COMMUNITY OVERVIEW

Describe the characteristics (such as geographic information, main sources of income, population size, and access to education/health services) of the specific community where this project will take place.

This project will take place in Ajaba Community, a rural settlement located approximately 15 kilometers from Makurdi town, the state capital of Benue State. The community has a population of about 1,000 residents, primarily engaged in subsistence farming and small-scale trading activities. Major crops cultivated include cassava, maize, and vegetables, with most households earning less than $2 per day. The area experiences distinct wet and dry seasons, with the dry season lasting approximately 5 months each year.

Access to basic services in Ajaba Community is severely limited. Currently, there is no reliable source of clean water, forcing residents to collect water from seasonal streams and unprotected shallow wells. These water sources are often contaminated and dry up during the prolonged dry season, requiring residents (primarily women and children) to walk up to 3 kilometers to fetch water from neighbouring communities.

The community has one primary school, St. Dominic's Catholic School, which serves approximately 250 students but lacks adequate water facilities for sanitation and drinking. The nearest health facility is 8 kilometers away, and waterborne diseases such as diarrhoea, typhoid, and intestinal parasites are common health challenges faced by residents, particularly affecting young children and the elderly.

COLLECTING COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT DATA

When you conducted the assessment, who in the community did you speak to? At least two different community representatives and beneficiaries who are not involved in Rotary (such as teachers, doctors, or community leaders) should be included in the discussions.

Our assessment team consulted with multiple stakeholders within Ajaba Community to ensure comprehensive understanding of the water situation. We met with:

- The community chief and three village elders
- The parish priest of St. Dominic's Catholic Mission
- The headmaster and two teachers from St. Dominic's Catholic School
- A women's cooperative group comprised of 15 members
- Youth representatives from the community

Additionally, we convened a community forum that was attended by approximately 100 community members representing various households and interest groups within the community.

When in the last year did the discussions occur?

The initial discussions with community leaders took place in August 2022. The most recent follow-up meeting with the school representatives, youth and women's cooperative group were conducted in the St. Dominic’s Catholic Mission, Ajaba on

Sunday, 30th March 2025. The larger community forum was held on the same day with a final technical assessment.

What methods did you use to collect information from community members (such as community meetings, interviews, or focus groups)?

We employed multiple methods to collect comprehensive information:

- Individual interviews with community leaders and key stakeholders
- Focus group discussions with the women's cooperative and youth representatives
- A community-wide town hall meeting where residents could openly express their concerns and priorities
- Direct observation of existing water collection practices and water sources
- Technical site assessments to evaluate groundwater potential and suitable locations for the borehole

TARGET POPULATION

Who is directly benefiting from the project? List the groups that will benefit (such as schools, hospitals, vocational training centers, cooperatives, or villages).

The project will directly benefit approximately 1,000 residents of Ajaba Community, including:

- St. Dominic's Catholic School with 250 students and 10 teachers
- St. Dominic's Catholic Mission, which serves as a community gathering center
- 185 households in the immediate vicinity of the water source
- A women's cooperative with 15 members who operate small food processing businesses
- Elderly and physically challenged community members who currently struggle with water collection
- Young children who are most vulnerable to waterborne diseases

Indirect beneficiaries include neighbouring communities who may access the water source during extreme drought conditions and visitors to the mission and school facilities.

Describe the process of how the beneficiaries were identified.

Beneficiaries were identified through a collaborative process with community leaders and stakeholders. Initial meetings with the chief and elders helped establish the community boundaries and population statistics. The St. Dominic's Catholic Mission was identified as an ideal location for the borehole based on:

- Central location accessible to the majority of community members
- Established presence and trust within the community
- Proximity to the school, which is a critical institution requiring water
- Technical suitability for groundwater extraction based on hydrogeological assessment
- Secure location that can be properly maintained and managed

The women's cooperative group provided crucial insights about households most affected by water scarcity, particularly those with elderly or disabled members. School administrators helped identify the student population that would benefit from improved water access. Community mapping exercises during the town hall meeting further refined our understanding of the distribution of beneficiaries across the community.

COMMUNITY STRENGTHS, NEEDS, PRIORITIES, AND PROJECT DESIGN
Describe what matters to members of the community as they were expressed during the assessment.

During our assessment, community members consistently expressed that access to clean, reliable water is their highest priority. Women specifically highlighted the significant time burden of water collection, with many spending 3-4 hours daily walking to distant water sources during dry seasons. Parents and teachers emphasized concerns about children missing school for water collection duties and the prevalence of waterborne illnesses affecting attendance and learning outcomes.

Community members also expressed strong interest in:

- Reducing waterborne diseases that drain family resources through medical expenses
- Creating opportunities for small business development that requires water (brick making, food processing, vegetable cultivation)
- Improving sanitation facilities at the school and in households
- Developing a sustainable water management system that would prevent conflicts over water access
- Ensuring water quality through proper treatment methods

Describe the community's strengths and resources.

Ajaba Community demonstrates several key strengths and resources:
The community has a strong social cohesion and established leadership structure through the chief, elders, and religious institutions. St. Dominic's Catholic Mission has served as a trusted institution within the community for over 10 years, providing not only spiritual guidance but also serving as a center for community development initiatives.

There is an active women's cooperative group with experience in managing community projects and mobilizing local participation. Many community members possess basic construction skills from building their own homes and community structures, which can be leveraged during project implementation.

The community has already demonstrated initiative by attempting to improve their water situation through the digging of shallow wells, although these have proven inadequate. They have established a water committee that collects small fees for maintenance of existing water sources, showing their understanding of sustainability principles.

Technical assessments confirm favourable hydrogeological conditions for a successful borehole, with good groundwater potential in the targeted area. The community has

offered local materials (sand, stones) and volunteer labour as contributions to the project, demonstrating their commitment to ownership.

Describe any challenges and gaps in the community's behaviours, skills, and knowledge.

Despite their strengths, several challenges and gaps exist:
There is limited technical knowledge within the community regarding water treatment processes and borehole maintenance. Many residents practice unsafe water storage methods, increasing contamination risks after collection. Handwashing and other hygiene practices are inconsistently applied due to water scarcity.

The community lacks equipment and technical skills for borehole maintenance and repair, which could threaten long-term sustainability. Previous attempts at organizing water management committees have faced challenges in fee collection and establishing transparent financial systems.

There is a tendency to view water projects as free services rather than community assets requiring ongoing maintenance and investment. Some households express reluctance to pay for water access, even nominal fees for maintenance.

The community lacks expertise in water quality testing and monitoring, which is essential for ensuring the water remains safe for consumption over time. There are also gaps in understanding the connection between sanitation practices and water quality protection.

What issues will the project address, and how does the community currently address those issues?

This project will address the critical issue of insufficient access to clean water in Ajaba Community. Currently, residents address their water needs through unsustainable and often dangerous methods:

During rainy seasons, they collect water from seasonal streams and unprotected shallow wells, which are frequently contaminated with agricultural runoff and human waste. In dry seasons, women and children walk up to 3 kilometers to neighbouring communities to fetch water, spending valuable time that could be used for education or income-generating activities.

Some households attempt to treat water by settling and boiling, but fuel scarcity makes consistent boiling impractical. The school currently collects rainwater during wet seasons using a small tank, but this is insufficient for their needs and unavailable during dry months. During extreme shortages, some families purchase water from mobile vendors at high prices, straining already limited household budgets.

Community members have attempted to organize water committees to maintain existing water points, but without technical training and proper equipment, these efforts have had limited success. The Catholic Mission occasionally provides emergency water delivery during extreme droughts, but this is not a sustainable solution.

Provide the specific details of the project design and how it will solve these issues.

This project will establish a sustainable water system at St. Dominic's Catholic Mission through the following components:

1. Construction of a deep borehole (approximately 120 meters) with a solar submersible pump powered by a hybrid solar-electric system to ensure reliable operation regardless of weather conditions.
2. Installation of a 10,000-liter elevated water storage tank on a 6-meter steel tower to provide gravity-fed distribution with sufficient pressure.
3. Development of a water treatment system using chlorination and filtration to ensure water meets World Health Organization standards for drinking water.
4. Construction of a water distribution point with multiple taps at the Catholic Mission to serve the general community, plus dedicated piping to supply the adjacent school.
5. Construction of public toilet facilities at the adjacent school at Catholic Mission premises.
6. Formation and training of a water management committee comprising community representatives, including women and youth members, who will be trained in:
    - Basic borehole and pump maintenance
    - Water quality testing and monitoring
    - Financial management and record keeping
    - Fee collection systems and transparency practices
7. Implementation of a comprehensive water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) education program for the school and community to promote proper water usage, storage, and hygiene practices.

The project will solve the community's water issues by providing a reliable, centrally located water source that will operate year-round, significantly reducing collection time and improving water quality. The treatment system will address health concerns related to waterborne diseases, while the management committee will ensure long-term sustainability.

Describe the long-term plan for the project (such as oversight, financial responsibilities, and expected behaviour change) after Rotary's involvement ends.

The long-term sustainability of the project will be ensured through:
A formal Water Management Committee (WMC) will be established with clear governance structures, including representation from the Catholic Mission, school administration, women's groups, community leadership and a Rotary Community Corp will be set up and headed by a Rotarian from the Rotary Club of Makurdi. This committee will be officially registered with local authorities to provide legal standing.

Financial sustainability will be achieved through a tiered fee system:

- Households will pay a nominal monthly fee (approximately $0.50-1.00) for access
- The school will contribute a fixed quarterly amount
- The Catholic Mission will provide support for maintenance costs
- Special rates for commercial uses (such as construction)

All collected funds will be deposited in a dedicated bank account with transparent reporting to the community quarterly. A maintenance fund will be established with an initial contribution from the project to cover major repairs.

Technical sustainability will be achieved through:

- Training of at least five community members in basic pump maintenance and minor repairs
- Establishing a relationship with a qualified technician in the nearest town for major repairs
- Creating a spare parts inventory for common replacement needs
- Developing a maintenance schedule and logbook

The WMC will conduct monthly water quality tests and maintain records of system performance. The Catholic Mission has committed to providing oversight of the WMC operations for a minimum of five years after project completion, ensuring accountability and proper management.

Expected behaviour changes include:

- Consistent use of clean water for drinking and cooking
- Improved hygiene practices, particularly handwashing with soap
- Willingness to pay maintenance fees for reliable service
- Community participation in protecting the water source from contamination
- Reduced incidence of waterborne diseases through preventive practices

Regular community meetings will be held to review project performance and address any emerging issues, ensuring the system remains responsive to community needs.

Community Assessment – Ajaba Community Borehole, Makurdi, Nigeria

Community Assessment Team (Right to Left)

Mr. James Ajaba (Project Coordinator for the Community)
Mr. Martin Nyikwagh (Church Leader)
Mr. Isaac Agbenda (Church Secretary)
Rotarian Kerla Sandra Akaa (Rotary Community Corps Coordinator – Rotary Club of Makurdi)
Rotarian Benjamin Gar (President Rotary Club of Makurdi)
Rev Fr. Solomon Uyekima (Reverend of Catholic Church where borehole will be located)
Rotarian Arc. Herbert Pinne (Chair, Rotary Service Projects Committee)
Mr. Fidelis Ajaba (Community Leader)
Mr. Ezekiel Kumaun (Youth Leader)
Mrs. Comfort Agbende (Women's Leader)

Community Assessment meetings – Ajaba Community