



## **MINUTES OF THE WASH-RAG ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING**

**Saturday June 24, 2023**

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### **Board Chair Neil Van Dine welcomed members of the WASH Rotary Action Group and opened the meeting at 10.00 am US Central Daylight Time**

I am excited to welcome everyone and have the opportunity to reflect on what we have accomplished over the year as our members impact communities across the globe. Today we are here to recognize some of the work that has been done by our Rotarian brothers and sisters who participate in the WASH-Rotary Action Group. Our members are really making a remarkable difference in the world and truly embody Rotary's motto of "Service Above Self".

My name is Neil Van Dine and I am the Chair of the WASH Rotary Action Group for 2022-23. The WASH Rotary Action Group is a group of Rotarians dedicated to promoting water, sanitation and hygiene facilities worldwide. Their activities range from providing clean water services to communities, constructing sanitation facilities, providing hygiene education, WASH in Schools, WASH in Healthcare Facilities, and assisting disease prevention programs.

The work of the WASH Rotary Action Group is crucial in a world where billions of people are still without access to safe drinking water and sanitation. And the lack of access to these basic human necessities puts countless lives at risk around the world.

Access to clean water and sanitation can prevent diseases such as typhoid, cholera and diarrhoea – which especially affects children under the age of five. And the work of the WASH Rotary Action Group has contributed to the overall improvement in health and wellbeing of numerous communities around the globe.

Our efforts extend both locally and internationally, impacting communities in need, in places around the world. We are seeing projects evolve into programs in Ghana, Kenya and Uganda, and in places like Haiti where we have the HANWASH program. In those places every project they undertake has made a difference in the lives of those who are struggling.

By working to transition those projects into programs, these Rotarians are dedicating themselves to creating a sustainable solution that will have long-lasting impact on the communities they are serving. But within WASH-RAG there is a particularly dedicated group – the WASH-RAG Operations Team. Led by its Chair Brian Hall, these folks work tirelessly to convene the World Water Summit, provide professional services to WASH Global Grants around



the world and build the WASH-RAG Ambassador Program to educate and inform Rotarians worldwide.

Brian has led the Operations Team with skill, humour and amazing leadership over the past several years, meeting every other week year-round to improve Rotary WASH programs worldwide and move the WASH Rotary Action Group forward.

Brian's term on the Operations Team ends this year, but we are thankful to have him hand over the leadership to Wade Nomura as our new Ops Team Chair. We are not losing Brian though, as he's joining the Board of Directors for his first three-year term, and we are looking forward to him bringing his skills to the Board.

I also want to highlight Julia Phelps, who has led the extraordinary World Water Summit for the past seven years. Julia and her amazing team have built the annual World Water Summit into a truly world-class session on WASH, convening some of the top WASH experts in the world. And over the last several years, thanks to the World Water Summits and Webinars put together by Julia, we've seen a significant evolution in the quality of WASH programs done by Rotary around the world. Julia's term on the Ops Team also ends this year, and Michael Fernando will be taking the reins and leading next year's World Water Summit in Singapore.

Julia – I want to personally thank you for your dedication, service and friendship. Your leadership in these sessions and the Summits has been truly exceptional. Thank You!

I'd also like to welcome our new Board members. We are excited to have **Kundleshwar Panigrahi** and **Brian Hall** join us on the Board. **Mary Beth Growney Selene** has been re-elected and will serve a second three-year term on the Board. They join current members Ron Denham, Mike Colasurdo, Beatrice Mwalwega, Patrisio Njeru, Patricia Merryweather-Arges, Chris Etienne and Ravi Vadlamani. Mary Beth Growney Selene will be our new Board Chair for the 2023-24 Rotary year, and we are looking forward to WASH-RAG's continuing evolution under her leadership.

In particular to all of you, the Rotarians and members in the WASH Rotary Action Group - thank you for your extraordinary dedication toward making the world a better place. Your efforts have not gone unnoticed, and your work has been a shining example of what human compassion, kindness, and hard work can accomplish.

You are all an inspiration, and your legacy will continue to improve the lives of people long after your work is done.

So this morning, this afternoon, this evening – let us all raise a glass to the WASH Rotary Action Group and celebrate our successes, the challenges we have overcome, and the group's inspiration to all of us. Here's to a better world because of your efforts.



This is really a powerful moment for me to be able to lead this session. The Annual General Meeting is a really exciting time for me to hear about everything that has been done. One of the things in particular that is really exciting for me, is the assistance that the WASH Rotary Action Group Donor Advised Fund provides for Global Grants around the world. This year that effort has been led by Board member Monica Louie, and assisted by Mary Beth. Our next item on the agenda will be to have Mary Beth and Monica speak a little bit about the Professional Services activities of the Operations Team.

**Mary Beth noted that Monica had not been able to join the call. Mary Beth therefore took the lead on this report.**

The Professional Services Team was started several years ago on the Operations Team. The purpose was to assist our clubs and districts in their Global Grant writing proposals. The initial goal was to enable those Global Grants to move through The Rotary Foundation's review process quickly because of the review by professionals in the WASH sector.

It has evolved. We initially started providing a \$500 grant that could be included in the funding budget of Global Grants. Three or four years ago we increased that to \$2000 per Global Grant – and we've seen an incredible increase in the opportunities to enhance the budgets of the Global Grant funding.

In order to do that, we had to develop a process. And the process is not complicated. We ask that the participants submit their Global Grants to the Professional Services Team. It is then delegated to a member of the team whose expertise deals with the development of the Grant. They review the Grant for information – to ensure that all the "i's" are dotted and the "t's" are crossed. We offer suggestions to enhance the Grant, and when all our recommendations are included in the Global Grant application, \$2000 is allocated to the Grant from our Donor Advised Fund.

Many – approximately 99% of those grants - are approved by The Rotary Foundation's Grants Team. We've had a couple of hiccups over the last couple of years, when the designation of the \$2000 from the WASH Rotary Action Group DAF was not identified properly in the Global Grant funding budget. To address this, Monica and her team have placed step-by-step instructions on the WASH Rotary Action Group website on how the \$2000 is to be shown in the funding budget.

The downside is when we are reviewing those Grants, and they get approved, the Grant writer comes back to us and wants the money released. We then we review the Grant – after TRF approval – and the grant writer did not include the allocated \$2000 properly. There is nothing our DAF can do to give that money unless it is properly allocated. In these cases we have gone to The WASH-RAG Foundation (of which Rod Kreie is the Chair) and they are writing the \$2000

check to the Grant. We are not leaving those Grants high and dry, but there is frustration on the part of the Grant writers when in fact there is nothing we can do once the “Submit” button has been pressed.

The new process going forward is:

- The Grant writer submits the Grant to our Professional Services Team.
- We review it, and the changes are implemented.
- We get the Grant application back **before** the Grant writer hits the Submit button to the Foundation.
- Again – once the “Submit” button is hit, NO changes can be made.

When I get those Grant applications to release our DAF money, the only thing I look at is the Funding budget and how it was allocated.

This is one of the things that Monica will be adding to the list of criteria to receive our \$2000 Grant, but it is an extremely important item in the Grant writer’s process.

Thank You!

**Chair Neil welcomed our Treasurer, Mike Colasurdo to the podium:**

Mike proceeded to review the Financial Reports step-by-step. A complete copy of our income and expense reports for year-end 2022-2023 plus our 990 report will be posted in the near future.

**Question:** What interest do we get on our bank account?

**Mike Responded:** Zero percent. In previous years we have used interest bearing accounts, CDs, etc. It is a good question that will be addressed with the Operations Team to explore options.

**Chair Neil asked Operations Team Chair Brian Hall to report:**

Good morning, good afternoon, good evening to all of you joining us today! It has been another great year. I joined in early 2017 and I have thoroughly enjoyed my six and a half years on the Operations Team. It has been a great ride and I have thoroughly enjoyed it.

I will be asking Chair Elect Wade Nomura to talk about his plans for the coming year in a few minutes, but I will talk now about the 2022-23 year.

We continue to expand the way we work and some of the things we are doing. An early step was a \$25,000 match on a Global Grant. We competitively selected a Grant to expand the WASH capacities in a refugee settlement in Uganda. In addition, we made a \$25,000 Grant to HANWASH.

We continued our wonderful partnership with a truly fantastic partner in BREW (Beers Rotarians Enjoy Worldwide).

Drilling down into the various committees, I'm very excited about the really good Ops Team we've been blessed with. For instance:

- Wade Nomura - WASH Cadre Liaison – 64 of the 110 WASH Cadre members are also WASH-RAG members. We're working to increase the integration between The Rotary Foundation Cadre and the WASH Rotary Action Group. Thank you Wade for your work there.
- Julia Phelps – what can I say! I've had the pleasure of working with Julia for years on the Ops Team. She is a rock star! This year's Summit was no exception. We had amazing content. We had UNICEF's Anne Thomas speaking, PRIP Barry Rassin was with us, Mark Balla spoke, and we had amazing breakouts. We had about 150 attendees in total breaking down to 110-120 in person and about 40 virtually.
- Our sponsors were extremely pleased and praised the connections they had made at the Summit. I do look forward to our future Summits. As mentioned earlier, Michael Fernando will be chairing those and I think he will do great work!
- I mentioned sponsorships. We had Barbara Spangler running that committee for us for much of the year. Unfortunately she is stepping away, but we raised record amounts in sponsorships. When you look at the income statement that Mike Colasurdo showed earlier, and you see that positive number at the bottom – the sponsorships are why. This year, not surprisingly, Ron Denham was a huge force in helping us to raise those sponsorships. Mary Beth Growney Selene and Julia Phelps also helped with the UNICEF sponsorship. It was a team effort to get there – and a wonderful year in sponsorships.
- Our Ambassador Team continues to roll. Carolyn Meub is running the Ambassador program now and she has built a strong sub-committee, including: Dilip Mirchandani, Ramesh Aggarwal, Ramesh Aggrawal, Steve Werner, S.N. Srikanth, Patrick Coleman, Jerry Coughter and Ron Denham. That program has really become invigorated. They are building tools and capacity. We have nine new Ambassadors this year and Jerry Coughter organized a "meet

and greet” for the Ambassadors in Melbourne. This event was very well attended. We estimated we would probably have about 20 – 30 and had no idea it would be attended so heavily. Actual count was over a hundred.

- Professional Services – Monica Louie continues to drive that program. She has done a great job over the last year. We have approved six grants receiving the \$2000 match.
- From the WASH Rotary Action Group Foundation, we had another \$4750 given for WASH software programs in grants, and as mentioned earlier we had the \$25,000 match for the HANWASH Global Grant.
- Rajiv Sharma is running our Membership Program. We had our Senior Leaders Dinner in Melbourne. He has worked Zone Institutes to promote WASH-RAG. He actually designed and produced our new pin which has been incredibly useful and he continues to keep our Photo and Video Contest rolling.
- Lisa Talley in Marketing & Communications does wonderful work. She produces the newsletter for us, she does a good job on social media. We’re thankful to have Lisa with us.
- Mike Brown – Technology. Mike thank you so much for your work – he’s running this meeting today. He’s done a really good job of taking what were some rather spread-out technologies and has already brought focus to them and to really improve that technology backbone.
- And then this year we brought a Rotaractor to the team - Abdul Rashid Alhassan. He is a fantastic addition. We are working to define how that role works within the WASH-RAG world. What we really want to do is to begin to engage with Rotaractors as we move forward. Wade may have more to say about that – there are some great ideas coming up about that position.
- As always, I would be completely remiss if I didn’t mention Anna Shepherd. When I became Chair of this committee about three years ago Anna was my right hand and without her I could not have gotten through these last three years. She has been an absolute stalwart. Her institutional knowledge is almost endless. So, Anna thank you so, so much for all that you have done to help

So that’s a very brief recap of this year. And I will turn it over to Wade to talk about the future.

### **Incoming Chair of the Operations Team – Wade Nomura**

Thank you all – and thank you for your leadership Brian. I will give a short update on what we plan to do. As you’ve heard, we currently have ten sub-committees represented in the Ops Team. I’m planning on adding two more for a total of twelve. I’d like to add an Education/Webinar person and also someone to assist at the Convention Booth.

The team itself – we’re going to try and keep it as intact as possible without any changes – but one of the ways I’d like to ask this group here for help. We plan on increasing each of the sub-committees, so that we will have from five to eight members assisting in each of the sub-committees that Brian just mentioned. This will give us a better bandwidth – something larger. With the membership we have in WASH-RAG right now it shouldn’t be too hard to tap in with others. For those of you listening in – if you heard of any area that you would be interested in, please feel free to reach out to me. I will then have that sub-committee Chair reach out to you and get you connected.

The only way we can get more done is to expand the size of the team itself.

Other than that, everything is going to stay pretty much the same. As you know, since I am connected with The Rotary Foundation through the Cadre program, next year I will be moving up in the program. Instead of being Regional Advisor for North America, I will now become the Regional Organizer/Advisor overseeing all seven regions of the world. So this will help us quite a bit. It’s a three-year commitment. And with that now, we will be able to reach out to quite a few other areas besides North America and our reach with other Cadre members.

Also keep in mind – we talk about Cadres. Some of you are going “Well, you know, Foundation cadres are a tough addition, because you know, we are WASH-RAG.” Well, the actual fact is, I’m planning to divide the responsibilities. The Cadre members are coming in as experts in the area of Global Grants. They come in with extensive knowledge and abilities on how to put these Grants together. We would then be able to connect with them through the Cadre Program globally. So, any project being doing outside the country and the host area, we should be able to connect up with a Cadre member at the host end of it so we can work then in conjunction with them. WASH-RAG is going to fit in with the technical expertise. You are the ones that have the professional expertise and knowledge of the future technologies in the water, sanitation and hygiene area. So that’s what we are tapping in to and how the groups will work together.

If you are a professional in any of the WASH areas, I would like to talk with and find out if you are interested in becoming certified as a Cadre member. This will help us quite a bit in moving both programs forward together.

And with that – I wanted to keep it short and sweet – I’m going to hand back to Brian.

**Brian thanked Wade for his report and noted that this concludes the Operations Team reports. He turned the meeting back to Chair Neil.**

Neil thanked Brian and Wade. The Operations Team gets so much done and the dedication of meeting every other week is really fantastic. Thank you so much.

Following up on Brian and Wade's reports – I also want to recognize Anna Shepherd. Anna has just been at the core of everything the WASH Rotary Action Group has done over the last 17 years. Anna is really fantastic. Thank you for everything that you do in the background to keep us running.

I also want to thank especially the Wallace Genetic Foundation who has been a huge supporter of our Rotary Action Group. They continue to be dedicated to improving the world through gifts to the WASH Rotary Action Group Foundation. Their funds in particular this year, are headed towards WASH in Healthcare Facilities and we thank them very much for this.

In conclusion, this is going to be the end of my term as the Chair of the WASH Rotary Action Group. Thank you so much to the Board of Directors and the Operations Team for everything you guys have done to make this happen. It truly is a member-driven organization and I am humbled to be able to help lead it.

**But next year is in front of us, and our Chair next year is Mary Beth Growney Selene. So, Mary Beth I would like to officially hand the reins over to you as we move forward.**

Mary Beth: Thank you Neil. Yesterday our Rotary Club had its "changing of the guard" meeting and one of our traditions is to pass the gavel from the longest Past President to the current. So I accept this honour. And I really do believe it's an honour. I am thrilled to be following in the shoes of Neil Van Dine who has taught me so much. Neil I looked in my passport and 2007 is the first time I came to Haiti. You were such a kind host and you have become a wonderful friend over the years. I thank you for your leadership. I thank you for continuing to move the WASH Rotary Action Group forward, and I look forward to continuing to move it forward during the next year.

One of the things I learned about leadership many, many years ago is that you leave an organization better than you found it – and that's no reflection on those who go before you. We are building on everything that we gained from those who came before us.

I was really excited to hear not only Brian's report, but also Wade's goals for next year, because one of the notes I have, and one of the things I would like to see us do, is survey our membership to find out what their passions are and what their interests are, because I think the more we engage our membership, the more we are going to achieve our goals as a Rotary Action Group – and that is to support clubs and districts in their efforts in the WASH sector.





We don't tell anyone what to do. We offer resources, we offer opportunities – and the more we can do that, the bigger and the greater impact we are going to have on providing support to achieve the UN's Sustainable Development Goals. We are behind in water, and I think that just tells us that we have so much work to do. We have got great partners in USAID, UNICEF, World Vision and many, many organizations throughout the globe. We as Rotarians, Rotary Clubs and Rotary Districts need to be reaching out to these potential partners to enhance our goals.

With that said, one of the things that we always need to keep in mind is how important our community assessments are to the success of our Global Grants, projects and programs. I prefer the word "program" because I think it is more sustainable. I think it is much more based in community needs, and if we're not engaging the communities in which we want to serve, the project or program that we are trying to embrace, enhance, fund, and implement, is not going to happen. Those who are the recipients of our goals, our grants, have to take ownership. And that's not only the community members – it's the community leaders, and the district leaders and the countrywide leaders.

We as Rotarians totally have the opportunity to influence that kind of change. Rotarians are the members of these communities, and in everything we do we need to be incorporating our communities. So, we can do wonderful, and larger, and bigger, better – what was it that Ray Klinginsmith said: Bigger Better, Bolder Opportunities. But they need to be driven by our community members – so I would ask that each and every one of us through our experiences, our opportunities through travel, meet with the community leaders and find out what they need. Someone once told me, as Rotary clubs we can always say we can provide you with tutors, and when we go to the schools they say "Gosh that's great, but we really need mentors". We need to be asking the question of our communities before we are asking our Rotarians what their expertise is.

I'm very excited about the next year. I think we have got such a tremendous base. We have a great Board of Directors. We have a phenomenal Operations Team. And we probably have the best members of any Rotary Action Group within the Rotary world.

I thank you. And I would like to ask if anyone has questions for anyone who has spoken here today

Thank you Neil.

## Questions and Answers:

### Question from Peter Lattey

You mentioned partnerships with USAID and so on. I've been trying to reach out to USAID for a while and I don't know where to get in. I don't know the door to knock on. How do we find a name and a phone number at places like that? That would be really useful to have.

### Mary Beth Responded:

Great question Peter. Julia Phelps – if you are still on the call you may be able to help me answer this question. From our experience we need to be going to Chief of Country at UNICEF and USAID. Don't work with either of those organizations in the United States. Both of those organizations have told us that the Chief of Country is willing to work with us.

What happens because of the bureaucracy of both of those organizations – we really need to get into the timelines of those organizations because of their collaborating organizations. We may go into a group today and say “We want to incorporate this large scale” – and that's my words, not The Rotary Foundation large scale programs – “But we want to go into these communities, or into this country and how can you help us do that?” And they may say “We are in Year 2 of four years of a program, so the timing is not necessarily good.” My response to that would be to ask what other organizations on the ground would you suggest we reach out to? I would not take their response as a dead end. I would continue to ask questions. But Chief of Country or Chief of Party is the person I would start with and they should direct you specifically to the WASH sector people under their leadership.

**Peter Lattey:** Thank you. I reached out to Anne Thomas at UNICEF and I am now having a meeting with UNICEF people in Nairobi in about ten days. I found the door to knock on there. USAID I have not.

**Mary Beth:** Excellent – but I think you will experience the same kind of response. And both of these organizations, because they are partners with Rotary and The Rotary Foundation, have a great deal of respect for anybody that's talking from Rotary.

Thanks – great question

### Question from Dan Perlman:

Do we have a Partner Committee – somebody who is in charge of organizing this information that you just alluded to? We kind of need a committee that helps us to organize who our partners are and who the contacts are by country I think.

**Neil Van Dine responded:** This blends with the last questions actually. I think it is one of the intended outcomes of the Ambassador program. In particular because we see these larger scale partners like UNICEF and USAID being very country specific. Mary Beth is exactly right that the

first order of business is to contact the Country Directors of those respective programs, because they are very independent of any regional or international office. As we build the Ambassador program, the intention is that those Ambassadors become a clearing house for these kinds of questions within the Districts around the world. That's really what we hope to do.

Chris Roesel asked a question on the Chat Line earlier about how do we measure impacts? I think traditionally that's been very difficult because of the kind of ad hoc project based nature of so much of our activities. As you reach out to UNICEF or USAID, keep in mind that this kind of program mindset – less of an individual school and more of a broader impact on all schools or all health care facilities. That's the best way to enroll those larger scale partners.

**Neil continued:** UNICEF and USAID quite often participate in what they call WASH Sector meetings. UNICEF often leads a WASH sector meeting in the countries where they have offices. That tends to convene a lot of the WASH actors, so if you can find out when that happens and get invited to that, maybe through your local Rotary club, that could be a significant point of contact for you.

**Mary Beth (reads question from Chris Roesel on the Chat Line)**

“Writing and calling the Country Director – he or she does not respond. I call the office – he or she is out of the country.”

Mary Beth: Please don't give up. Ask who, in that person's absence, you can talk with about WASH. Please be persistent.

Julia Phelps posted that getting on the organization's newsletter is also a great way to find out what's happening and may be a source of contact information especially in the articles about specific projects – there's usually a contact person for that particular project. Newsletters really help.

Mary Beth shared that as part of the USAID Steering Committee they found out that in 2020 or 2021 the Head of USAID in Washington, DC was a new Head of Department who had decided that Covid was a far greater priority for them than WASH.

Our response as a Committee, was “Oh gosh, pity nobody considered that WASH is direct input of Covid”. USAID then started to focus all of their attention on Covid response. It took organizations like HANWASH to get to the Country Leader to make sure that WASH had not been eliminated from their priority list.

We've just selected Nepal as our fourth country and they did the same thing. Rotarians in Nepal got to the leadership of USAID in Nepal and said “We need to be doing this for the people of our country.” And they were able as a more localized organization to be able to select their priorities. They weren't omitting Covid from their plan of action, but they weren't sacrificing

WASH for Covid. So it's really getting to the in-country leadership and their collaborative partners to make some of our stuff happen.

**Conclusion:**

Before closing the Annual General Meeting, Chair Neil asked Michael Fernando to say a few words about the World Water Summit in Singapore next year.

**Michael:** First I'd like to express my gratitude to Julia for the wonderful job she's done over the past seven years. I have giant boots to fill. I hope I do justice to the role. Thanks to the Operations Team as well. We are looking forward to Singapore. We've managed to convince Jack Sim (who many of you will know as Chair of the World Toilet Organization) to speak and I am sure that he will a great main speaker. We are starting off strongly and I'm looking forward to building on Julia's legacy.

Thank you very much everyone. I hope you can all make it!

**Mary Beth thanked Michael for his input and concluded:**

In closing, I want to thank all of you for the service that you are providing – not only to our clubs and our districts but to our Rotary world in general. We are changing lives and I look forward to enhancing Imagine Rotary to Creating Hope in the World. I think that we are not only creating hope, but we are creating an opportunity for so many of our world neighbours to have better lives.

Thank you so much for being with us today.