s direct liaison with suppliers and volunteers requires extra attention and discussion amongst partners. Through greater discussion and coordination both sides may better understand the challenges this poses for the other partner as well as providing an opportunity to highlight key pros and cons.

4.1 How does H2O align internally with emerging priorities of USAID and RI/F?

While efforts have been made to refer to key documents of both USAID and RI/F and to the governing documents of the partnership, the analysis found in this section is largely based on candid interviews with key stakeholders in each partner organization. The discussions below are based on those internal factors that appear to have a direct and specific bearing on each organization’s relationship to the Alliance. In essence, the review sought to understand:

- How the Alliance contributes to each organization’s mandate and strategy
- How support for and commitment to the Alliance filters through each organization
- Whether there are legal, “regulatory” or other related institutional considerations that shape each partner’s contributions
- Whether there are any challenges particularly around the local/global dynamic of each organization that shape each partner’s engagement with the Alliance.

4.1.1 Internal Alignment within USAID

Both organizations are complicated and it is difficult to generalize about the “perspective” of either given their varying departments and professional competencies, their global and local positioning and mandate, and any differences in perspective that naturally emerge as an assessor interviews different individuals with different vantage points within an organization. Starting with USAID, a few key factors shape USAID’s relationship with RI/F. Admittedly the Alliance partnership is not the biggest match spend of USAID’s Global Development Alliance (GDA) portfolio. However *USAID representatives see the potential contribution of RI/F to the water and sanitation sector both in terms of leveraged funding but also in terms of influence and reach.* Through these contributions, RI/F can certainly help to expand USAID’s existing water and sanitation portfolio of projects. Although not formally launched yet, there is a sense that this partnership can help USAID to deliver on the US Government’s new strategy for enhancing access to water and sanitation in developing countries.

Interviewees from USAID noted a clear willingness to experiment with a different kind of dispersed partner that brings wide social capital and reach. Recognizing that RI/F is keen to play a role in and make a contribution to the water and sanitation sector, USAID staff have clearly seen an opportunity to influence and shape that contribution, seeking to help shift some of RI/F’s approach away from a smaller series of one-off infrastructure investments towards a wider reaching more influential body of work. With this in mind, while recognizing that the projects have been more of a pilot nature to date, USAID is clearly seeking a larger, more ambitious set of investment programs that bring (economies of) scale.

There is a sense that the H2O partnership may not necessarily be the most appropriate space for “innovation and experimentation” but rather for larger scale investments with some standardized approaches. There is a goal at least for larger scale projects not to have everyone recreating the wheel in the name of innovation but to create some standardized processes for design, implementation and monitoring. That said, however, there is an expectation that significant learning could be derived from whatever investments are made.

The challenge to date has been that the pilot projects themselves have not truly been shaped around the complementarities of the two institutions. As shown in the project analyses, in the Dominican Republic the “partners” on the ground were running parallel and largely separate programs; in Ghana, the project brought what each had to offer but this was not seen to have ramped up much influence beyond the specific project locations; and in the Philippines, the nature of the relatively small-scale projects did not lend themselves to a more macro use of what both organizations could bring to the table. There has been throughout the pilot phase an element of putting funding in to jointly match a set of similar activities rather than more clearly differentiating what each can and should be bringing to the table beyond the funding. As discussed in the debriefing meeting for this evaluation in Evanston in early July (2012), taking the financial contribution out of the equation initially would allow for a more robust analysis of what each can and should be bringing to the projects and the partnership. As noted at the debriefing meeting, “if we removed the funding from the equation at the initial discussion stages for projects, only then would the division of responsibilities be clear.”

Returning then to USAID’s expectations from the center, there is a clear understanding of the need for local people of influence to be involved if projects are to be high impact and sustainable. As noted by a Rotarian on the Steering Committee, while keen to be involved in the delivery of hardware and technical solutions, Rotarians do not always grasp that their greatest contribution is really their influence at the local and country levels. Senior representatives from Rotary recognized that *making appropriate and best use of this local influence is what partners are in fact seeking from Rotary, though how best to galvanize Rotarians in this way is challenging in many contexts.* It should be noted however that in many instances influential Rotarians are not really part of the target communities for projects but could also be perceived as outsiders with even more challenging power and status dynamics than expatriate staff of NGOs or donor organizations.

In terms of USAID’s own selection criteria, some Missions are seemingly more adept at marrying the interests of different partners with the wider development needs of project areas, as well as more versed in working in partnership. Some are perhaps more able to navigate through the politics of the local operating environment. There are also constraints on funding that generally make adding on to existing projects more attractive than forging new activities. Working with RI/F thereby creates opportunities but also involves transaction costs that Missions with less capacity would struggle with meeting. This type of work also requires a kind of ongoing non-hierarchical dialogue that USAID Missions are used to having with host government officials and to some degree with other donors but not necessarily with other kinds of institutions where the relationship is more contractual in nature.

Thus the key for USAID is to *ensure that Alliance projects and programs are located in Missions where there are conducive programs where additional funding and activities make sense not just from a programmatic point of view but also from the view of available capacity and willingness to engage.* There is also a need for Rotarians to understand that in some contexts, they might become the

institutional memory as USAID expatriate staff are likely to move on and Foreign National staff of USAID may not be suitably invested with responsibility in all cases.

With regard to funding, the bulk of USAID funding is channeled through and obligated by USAID in-country Missions. Very little of the money is actually programmed by staff in Washington. Thus while Washington can suggest opportunities and help support Missions in delivering on its objectives and strategy, ultimately it is the Missions that require the capacity and interest to make these kinds of partnerships work. According to interviewees within USAID, *identifying where the capacity, appropriate levels and types of funding, and strategies align at Mission level leaves few countries in which a partnership like the Alliance can practically be active.* According to the partnership reviews at the country level, although there were varying degrees of interest and participation, none of the three countries reveal a very active role taken on by USAID Mission staff. In part this is logical given the relative size of the budget allocations compared to other programs, that USAID often worked through proxies (sub-contractors or NGOs), or that Mission emphasis and objectives were shifting (as was clearly the case in the Dominican Republic).

4.1.2 Internal Alignment within RI/F²

The incentives for RI/F to be involved in the Alliance revolve largely around the institution's eagerness to make a significant and collective contribution to key development issues as has been done for polio eradication. Water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) are seen as a combined key focus area within the Future Vision plan for the organization and projects in these areas are a huge rallying point for Rotarians around the world. *At the moment, (apart from polio), water and sanitation is the biggest expenditure item for Rotary-supported projects across all areas* and WASRAG is one of the most active Rotarian action groups. As the Future Vision plan evolves, it is possible that other areas of focus within the six named in the Future Vision process will scale up or that some will combine like Maternal and Child Health and Disease Prevention and Treatment. For the moment, WASH is completely demand driven with clubs and districts determining the kinds of projects on which they wish to engage.

Senior Rotarians recognize that a partnership with USAID can help to strengthen projects and programs and RI/F's more strategic contribution as a development player. While leveraging funding is obviously important (or perhaps the importance of it is a given), this element did not factor heavily in the interviews with key RI/F interviewees. The bigger challenge mentioned is not that every \$1 from Rotary is matched by \$1 from USAID, but rather that every \$1 provided by USAID requires a \$1 match from Rotary *that needs to be found.* In some cases, finding this funding has proved easy while in other cases, finding the matching funding for Rotary has been more challenging (particularly for Ghana in this instance). As noted by participants in the debriefing meeting in Evanston, part of the challenge around finding the matching funding was due to the timing, when economic downturns were causing organizations like Rotary to tap into their reserves to support commitments to grants programs. Earnings on reserves also help to pay for administration and other support and thereby when reserves are down, RI/F's ability to support programs in this way is reduced.

² Please note that unless explicitly stated Rotary International and the Rotary Foundation are seen as one joint entity. While there are obviously key differences in how they relate to the H2O partnership, the evaluation did not go into too much detail to unpack these internal relationships.

While eager to work in partnership with USAID, indeed the concept of partnering for programming and implementation is quite new to RI/F. RI/F has a history of partnering for fundraising and even for raising awareness around an issue (like polio). A new unit was set up in the last eighteen months that focuses on strategic partnering which has a mandate to establish and support more implementation oriented partnerships. The team looking after these relationships has been busy determining appropriate guidance for Rotarian project leads and assessment frameworks that can help Rotary understand the effectiveness and impact of these relationships. Part of the task of this pilot phase of activities through the Alliance has been to help RI/F determine its targets and goals for the WASH sector in support of the Future Vision planning. The partnership has clearly provided significant learning for Rotary Steering Committee members about the needs of and possibilities to further and more systematically support the WASH sector. It is understood that the evaluation particularly around aspects of sustainability will usefully feed into this process and Steering Committee members need to find ways to get messages out to wider RI/F decision-makers. *Admittedly further thinking is required to best understand not only what Rotary's contribution could be but also the level of risk that Rotary is willing to undertake, particularly as it enters into more and more larger scale projects.*³

Beyond the challenges of partnering for programming and implementation for RI/F, this larger scale approach was a key issue mentioned in many of the interviews. By and large, RI/F grant activities have historically been in the \$30-50k range. *Operating at the Alliance scale whereby spend over a 12-24 month period is aimed more in the \$2 million range flies in the face of Rotary's DNA which revolves around small, bottom-up, Rotarian-led, volunteer-based initiatives.* *Small* refers to both scale and spend, based on what can have relatively immediate impact with minimal management requirements. *Bottom-up* refers to initiatives that are identified as meeting a clear and immediate need by members of the community. *Rotarian-led* suggests the interaction of specific Rotarians who are keen to make a contribution and feel an "emotional attachment" to the project and the beneficiary communities. *Volunteer-based* refers to initiatives that do not require further professional or technical support than that which volunteers can provide directly, though as noted below, framed around involved Rotarians' own availability. In essence, the scale and nature of the expected investments through the Alliance turn this entire equation on its head through relatively large-scale interventions that combine the needs of the community with wider community planning requiring some technical and management skills and with clear and determined time frames that are geared around project management cycles.

When discussing Rotary's relationship with external organizations, aspects of finance quickly rose to the fore. In essence there are a few elements that shape how Rotary would engage in any partnership around implementation. Firstly, money generally comes from Rotary Clubs who want a say in how these funds are spent. Again this relates to the sense of involvement, emotional attachment and service ethos that is in part why Rotarians join the organization in the first place. The result is a wide-ranging plethora of homegrown activities and grant-funded initiatives that are defined by Rotarians. Needless to say,

³ Again this is all in the context of an emphasis that has been building in the Alliance around the need to ensure that infrastructure investments supported by the alliance are sustainable. This has resulted in a growing recognition of the need to advocate to Rotarians that focusing on only capital expenditures to put in infrastructure are not sufficient in the long and medium term as processes will need to be funded to ensure that both management and finance are put in place to maintain these investments. Thus there are risks involved in water and sanitation investments that may be less present in other more traditional Rotary-supported activities (around education and scholarships or polio eradication programs, for example).

Rotary International welcomes these initiatives but also has a difficult time keeping track of them all. Keeping tabs on just those that receive grant funding (notably over 5,000 per year) proves largely “unworkable” for the staff in Evanston. While the management of these small grants is obviously not the subject of this review, the issue here is that *RI/F processes and procedures currently in place are more geared towards dealing with these smaller activities rather than the larger scale aspirations of the Alliance*. Even M&E systems, only now being developed in earnest, are not yet geared to larger activities and there is no clear sense of how best to encourage such a wide range of small projects to add up to a more sustained contribution to sustainable development challenges.

A second aspect of financing relates to Rotary’s governance structure that sees Trustees and the President rotating on a yearly basis. While overarching and long-term commitments are made to various development and poverty-oriented themes, to avoid committing subsequent governing bodies to future funding obligations, *the RI/F currently operates on a single-year budgeting cycle, which, needless to say, is less conducive to larger projects that are unlikely to be completed in a 12-month period*.

A key question that apparently has been debated for some time within the Foundation is how best to create two parallel universes. This would obviously allow the “small is beautiful” or “bread and butter” activities to continue but separate out the processes and procedures, criteria for selection, and levels of support required of big projects (above a certain threshold of say \$100,000-150,000). Otherwise the default mechanism is to treat the larger projects in the same way as the smaller ones, which does not allow for sufficient attention to design, project management and support, and monitoring and evaluation.

According to Rotary interviewees, whereby Districts were once given free rein over the projects in which they were involved (either as funders or implementers), there is a growing expectation that greater “stewardship” of these initiatives will ensure that they are cost effective, appropriately designed and that they call on the focused skills and expertise available through Rotarians. (As noted above, for the purposes of this document, Rotary International and the Rotary Foundation have largely been grouped together. However, discussions with various Rotary interviewees suggest that the approach of the two institutions towards development projects and programs has not been identical with the Foundation seemingly well ahead in its emphasis on sustainability and longer term commitments.) Various interviewees suggested that *as Rotary begins to partner more strategically around implementation with more sophisticated partners (the Gates Foundation and others were mentioned directly), these partners will be looking for Rotary’s local reach but also emphasis on ensuring that investments are soundly designed and delivered*. Towards this end, *the relatively flexible and open partnership with USAID has been a useful testing ground for Rotary to get up to speed in a few procedural and process areas that ultimately these new strategic partners will be expecting*. *Ensuring that Rotary has sufficient staff to manage these more complex funding arrangements, M&E requirements, and partner and stakeholder relations will be critical*.

Finally with regard to the RI/F itself, it is clear that there is a rich history and tradition of, and role for, storytelling in how the organization works. Rotarians meet very frequently and speakers are invited from within (and outside) the organization to speak about the good works they are doing. This is a powerful part of the Rotarian culture and good speakers are in high demand. This appears to be a clear way of getting information into the wider organization by encouraging identified speakers to engage with wider sustainability issues. As noted in the debriefing meeting, Trustees might also benefit from a

greater understanding of sustainability in relation to Rotary’s work. *The Sustainability Check and other emerging M&E tools can be used to help frame or inform these discussions with Trustees grounded in the real challenges and complexities of development work, though with obvious efforts made to maintain the more “feel good” elements of the work that continues to drive and motivate individual Rotarian contributions.*

- *Recommendation: Continue to use the Future Vision process but supplemented with the findings from the Sustainability Check to galvanize a conversation within RI/F about the needs of larger projects vis-à-vis the systems that are currently in place for smaller initiatives.*
- *Recommendation: Highlight in Rotary publications those districts that are embracing these wider, long-term approaches and concepts. Find other ways, like through storytelling and the speaker roles at Rotary meetings, to shift the narrative about what makes for a good project. This could also be supported through meetings that bring USAID (and other strategic partners) together with Rotary Foundation Trustees to debate and discuss approaches to and issues around sustainability.*
- *Recommendation: To ensure some kind of balance between USAID and RI/F in fulfilling the Steering Committee role around strategic programmatic decision-making and given the role of Trustees in ensuring buy-in from but also to educating the governing bodies in RI/F, identifying Trustees or senior representatives familiar with development issues and approaches to sit on the Steering Committee seems like a logical approach.*
- *Recommendation: Ensure that Rotary has sufficient and sufficiently experienced staff to manage these more complex funding arrangements, their M&E requirements, relations with partners and other stakeholders, and the need to carefully manage upwards within RI/F again to diplomatically educate but also to reassure Trustees about expenditure.*
- *Recommendation: RI/F is in the process of developing a range of tools and frameworks around its development work, including a relatively new emphasis on M&E. Efforts should continue to be made to link these (and perhaps the institutions supporting RI/F) with the Sustainability Check both in terms of methodology and content.*

4.2 What are the conversation stoppers – areas where partner perceptions could cause problems for the Alliance?

The interviews with a wide range of individuals from USAID and RI/F revealed a number of key areas where there appears to be a disconnect between wider perceptions of the two organizations. Many of these were discussed during the debriefing meeting in Evanston in early July. These are raised here as they potentially distort the expectations that different partners bring to the Alliance table or they represent challenges in perspectives that will need to be managed by the partnership and/or the partner representatives.

Perhaps the most challenging issue that came up repeatedly was around the **Rotarian culture of voluntarism** referred to earlier in this report. There appears to be an ongoing conversation within the organization about how best to capitalize on, or some would suggest harness, the in-kind contributions that Rotarians make to a wide range of development initiatives. Rotarians bring an undisputed (and perhaps unparalleled) amount of good will and huge generosity to programs all over the world. In many instances like in the Alliance project in Ghana, they also bring significant expertise. The challenge noted

by many interviewees from both USAID and RI/F and also highlighted in the Sustainability Check analysis is that water and sanitation proves to be less straightforward than other sectors (like polio for example, an area in which RI/F has had enormous success). Putting in water and sanitation infrastructure is in some ways the easy part. Ensuring that this infrastructure provides sustainable services to all segments of society proves more difficult.

The perception is that for many Rotarians an appropriate contribution stops with the infrastructure investment and construction. This can seemingly be done through relatively targeted, in some cases relatively small, and generally localized projects that need not be connected to wider issues of community development, other infrastructure, community power dynamics or other factors. Increasingly the water and sanitation sectors are engaged in a debate about how best to ensure sustainable services at scale. The growing consensus is that just putting in the infrastructure is not sufficient. The Sustainability Check results clearly highlight the weaknesses in various projects in financial, institutional and management factors.

So the Alliance finds itself wanting to tap into the huge contribution that Rotarians can make but also to ensure that projects need not be repeated after a few years if they had been insufficiently planned and carried out. Sponsoring Clubs and Districts understandably like to support water and sanitation projects as they understand the difference that these investments can make in people's lives. Many of the findings of the Sustainability Check revolve around the necessary links to be made between hardware (the actual infrastructure) and software (the analysis and soft skills that ensure proper management, equitable access, gender and other social considerations, and other factors that can scupper an otherwise well-intentioned project). In some cases, as noted in the various country reports and the macro document on sustainability, infrastructure like boreholes were put in well before any proper engagement with the community had begun around how to manage the infrastructure and what to do if something goes wrong. This resulted in confusion around the ownership of and responsibility for the longer-term maintenance of facilities constructed under the projects.

Rotarians are *"generally can-do individuals who like to get directly involved in projects, getting their hands dirty"*. Thus the findings from the Sustainability Check suggest that there is work to be done to educate Rotarians around how best to design water and sanitation projects and what contribution they are best placed to make. Referring back to the complexity of water and sanitation, there is a view that seems pervasive amongst Rotarians that development workers make issues needlessly complicated and that what is needed is simply more charity and voluntary initiatives. Indeed for many, there is the perception that development work has become an industry with its own vested interests and reputations to uphold. While this may very well be the case in some instances, it does not negate the decades of learning around why, how and when to engage communities in their own development (rather than just putting infrastructure in for them) as well as who, how and why various other interest groups will try to commandeer different development initiatives to their own advantage. In some places, given their level of influence in the community, getting these aspects right could be the bigger contribution that local Rotarians certainly can make (assuming that RI/F and Rotarians more generally would openly endorse this approach). On the flip side, the NGOs and development professionals in some cases have the impression that the Rotarian approach leaves too much to chance.

So here the Alliance confronts different aspects that need to be analyzed further as we can imagine they could very easily play out differently in different contexts.

- Engaging communities more effectively and prohibiting rent-seeking behavior can both have political angles to them. Rotary is by its own design apolitical and thus there will be obvious tension around when Rotarians will want to use their influence and when they will not. It has been noted that in many instances, given the upheaval that political cycles make to project interventions, Rotarians can also provide an apolitical continuity in support to communities.
- In many instances, local Rotarians could very well be the elite in a society and come into poor communities bringing both positive and negative influences. On the negative side, elites can create new patron-client relationships that would not necessarily be endorsed by RI/F. On the positive side, Rotarians have the connections to affect change by taking up causes and making these causes seem like “the right thing to do”.
- Again presumably Rotarians are not always very keen to use their influence in this way, would rather stick to the tangible hardware investments, but may also resent NGOs or other higher paid professionals intervening in *their* projects.
- A further aspect that arose in numerous conversations revolved around whether voluntarism was the right approach for the larger kinds of projects that the Alliance seeks to support. For larger infrastructure investments, there are various project management elements that need to be addressed. Voluntarism is based on the availability and good will of the volunteer. Thus time scales for projects can easily slip if the Rotarians are not physically available to support the project. Related to this, because he or she is engaging in the project on a volunteer basis, it is very difficult to hold Rotarians to account. This could mean that attention to detail slips or there could be cases where there is no agreed culpability if something goes wrong with the project. Where the Rotarian is a member of the beneficiary community and present more often than not, this could be less of a problem. Again what was found in the Sustainability Check work, the Rotarians involved were not necessarily part of the beneficiary communities but came from adjacent communities or communities further afield.

So considering the points above, the questions remain as to whether Rotarians are bringing the right skills to the table for the task at hand in a particular project, whether they would be comfortable taking on more of the facilitating and software roles required to ensure that projects are sustainable, and what awareness raising would be required to understand and respond to both of these aspects more clearly. Proper problem and context mapping should help bring out the softer issues in a particular context. A decision would then need to be taken as to whether given the amount of time involved and the nature of the skills required, Rotary would contract a qualified person (which could presumably be a Rotarian if the terms were transparent) or how they would work with local NGOs and/or contracted parties to deliver the project.

This brings us to the second primary issue raised by interviewees that revolves around **costings and contributions**. Generally speaking the mechanics of the Alliance have been designed in such a way that the matching funding that RI/F and USAID put forward do not ever come into contact with each other. In some places, most notably in the Dominican Republic, this has clearly resulted in parallel projects and activities that have not been integrated in any way – these efforts perhaps need to be recognized as not really operating through a partnership modality. It has been stated that keeping the funding separate

understandably allows partners to see how their financial contribution has been used and avoids complications of applying two different sets of (financial) reporting standards. The down side of this approach is that separate strands easily and quickly get out of step with each other (as shown by the challenge of activity sequencing in Ghana), and that without sufficient information, differences of opinion can easily emerge as to whether one's partner's funding is value for money and being used to best advantage and effect (as perhaps most clearly shown in the Philippines). It is also harder to create systemic approaches and hold a systemic vision if partners, funding and activities all become too compartmentalized. Again the Dominican Republic experience is probably the most clear cut example of this although elements of this same problem can also be seen in Ghana and The Philippines.

This last point about perceptions of value for money returns us to various aspects related to the voluntarism discussion above. There is an obvious difference in how funds are spent between the two organizations. Rotary relies on much in-kind support from Rotarians that is not accounted for. Whether these contributions are appropriately timed, provide the right skillsets, and are appropriate to ensure sustainability has already been touched upon above. Assuming that they meet all of these requirements, then the contributions from Rotary need to be understood in a different way and the partnership negotiated on the ground differently as well.

What normally happens in partnerships of this kind is that the money is put on the table and the funding then dictates the way the partnership project is designed. The conversation then is framed around what the donor or "investor" can get for his/her money. Procedures around the procurement, spend and reporting on finances then understandably predominate the discussions. In-kind contributions slowly fade from these discussions. In essence, tensions have arisen across all three projects (though perhaps least of all in Ghana) around the funded versus in-kind contributions but also around the not-for-profit and the for-profit dichotomy. *Resource mapping has been used by some partnerships to more clearly lay out all the skills (technical and non-technical) and "purchases" that are required to make the activity work most effectively.*

Thus, as noted in the *Sustainability Check – Global Findings* document, a key recommendation from not only project design and implementation but also from the view of ensuring a more effective relationship between partners is to *conduct the context analysis and resource mapping first before any true discussions of finance and transactions enter into the mix. This might ultimately help create greater understanding certainly at the project level of who is paying for what and how the pieces fit together to form a bigger whole.* Similarly it might also reveal where in-kind contributions (from both sides including also policy level work from USAID staff as part of national sector processes) are helping to develop, deliver and monitor the activities of the Alliance. It might also allow for a discussion around where a one-to-one match might be less fair on RI/F (given all the in-kind contributions) or where facilitation skills are needed either to help the partnership gel more effectively or to help frame the partnership for wider stakeholders.

The third area that implicitly more than explicitly came up in the interviews centered around the **learning function of the Alliance**. While it may have been less obvious at the project level that the approach was that of a pilot program, the design and intent at the macro level in these first few years was clearly to learn from both the effectiveness of the partnership but also the projects themselves. This review exercise that combined the partnership review with the sustainability assessment has without doubt been framed in the spirit of learning. The idea is that the partnership review will help to

strengthen the way the partners work together and the sustainability check will help to strengthen the initiatives delivered by the alliance.

To date, though, this emphasis on learning seems to have taken somewhat of a backseat to the day-to-day operations of the Alliance. This is in part due to insufficient staffing to manage and oversee the projects, let alone to take on any further project analysis, cross-sharing or other reflections. *Capturing the lessons learned around the projects and also the rationale for why certain decisions were taken at various levels will be important to help new members of the Steering Committee come on board and to engage peers and colleagues in the work of the alliance. It will also help to mitigate risks associated with non-functioning projects both in the sense of being able to make a case for “we are learning by doing” but also to use the learning to shape and drive new activities.* (Again the focus on storytelling and framing the narrative particularly for RI/F seems a useful way of thinking about how best and why to do this.)

A key question with regard to learning is how best to optimize the contribution that WASRAG and the role the Future Visioning process can play in terms of collecting experiences and learning but also in terms of then shaping Rotarians knowledge and understanding around what makes for successful projects. Significant investment has been made in the last year to create tools and processes to support the organization’s work. Admittedly it has not been readily apparent to the reviewers how all of these pieces fit together, what links they make to wider sector learning or even how learning will be managed within the organization. These aspects will be important should a further more strategic advocacy role be sought by the organization to ensure that the efforts of both the organization and the alliance are seen as credible.

4.3 Are the mechanics of the partnership fit for purpose? Governance and management

Like most partnerships at this scale, initially there is much good will at the beginning. Then as the partners decide how to actually work together, there are the inevitable “teething troubles” and hitches, before the partnership settles down to actually begin to develop some useful ways of working together. The Alliance is no different in this regard. It is unfortunate that the funding mechanism for USAID got caught up in the difficulties with AED as this seemed to slow the partnership down and created some ill feeling about the rate of progress and the bureaucracy involved. There also seemed to be a fair bit of internal discussions needed on the RI/F side about partnering with the US Government in this way. Should the partnership be entering in to a new phase, there appears to be significant momentum on both sides to move forward (assuming that the different institutional caveats and structures noted in the previous sections are accommodated). There is obvious commitment, interest and a sense of potential as reflected in the efforts to maintain the continuity of the representatives on the Steering Committee. However, given that resources have not yet been committed by either side, wider dissemination within each organization could also undermine these efforts if the spotlight is not managed carefully.

It is understood that within the Rotary context, this kind of continuity is extremely rare. A growing awareness within the organization around the Alliance may in fact prohibit this kind of continuity with

regard to representation on the Steering Committee unless a clear case can be made to ensure it. It is likely that this is a wider conversation for Rotary around how they engage in ever-expanding strategic partnerships where the partners will be looking for some reasonable form of continuity at this level. Given that a new president of Rotary International is named every year and there is rotation of Trustees as well, committee membership generally changes with this new leadership. Thus *there is a delicate balance to be struck between ensuring some kind of continuity for the sake of the partnership but also ensuring some kind of buy-in with new Rotary leadership*. While the staff has a definite role to play in ensuring this continuity, the dynamic between staff and leadership is apparently not very straightforward. According to interviewees, Trustees want to leave their mark, exert their expertise, and emphasize the voluntary ethos of the organization that runs counter to the need for a professional cadre of staff to manage programs. Staff thereby has to find diplomatic and subtle ways of exerting influence based on their own expertise and reading of a situation. Seemingly the more successful staff members are those who can influence through a “less prescriptive” approach. Similarly classifying the work of the Alliance as a project rather than a program allows for certain leeway in terms of how it is managed with the RI/F. From the outside though, regarding the work of the Alliance as a disconnected series of projects is perhaps unhelpful for the wider influence that the partnership and indeed the RI/F seek to have in this area. Semantics perhaps, but the term program suggests a more integrated, systemic approach.

Interestingly, with regard to continuity in the Alliance, the counter-argument could be made for USAID suggesting that there will come a time when new representatives will need to be brought in “to ensure fresh thinking.” In this case, it is not obvious how USAID staff beyond the Steering Committee representatives are involved in or informed of the work of the Alliance. This is in part due to the pilot nature of the initiatives as discussed above but also perhaps to a need to wait until this review has been completed before sharing information more widely. Admittedly only a handful of interviews were conducted with other USAID staff with regard to this evaluation, but there is a sense that the Alliance is not that well known – again by design to allow the Alliance partners time to generate helpful ways of working together as well as initial success at project level.

At any rate, by all accounts, *the continuity within the Alliance Steering Committee has been hugely helpful in ensuring that the conversations within the partnership continue to move forward*. In some ways though, the partnership has flown under the radar for several years in both organizations and there is probably some need to now generate further interest and buy-in at different levels of both organizations. The rigorous results of the Sustainability Check (and perhaps to some degree this and the country-specific partnership reports) should help to achieve this.

Several interviewees noted that the partnership was past the “teething troubles” of the earlier years. A clear question needs to be asked from both sides that will help in the creation of new partnerships at this level in the future: *in hindsight were there any discussions at Steering Committee level, procedures at programmatic level, or efforts at wider communications within both respective organizations that would have helped progress the Alliance even further faster?*

From BPD’s perspective, along with some changes in approach at the programmatic level which will be discussed below in Section 5, at the macro level, it has been noted that efforts aimed at introducing each organization to the other and keeping each partner up to date on latest contextual factors within each organization were done rather informally within and alongside the Steering Committee meetings. The Steering Committee meetings are very helpfully kept informal and relaxed, thereby encouraging

open and honest discussion. This has enhanced sharing between the partners and allowed for greater understanding to emerge and consensus to be the dominant approach to decision-making.⁴ It has been suggested that the agenda for each Steering Committee meeting actually include an agenda item that allows each partner to more formally inform and advise each other of potential institutional factors that could have an impact, either positively or negatively, on the partnership. A clearer and growing understanding of each partner's context and risks is emerging but this could be fostered more directly, as one Steering Committee mentioned, through a "Breaking News" agenda item that allows for institutional updates that look particularly at opportunities for influencing within each organization and risks and challenges that are emerging.

Given that the partnership is likely to be entering into a new stage, now is the time to review both the Terms of Reference for and the composition of the Steering Committee (even if neither end up changing very much or even at all). Given that much of the actual decision-making on expenditure happens at the country (or even local) level, the overall functions of the Committee are to hold the overview and big picture for the Alliance, and to make the linkages across the programs, institutions and events. As noted in the debriefing meeting, once the second phase is largely designed and up and running, the Steering Committee might then be able to play less of a role in strategic management and more in strategic oversight. (To be clear, USAID requires that Global Development Alliances have some form of steering committee or governance structure to oversee the spend.)

From BPD's experience, given they are usually made up of senior-level individuals who each bring a wide range of experiences to the table, Steering Committees and governing bodies more generally are notoriously bad at admitting what they may be lacking in terms of skills. For a partnership like this, at this level, the Steering Committee can bring in legal and auditing skills as needed but they should have in-house skills around "visioning", strategy, and programmatic and development expertise, and communications to generate institutional buy-in as well as external linkages. From our limited exposure to the group, the area that might require some further thought is the latter perhaps for both parties.

As noted above, an area that requires further thought is around how the Alliance actually learns. While there is much learning that happens at the Steering Committee level by individuals and as seen in how sophisticated the conversations around the table are, *it is not clear how the learning of the Alliance is documented or shared.* Given the dispersed and as of now unconnected nature of the programs in country, and that there is no other body that works across them, learning can only really be generated across the Alliance at the Steering Committee level. This could be a function that is designated to the staff who manage the day-to-day programs but there is some concern that the staffing as currently exists is not sufficient to manage all the requirements of an expanded program of this nature – let alone to take on more tasks related to learning.⁵ *Documenting the learning will be critical as part of an induction process both for new projects but also for new Steering Committee members and new staff that might come in to support the alliance.*

⁴ Consensus-based decision-making has allowed both organizations to move at its own pace and within its own comfort levels. This approach is logical as guidance from the center needs to be accommodating at the local/national level where the day-to-day majority of the funding and programmatic decisions are taken.

⁵ By all accounts, this is in no way a reflection on the individual(s) that currently operate in this capacity. Feedback has unanimously been very positive about the competence, approach and attitude of that individual.

A key governance challenge is how to ensure that sustainability is designed in from the beginning. As noted above, *both the Steering Committee and staff are caught in a rather challenging position of “needing to be advisory without being supervisory”*. This plays out slightly differently with USAID and Rotary respectively, given the role that the USAID Missions play in terms of bringing both the funding and the projects and the emphasis on “local, homegrown and voluntary initiatives” from Rotary. The assessors noted a rather deferential language that needed to be used to persuade local representatives to consider various ways of standardizing projects around sustainability criteria. Again for Rotary some of this comes back to making a clearer distinction between the requirements for larger projects versus those for smaller grants.

For both partners, if the (expectations around the) time allowed to create a project is lengthened and the budget cycles would allow for this, then greater efforts should be made to encourage more robust design from the start. This should include a greater emphasis on understanding the problems that the projects are trying to address (seeing that most problems are not resolved merely by putting in infrastructure as discussed at some length in the Sustainability Check documents and above). Problem analysis should lead to stakeholder analysis that details who is likely to affect a project’s success or failure and who has the most to win or lose from specific project interventions. Resource mapping then allows for Rotarians’ contributions to be assessed more objectively based on what is needed to deliver the most sustainable initiatives. All of this is best discussed before any notion of funding is put on the table. As agreed at the debriefing session and discussed above, the funding takes the focus away from what other resources each partner (and other potential partners) bring to the table. Once the funding is noted, the conversation then turns to auditing, value for money, the required paperwork and institutional frameworks to spend the money and other important but potentially distorting aspects of the initiative. All of these conversations would benefit from some more interactive facilitation and partnering support from the beginning. Many of these approaches are now being tried as part of the Project Enhancement Process (PEP) within Rotary. The Alliance can help to institutionalize this further.

As noted in various ways in the analysis above, perhaps the ultimate challenge for the centrally negotiated Alliance is around the decentralized nature of both the RI/F and USAID. In essence, *the center has only limited ways of ultimately influencing the projects*. Again while projects and programs should be home-grown and respond to local need and context, at this scale one would expect certain reassurances that some standardized approaches are being followed. Such standardization would allow for smoother financial transactions, easier monitoring, and some ability to cross-share and learn from the experiences. Clearly identifying what would be expected in this regard would be the critical first step. For example, using the Sustainability Check List as part of the monitoring, revisiting financial reporting requirements and determining what the Alliance would want to learn (or should be learning) for both internal and wider audiences would be logical starting points.

Once such “standards” and central expectations have been identified, reward mechanisms through recognition or further central funding could be one way of encouraging Rotarians in particular but USAID Missions as well to adhere to specific or standardized approaches. Creating cross-sharing and learning mechanisms also can provide incentives to link in with wider or central frameworks. Partnership and project development tools can also shed light on what skills or resources the center can provide that may not be available at the local level. Again for Rotary, WASRAG could play a legitimate role in extracting learning but then also in creating channels for wider publicity and recognition. Some of the

tools identified in this exercise should help to undertake skills and resource audits at the local level. In sharing this with central office, links can then be created to see how gaps can most easily be filled. Linking together key focal points for each project as facilitated by an overall operations manager at the center, if managed as a learning and support mechanism for the projects rather than as yet another oversight function, can help create cross-learning and cross-project support. As constraints allow, project staff and partners should be given opportunities to both seek support from each other but also to provide guidance to each other based on their own experiences. Along with building up skills at the local level, this will also create a greater affinity for and connection to the whole – again reshaping the H2O Alliance from a series of activities or projects into a more coherent body of work for both organizations.

- *Recommendation: Encourage problem / stakeholder / context / resource mapping & facilitate and support partnering practice from beginning*
- *Recommendation: Determine what are the non-negotiables around technical and broader sustainability standards*
- *Recommendation: If partners are not keen on creating more “procedures” for whatever reason, the proposal process could be made more stringent for projects over a certain monetary level to ensure highest quality projects.*
- *Recommendation: Encourage greater discussions with wider sets of internal institutional leaders around sustainability issues (as per section 4.1.2 above)*
- *Recommendation: Address the limited influence of the HQ offices of both organizations by revisiting incentive structures around funding, recognition and cross-learning opportunities.*

5 Country Level Snapshots

5.1 Dominican Republic

5.1.1 Country Level Partnership: functioning and procedures

Initially planned for a duration of three years (Oct 2009-Nov 2012), the H₂O Collaboration between USAID and RI/F in the Dominican Republic (Rotary District #4060) was launched in June 2010 and is ongoing. A national MoU (signed June 2010) is situated in the wider context of the MoU signed by RI and USAID in 2007; it formalizes the intention of both parties to collaborate through a matched 1:1 funding model of US\$ 1 million each. On the Rotary side, US\$ 500,000 was awarded through the RF 3-H Grant and the remaining US\$ 500,000 was raised by RF through Clubs and Districts by means of cash and DDF donations. USAID contributed US\$ 1 million from the US\$ 9.5 million budget of their *Bateys*⁶ Community Development Program (BCDP).

⁶ Originally the work camps created by private sugar plantation owners to house their predominantly Haitian workers.

The Alliance was conceived on the basis of two existing initiatives that already had their own momentum. In essence, these programs work in parallel:

- The USAID *Batey Community Development Program* – This is managed by the implementing agency, Save the Children US, which in turn sub-contracts two local implementing partners FUDECO (Save the Children DR) and MUDE.
- The Rotary DR *Children’s Safe Water* Biosand filter provision program – this focuses on promoting the utilization of filters with the support of local and international RCs, notably in Michigan, USA.

Rotary’s contribution to the partnership included US\$ 1 million, water quality technology (the bio-sand filter) and a solid know-how in point-of-use (POU) projects, including a refined intervention model and expertise in the training of community facilitators.⁷ Rotary also brings significant fundraising capacity and social capital to the project. Rotarians’ activities are geared towards community health, education and economic development, and seek to create community ownership through participation; this resonates closely with USAID’s development approach and activities.

USAID contributed US\$ 1 million, a detailed plan for WASH interventions integrated into their holistic BCDP, a multi-disciplinary team of technical experts at Mission level, and the skills, influence and experience of their implementing partners. Together with SCUS, USAID was interested in scaling up financial resources to the existing *batey* program and increasing impact without adding overhead costs. Promoting POU filters in *bateys* was regarded as a meaningful complementary activity.

Negotiations led to an agreement whereby Rotary would lead the ‘water quality’ interventions (i.e. the use of the filter) in twelve *bateys*. The unprecedented scale of the project, managed by a Program Management Committee, was certainly ambitious for Rotary. The training part of the filter program was delegated to ENTRENA, a private company with expertise in this matter. USAID leads the rest of the activities (i.e. construction and rehabilitation of water and sanitation infrastructures). Although there exists a joint Management Committee, this has not met regularly. On a related note, there appears to be some confusion over which activities were done under the Alliance umbrella and which were not.

5.1.2 Country Level Partnership: field project performance

While the respective programs appear to date to have been carried out to a satisfactory level (see the Sustainability Check), the level of institutional buy-in to the partnership itself is low. The collaboration is more of a contractual relationship for supplying bio-sand filters to FUDECO and MUDE and financially supporting their part of WASH activities in the *bateys* than a partnership seeking to maximize the synergies between partners. Although unfavorable circumstances at the start of the project led to shape the project as it stands, this evaluation argues that there is great scope for building on the collaboration to bring about more meaningful and ambitious projects and make better use of partners’ resources through a better structured intervention. Following some of the partnership constraints below, this summary also provides an overview of key recommendations.

⁷ Rotary also funds some sanitation infrastructure in *bateys* (US\$ 180,000 of their US\$ 1 million).

5.1.3 Constraints for the partnership

On the **Rotary** side, several constraints have been identified, including:

- **Project and partnership management:** the availability and volunteer nature of Rotarians is a clear limitation for partnership liaison and project implementation. In addition, there have been some grant restrictions for hiring permanent staff for project management. Rotary underestimated the staff needed to undertake the more ambitious type of field supervision, regular follow-up, ongoing support to the facilitators, partnership communications and the monitoring and reporting of resources that this partnership required.
- **Engagement with local stakeholders:** no formal feedback mechanism was set up between Rotary and ENTRENA. As a result, ENTRENA has not been able to adjust their training sessions to address weaknesses observed in the field or to manage the performance of the local facilitators. In addition, facilitators reportedly focused more on raising community awareness of filter hygiene practices than personal hygiene. On another note, critics of the filter approach in DR observe that keeping the contribution too low distorts the market by excluding local suppliers (concrete filter manufacturers).
- **Ongoing Rotarian commitment:** the project is regarded as an evolutionary expansion of the Children’s Safe Water program underway for the past seven years. This reportedly resulted in less interest by Rotarians in the other WASH activities carried out in the *bateys*, and there is a risk that the filter program may lose momentum at least in some clubs.⁸

For **USAID**, the following constraints were identified:

- **Partnership management and buy-in** – the vague nature of preliminary negotiations with Rotary has proved a source of concern on the part of the USAID team and has affected subsequent internal buy-in to the Alliance. In addition, priorities have changed in the Mission over the past three years where there is now less focus on Alliance initiatives and more pressure to concentrate on local governance. Shifting priorities, shifts in key staff, and the lack of any representative officially in charge of the partnership since the departure of the project initiator explain much of USAID’s difficulty to fully engage in the project.
- **Engagement with local stakeholders** – a greater level of ambition in terms of sustainability, notably through stronger linkages with relevant institutions and partners (e.g. INAPA, municipalities, and pit-emptiers) could have been sought.

Overall constraints for the Collaboration were also highlighted:

- **Project location** – From the outset, the origin of USAID funds required that activities would be undertaken in *bateys* as defined in the BCDP. However these were not areas where RI had a presence and so creating a partnership with joint activities based on geographic considerations has proven difficult as few Rotarians are based near the *bateys*.

⁸ As a result of the repetitive nature of the initiative maybe and also as a consequence of the recent discussions concerning Rotary’s choice of imported plastic filters and highly subsidized approach.

- **Partnership communications and governance** – The amount of time, communications and work needed, and consequently the staff required to make the partnership effective has been underestimated by all partners. The partnership initiators also moved on (with the exception of the Rotarian H2O ‘champions’) and little other paperwork or formalized governance mechanisms exist, beyond the MoU.

5.1.4 Specific recommendations for project stakeholders

Reinvigorate partnership processes at the local level by convening partners to reflect on their respective culture, interests, constraints and modes of operation, examine their respective contribution and the relevance of bringing in new partners. Formalize the structures of the partnership, including: clarifying roles and responsibilities, timeframes, objectives/activities/outputs, governance and accountability mechanisms to ensure compliance, transparency and responsiveness. Include partnership functionality indicators in the M&E framework to ensure that partnership mechanisms are in place and utilized. Partners should also designate representatives (or for Rotary, some permanent staff) who will fully engage in the partnership structures (e.g. steering committee, points of contact), follow the jointly defined mechanisms, and document the work and learning.

Boost community awareness and create greater demand (for filters) by investing more resources in preliminary community awareness meetings. In addition, **supporting facilitators** through the provision of additional didactic tools, greater hands-on support from Rotary staff, and greater financial incentives or level of compensation would strengthen their role. **Better induction of implementing partners** contributing to filter activities, e.g. by training more staff of partners such as MUDE or FUDECO would also serve to formalize and standardize the process.

Link with local and other stakeholders by maximizing USAID’s convening power to further engage the authorities⁹ (e.g. the local municipality, MoH) in the project and consider bringing in more partners such as INAPA, Peace Corps volunteers, Rotary WASRAG (for technical advice and guidelines), and other international Rotarians. In addition, it would be prudent to **re-examine POU options from a macro, longer term perspective** by revisiting the relevance of working with plastic vs. concrete, imported vs. locally manufactured filters.

Boost Rotarians and RCs buy-in by expanding the range of WASH projects (e.g. filters, hygiene education, community WASH, WASH in schools) to provide a wider spectrum of activities for Rotarians to engage in that will best match their local needs, resources (including social capital) and interests (including country visits and hands-on service contributions). Achieve the transfer of critical technical knowledge to volunteers and expose them to state-of-the-art concepts of community development and partnership work.

5.2 Ghana

5.2.1 Country Level Partnership: functioning and procedures

The Alliance collaboration in Ghana sought to contribute to improved health and productivity by increasing access to WASH services to over 114 rural communities in four regions through a three-year

⁹ This can be relevant given USAID current emphasis on Local Governance in DR.

project. A MoU was signed between USAID and the Rotary Clubs of Ghana (part of District 9100¹⁰) on 31st January 2011 to run until 31st January 2013. The MoU outlined the purpose, objectives, roles and responsibilities, and scope of the project. The project was targeted to provide capacity building, construction of water supply systems (including boreholes, mechanized water systems, and rainwater collection systems), construction of sanitation systems (including VIP latrines and pour-flush/flush toilets) and/or hygiene education. (Please see the accompanying *Sustainability Check* for current output results.) USAID and Rotary each raised \$1 million to finance the project with additional contributions including:

- **For Rotary** – a wide range of skills and expertise among their members that were harnessed to support the project; local knowledge of institutions and the environment; extensive network of contacts to provide information or in-kind assistance.
- **For USAID** – vast experience in international development; strong internal organization and paperwork experience (e.g. drafting MoUs, reporting schedules, etc.); technical expertise for training, capacity building and behavioral modification activities.

Each partner managed their own contributions and financed their project components separately due to differences in financial procedures. Rotary International focused largely on the infrastructure component of the project, whilst USAID handled all the software aspects and some hardware.

USAID implemented its component through an international NGO, Relief International. Rotary International implemented its part of the project through the Rotary Clubs of Ghana, the Community Water and Sanitation Agency (CWSA, the Government agency responsible for rural water supply) and local contractors. CWSA assisted with the selection of beneficiary communities, appropriate technology options for water and sanitation facilities and finding private sector entities to support Rotary's activities. Rotary initially met with the CWSA to identify such regions where the need was highest and where their work could have the most impact; such geographic needs were then matched with each partner's geographic interests and existing relationships.

The partnership benefits from effective management and clear decision-making mechanisms. At the national level, a Steering Committee comprising USAID and Rotary meets monthly to review progress and make implementation and strategic decisions; these meetings are regarded as constructive, practical and effective. For Rotary there is a seven-member committee of the host club that provides overall leadership and project management for the Rotary component. The USAID Management Committee, comprising management staff of Relief International and USAID, also meets regularly to review progress on their component. The design of the partnership is regarded as effective with each partner delivering on agreed contributions and playing to their strengths. In essence, the teams ran parallel programs as part of this project; however alignment was achieved, for the most part, in terms of planning and coordinated delivery in the same communities.

¹⁰ District 9100 includes a number of West African countries.

www.rotary.org/en/Members/RunningADistrict/Pages/DistrictZoneMaps.aspx

5.2.2 Country Level Partnership: field project performance

Project objectives were realistic within the time frame despite the initial challenges in getting the project off the ground.¹¹ In the Volta region for instance, Relief International was able to achieve in one year what would normally have taken two years, due to the hard work of field officers and the resources available. Also Rotary and the CWSA were able to implement the infrastructure projects within nine months, compared to a national average of two years. Over 90% of all expected outputs and deliverables have been achieved. Despite this, there are a few projects that are still pending completion for various reasons (for example, the delay in fully implementing Relief International’s activities and the challenge of activity sequencing highlighted below). The project was also able to respond and adapt to local needs and contexts (e.g. in Ga East District stakeholders preferred to have 5 mechanized wells installed rather than 20 boreholes and the project was able to deliver on this). Although some constraints remain, the projects in Ghana are mainly regarded as successful and there is scope to scale-up or replicate the activities – especially if there is more creative engagement with government agencies (and their national policies and important regional offices) and if better sequencing of activities is promoted. The project appears to have influenced all players positively, despite initial tensions between Relief International and the CWSA and some District Assemblies.

The project also benefited from community participation, for example by selecting sites for the construction of the latrine facilities after the contractors had been introduced to the local community by District Assembly officers. Some of the District Assemblies took upon themselves additional financial responsibilities by deciding to mechanize the boreholes that had been installed in their communities. Where community leaders were involved, a sense of investment was evident in terms of maintenance and cleaning practices.

5.2.3 Constraints for the partnership

- **Engagement with local stakeholders:** the project MoU identified a clear role for the CWSA for their support and facilitation of the project on the ground and the ongoing maintenance and sustainability monitoring of facilities. CWSA were to be remunerated 2% of the project funds expended on external contractors for their facilitation and negotiation role. An additional MoU between the partners and the CWSA was also drafted to outline how this would work, however it was never finalized or signed due to USAID’s (US government policy) limitations on payments to public officers – this was regarded as a constraint to securing CWSA’s buy-in to all elements of the project. From the CWSA perspective, as additional donor programs such as the Alliance project fall under their purview, additional and incremental administrative and other transaction costs are incurred in order to manage the programs and related relationships. Rotary therefore engaged directly with the CWSA and paid the 2% management and facilitation costs out of their funds. There is some initial concern that the non-involvement of the CWSA could affect the ultimate sustainability of H2O Ghana as a whole.
- **Differing approaches to implementation:** the decision of USAID to contract an implementing partner (Relief International) created an unavoidable challenge regarding the role that the CWSA would have traditionally played in such projects. Due to this and the

¹¹ There was about a one-year delay in starting full implementation of the project on the Relief International side. This led to some frustration and anxiety in those communities that had been promised services.

payment dynamic noted above, there was some resentment on the side of the CWSA towards Relief International (although not towards USAID) that they were being excluded and their monitoring role not being recognized. This reportedly led to some of the CWSA staff and some of the District Assemblies to feel that their existing WASH extension plans had been bypassed by Relief International's project activities.

- **Individuals and institutions:** Relief International faced initial delivery and continuity issues due to changes at Chief of Party (COP) level. The first COP to be engaged in the Relief International program remained in post for only 11 months and was unable to resolve the issues with the CWSA. The replacement COP however was able to reinvigorate Relief's activities and relationships and has ensured that Relief International has effectively delivered on its commitments.
- **Implementation sequencing and confused roles and responsibilities:** the differences between project management procedures (including the separate and non-pooled funding streams and subsequent reporting requirements) also served to pose some timing challenges on the ground. Reportedly, some Rotarians became frustrated by the delay in the community mobilization and sensitization work that was supposed to be undertaken by Relief International prior to the building of hardware. In some cases, the infrastructure has been constructed first and some of the sanitation software components and community capacity building are still pending. This has also led to confusion for beneficiary communities on the ground.

5.2.4 Specific recommendations for project stakeholders

Engage government partners more proactively: it would be prudent to still involve the CWSA in such programs even if they are not remunerated. Rather, greater dialogue should be brokered with the CWSA to ensure they are fully aware of the program and can plan in advance to leverage other funding (from national government or other donor sources) to fund their related activities in support of the program. Such counterpart funding would enable the CWSA to work on such additional programs as well as to deliver on their existing commitments. Beyond CWSA, Municipal and District level Water and Sanitation Team involvement should also be encouraged from the start of a project to support community understanding of who can provide ongoing maintenance and system monitoring once the Alliance projects are completed. CWSA could also support these M/DWSTs more on the ground as capacity is felt to reside at the centralized level. Greater connections could also be made with District Environmental Health Assistants to promote hygiene and hand-washing in schools.

Promote equity and inclusion: the project could do more in future to tailor services to the needs of different groupings within the local communities – for example to address the specific requirements of the more vulnerable e.g. the elderly, the poorest of the poor, those with disabilities or those excluded for ethnicity reasons.

Improve hardware and software sequencing: as above, more effort should be paid to ensuring that hardware is not installed without accompanying software activities such as community awareness raising, training and hygiene promotion activities.

Volunteerism vis-à-vis contracting: as in The Philippines’ project tensions between USAID’s approach of contracting local implementing partners and Rotary’s direct liaison with CWSA / contractors and volunteers requires extra attention and discussion amongst partners. This seemingly has a direct impact on the perception of (and perhaps actual) value for money these projects represent.

5.3 The Philippines

5.3.1 Country Level Partnership: functioning and procedures

In The Philippines the Alliance collaboration aims to implement sustainable WASH projects spread across five grants involving the USAID country mission and separate Rotary Clubs. This partnership review focused on the relationships within each of the five implementation areas (but not on all the projects) in: Santa Ana market and surrounding *Barangays* (Manila), San Fernando (septage management and wastewater treatment), Zamboanga (an urban reticulated system plus hygiene), and rural water systems and hygiene in Davao and Dipalog. Both USAID and Rotary in The Philippines recognize water and sanitation supply as a high development priority. USAID’s contribution is made through existing development projects (cash and in-kind) and Rotary contributed through the 3-H grants mechanism.

The terms of engagement are ratified through a MoU at the country level between a national Rotary Steering Committee (SC) and USAID Philippines. The SC, comprised of senior Rotarians, was established at the instigation of Rotary International to provide oversight and guidance to the individual Rotary Clubs. Initially the SC provided direction and decisions on sharing out the RI grant and deciding which proposals should be put forward for approval. Reporting was done separately by the two main partners up through their respective systems: USAID contractors to the country office of USAID and RCs to RI and the Rotary Foundation.

Memorandums of Agreement were developed for each project laying out project management mechanisms. The way the partnerships between local RCs, nominated USAID contractors and additional partners at project level were formed and the projects developed varied:

- In Manila, unlike in the other projects, the Philippines Sanitation Alliance (PSA) had already been in discussion with Rotary. The driver for the specific projects arose out of the need to clean up the Pasig under the Pasig River Improvement Program. A steering group of the partners (RC, Lola Grande, AECOM/PSA) met monthly to manage the project.
- In San Fernando, PSA had done previous work with the City authorities and discussed potential projects under its USAID funding. When the H2O opportunity arose, PSA invited a local RC to work together. The RC is now part of a Technical Working Group established by the City.
- In Dipolog and Davao, AMORE identified the project barangays to work in based on previous solar projects, then contacted the local RCs. In Dipolog, the RC established a management group for its part of the project, with one member as the project manager reporting progress to the RC, and others as co-signatories for finance. The group met as required for making

decisions. In Davao¹², AMORE and the RC held joint meetings monthly for coordination, but essentially the different responsibilities of the two organizations were managed separately.

- In Zamboanga, the Philippines Water Revolving Fund (PWRF – a program of USAID run by DAI) had already worked with the Zamboanaga City Water District (ZCWD) and discussed potential further work, the RC had already carried out small projects in the two barangays, and key personnel in both and ZCWD are also Rotarians. In Zamboanga, the management was facilitated by PWRF and involved the three partners – the RC, ZCWD and PWRF in a project steering committee, with sub-committees for finance, construction and public communications.

One common element in the project partnerships was that the project technical components were largely defined by the USAID contractors, including preparation of the proposals. The exception was in Davao, where the RC had a member who was familiar with such applications. There were some very effective relationships, notably the partnership with ZCWD in Zamboanga, and with the City of San Fernando. The project clearly benefitted from the strong working relationships in these places.

5.3.2 Country Level Partnership: field project performance

In terms of partnership initiation, this evaluation found that the relationships resembled more of an ‘arranged marriage’ defined externally by RI/F and USAID in the USA rather than a demand-led set of initiatives developed in-country. Saying that, the ‘marriage’ has seen some successes as well as tensions (highlighted as constraints below). In all the projects the RC were very effective in maximizing contacts with other organizations and influencing support for the projects. In some cases, such as Davao, this influence could usefully be extended to advocate for changes in local government support for sustainability. In San Fernando, the future role of RC is being formally established as an observer on the City’s Technical Working Group for septage management. Overall, there exists ongoing potential for further collaboration in The Philippines – although this requires greater support to the partnership structures and clarification of the decision-making mechanisms between partners.

5.3.3 Constraints for the partnership

- **Partnership initiation and process:** although the individual project partnerships were formed in different ways, the common theme was that this was the first time each had worked together on a project. Because of time pressure to submit proposals for acceptance and approval, there was very little time for the partners to get to know each other, in particular in terms of values, approaches and ways of working; and in creating a common understanding of development and its processes (see below).
- **Project location:** the geographic areas for projects were determined by USAID. Although this has the benefit of increasing the impact of their existing activities, it caused some concern on the Rotary side that viable projects were excluded because they were not located in “USAID areas”. The other major factor missing in the project identification and development process was insufficient time for understanding technical and development issues, such as the importance of community development processes and software approaches. This had

¹² Additionally, in Davao, the Davao City Water District was involved in initial discussions but eventually declined to make a formal agreement to work together.

implications for the implementation and management of the partnerships in two projects (described below).

- **Partnership accountability and reporting:** between partners, in all projects, there was frequent progress reporting. There was, however, limited reporting on the respective finances, mainly as a result of the agreement that there should be no co-mingling of funds.
- **Differing approaches to implementation:** in some cases tensions arose due to the Rotarian's concept of **voluntarism** and the time-bound obligations of USAID's contractors and sub-contract organizations. In the Manila project, the Rotarians expected to find volunteers from their own members to perform tasks that they considered were highly paid through contracting out. Also they tended to want to look for alternative materials and solutions without too much concern for the **deadlines** that contracted organizations were obligated to uphold. While Rotarians certainly bring skills to the projects, in a few cases clashes arose around the appropriateness of solutions proposed as compared to those from the technical specialists brought in by USAID. For example, as a result of the short time available for developing proposals, in two of the projects, San Fernando and Manila, the RCs did not fully appreciate the technical and **software (and gender) issues** involved. Although the technical proposals were discussed and agreed, real understanding did not happen until the projects were being implemented. This affected the partnerships in the two projects in contrasting ways:
 - In Manila, the relationship became acrimonious, with decisions delayed or overturned. There was strong resistance by the RCs, including the National Steering Committee, to the software components and processes, due to the lack of understanding of the importance of these for eventual sustainability. There was also resentment of fee payments to contracted partners and sub-contractors for tasks like project management, which the Rotarians felt could be done with voluntary inputs by members.
 - In contrast, in San Fernando the relationship benefitted from mutual respect, so that the RC was able to challenge technical decisions and negotiate to get major changes in what was constructed, resulting in a better scheme overall for the septage management.
- **Engagement with local stakeholders:** community engagement in and management of the three water supply projects was lacking. In Davao and Dipolog, needs were to some extent identified by AMORE in its previous work with those communities. Communities were not, however, involved in developing the projects and their roles, which were defined by AMORE, were limited to provision of labor and materials – there was no role in management. There was no project agreement developed with any of the communities. Local government engagement and buy-in also varied across the projects, being better in some than others.
- **Rotary project ownership and leadership:** in all the projects, except possibly Manila, too much of a burden was carried by one individual, usually the incumbent Rotary President. There appear to be several effects stemming from this, apart from the obvious one of one individual having to spend too much time and effort. The projects become, in effect, the President's project, rather than a Club project and there is **limited continuity** in supporting the project after the President's term has ended or for them to reap multi-year benefits. Additionally, the incoming President may find it difficult to promote his or her own initiatives following such a

substantial project – as is commonly reported through the Rotary grants process (although efforts to improve this through better stewardship practices is currently being pursued by Rotary).

5.3.4 Specific recommendations for project stakeholders

Engage local government: to improve the likelihood of longer-term sustainability, ‘missing’ government partners should be engaged, specifically Local Government Units (LGUs) at higher (city/provincial) levels in Davao and Dipolog for example who can bring such projects into the government system for future management and technical support. Government partners playing a role in hygiene promotion may also strengthen the software elements of subsequent projects and help to influence Rotarians in this regard.

Improving financial transparency: clearer mechanisms should be developed for reporting on the respective financial contributions – as there was overlap in some project activities, it may be necessary to check that costed items were not double counted and thus affecting the value for money equation. Additionally, information should be provided upfront to communities of the estimated and final costs of the projects.

Community participation: agreements should be developed with communities on respective roles and responsibilities. To promote long-term sustainability it would serve partners well to consider a more formal role for communities in the management of projects.

Volunteerism vis-à-vis contracting: the inherent tension (and resulting resentment) between USAID’s approach of contracting local implementing partners to manage their activities under the H2O umbrella and Rotary’s direct liaison with suppliers and volunteers requires extra attention and discussion amongst partners. Through greater discussion and coordination both sides would then understand the challenges this poses for the other partner as well as providing an opportunity to highlight key pros and cons.

Acronyms

AECOM	USAID Contractor
AED	Academy for Educational Development
AMORE	Alliance for Mindanao Off-Grid Renewable Energy Program
BCDP	Bateys Community Development Program
COP	Chief of Party
CWSA	Community Water and Sanitation Agency
ENTRENA	USAID Contractor
FUDECO	Fundación para el Desarrollo Comunitario/Save the Children Dominicana (Save the Children Dominican Republic, Inc.)
GDA	Global Development Alliance
INAPA	Instituto Nacional de Agua Potables y Alcantarillados (National Institute for Water Supply and Sewage)
LGU	Local Government Units
M/DWST	Municipal and District level Water and Sanitation Team
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MUDE	Mujeres en Desarrollo Dominicana, Inc. (Dominican Women in Development)
NGO	Non Governmental Organization
PEP	Project Enhancement Process
POU	Point of Use
PSA	Philippines Sanitation Alliance
PWRF	Philippines Water Revolving Fund
RC	Rotary Cub
RI	Rotary International
RI/F	Rotary International/The Rotary Foundation
SC	National Rotary Steering Committee
SCUS	Save the Children US
USAID	US Agency for International Development
WASH	water, sanitation and hygiene
WASRAG	Water & Sanitation Rotarian Action group
ZCWD	Zamboanaga City Water District
3-H	Health, Hunger and Humanity Grants