

Water for Survival

JOHN LA ROCHE

DIRECTOR (RETIRED WATER ENGINEER)

Water for Survival is a voluntary New Zealand registered charity. We concentrate on assisting people in developing countries to achieve better health through clean water supply and basic sanitation. The emphasis is on community participation. We do not send volunteers into the field, believing in the need for local communities to help themselves, assisted by a little financial (and sometimes technical) help from outside.

Established by a group of New Zealand professional engineers in 1988, we set out to follow the lead of the UK Charity WaterAid which had been established by the leaders of the British water industry in response to the UN International Drinking Water Supply and Sanitation Decade.

To date we have provided financial assistance to 135,000 people in 13 developing countries. Our main activity in the Pacific has been in the Solomon Islands where we have a Representative to monitor and evaluate projects. The New Zealand Government has a subsidy scheme for overseas aid agencies which contributes on a dollar for dollar basis to donations raised. However in order to obtain the subsidy there are many criteria and reporting requirements which must be fulfilled. Most of these requirements are based on good development practice which involves communities making their own decisions. An essential component is community ownership, achieved through participation, fi-

nancial, material and physical contributions and undertaking the responsibility for maintenance of the completed scheme.

We have also been receiving water supply and sanitation project applications on behalf of the Pacific Development and Conservation Trust. This is another NZ based organisation which provides small grants for village type development. Applications to the Trust must be from citizens of South Pacific countries. South Pacific Forum countries including Tokelau, and the Pacific territories of UK, France and USA are eligible

After some difficulties with one of our projects in the Solomon Islands we now require an independent representative in any country where we operate. Slow mail services and difficulties in appreciating local conditions have reinforced this need. There are possible representatives offering in Papua New Guinea, Fiji and the Marshall Islands.

Being completely voluntary, we are able to keep our overhead costs very low - usually between 1 and 2% of our income. Our organisation has Coordinators in seven regions throughout New Zealand all of whom are active in raising funds and promoting Water for Survival. Although most of the money we raise goes to Africa and the Indian subcontinent, we are keen to assist needy communities in the Pacific.

If you would like to be involved or have projects you would like to submit for consideration, please write to Water for Survival, P O Box 6208, Wellesley St, Auckland, New Zealand or phone/fax 64-9-528-9759 or email john@wfs.ak.planet.gn.nz