

FROM INDIA TO THE BAHAMAS, ROTARY CLUBS IN CARROLL, MARYLAND EXTENDING RELIEF EFFORTS ABROAD

By Akira Kyles [Excerpted from the *Carroll County Times*, September 8, 2019]

From India to the Bahamas, Rotary Clubs in Carroll, Maryland extending relief efforts abroad

Two women draw water from a dug well, a typical rural source of unfiltered water, in Purulia District in eastern India. Local Rotary Clubs have helped with a project to give 17 schools and a village there clean water. (Paul Mahata / Courtesy photo)

Maryland Rotarians, including from Mount Airy and Westminster, have pooled together to lend a helping hand abroad through a project in India and plans for relief in the storm-ravaged Bahamas. Nine Maryland Rotary Clubs pooled together for an international relief project in India to give 17 schools and one village clean water. The nine clubs raised money in about six months after the approval of the project in Purulia District in eastern India in 2016. "These projects are called Global Grant Projects, and they're really big projects, typically \$50,000 to \$60,000," said Paul Mahata, Mount Airy Rotary Club Foundation chair. "These projects last two to three years."

Mahata, project manager of the Global Grant project, grew up in India and is familiar with the area. He expected the project to be complete this winter.

"I know that area well, how much they needed — clean water and sanitation,"

he said. "So, it is based on familiarity of the area and also the needs that the people have. It's a very poor area of India; the average income in that area is about two dollars a day, it's a rural area. So, that's why we chose that area."



Along with helping with the project in India, Mahata will be venturing out to the Bahamas with other Rotarians to aid in relief efforts in response to widespread damage and flooding brought by Hurricane Dorian.

"We are doing several initiatives," Mahata said. "From Maryland, we have a group called Disaster Aid USA, which is headquartered in Lanham,



Maryland. I'm part of that group and we are going there probably in one or two weeks to help out, especially providing water filters, and also providing generators and things like that." Disaster Aid USA, organized by Rotarians, sends volunteers to places that could be flooding or experiencing a hurricane or wind damage. They also help with other

natural disasters like earthquakes, fires or lava flows. After a disaster, they help assess the damage and bring people back on their feet as soon as possible, according to Mahata. "We go after one or two weeks and assess the needs of the people," he said. "It's more of a relief operation and helping them probably build homes, or get them on their feet and give them some resources they might need to get back on their feet." The Rotarians with Disaster Aid USA raise funds in response to different disasters. The organization is fortunate if they can raise \$200,000 to \$300,000 a year, according to Mahata.

The funding for the Global Grant Project is contributed by each of the nine Maryland Rotary Clubs, each of which donated \$2,000, plus a Rotary District match and a Rotary International grant that brought the total to \$52,516, according to David Highfield of the Westminster-based Rotary Club of Bonds Meadow.

The Rotarians' efforts in India are still ongoing, with three schools still underway to get clean water, according to Highfield.

The project has been able to provide clean water to 14 high schools and one village so far, providing clean water to about 26,000 persons in total, Highfield said in an email.

"I feel very satisfied that we could help the people who need it the most," Mahata said.

According to Mahata, the next project might be in Kenya, Africa, within the next year if the site is approved.