

Water Project – Cochabamba, Bolivia, Village of Aramasi

In Rotary Year 2003-04 the Rotary Club of Space Center (SCR) led three other clubs (Friendwood, Vienna, and Wintertur) in establishing a Matching Grant Project (MG 56831) in Bolivia. This was an agricultural project in the rural Andean Mountain areas 80 kms outside the City of Cochabamba.

On the trip to the Village of Aramasi outside of the City of Cochabamba in June 2006, a fellow Rotarian, Peter Reichers from Napa Sunrise Club (Napa Valley, CA), accompanied Club member Stan Galanski in examining the mountainous terrain high above this community (about 4 kilometers upstream of the village). The purpose of this topographic review was to determine if a year-round water source could be found or harnessed, so the farmers in that territory could acquire a constant water supply for their crops, versus having to bow to 7 months of near-drought conditions. Their investigation proved that a dam structure could be built high above the village, creating a mile long lake that would provide constant running water to the nearby farmlands. Stan and Peter started collaboration with the local Bolivian Government authorities to see if there were sufficient funds for such a project. After many meetings it was determined that the Tapacari (County) Government only had about 40% of the necessary funds to complete such a dam project. Hence, Peter and Stan returned to the U.S. to review the technical specifications for the dam and begin fund raising for the remainder of the projected funds. The Tapacari Government said they had to spend their money by December 2007 or lose the money altogether.

In June 2007, Stan returned to the Village of Aramasi. During this visit, a meeting was held with representatives from the Tapacari Government, and the villagers. It was determined that a local Civil Engineering Contractor, while not fully funded, was going to start construction of the dam in November 2007. This only put more pressure on the interested Rotarians to try and come up with the complimentary funds (\$67,000) to complete the project. A second visit of the potential dam site was made by Stan, Club President Geoff Atwater, and John Nodalski, Sugarland Rotary Club, Sugarland, TX. John was a member of Living Water, and had experience in large water projects. He confirmed that such a project was viable, but would require careful design.

The Tapacari Government began constructing the dam above the Village of Aramasi in November 2007. Unfortunately, they were only able to build half of the required dimensions and left it standing (in December 2008) until additional funds could be found, either by the government which projected to take another 3 years, or from Rotary. Through some heavy lobbying, The Club was able to combine Club and The Rotary Foundation contributions totaling \$53,000 by March 2008, and get another matching grant approved for the construction of this dam (MG 67468). Stan was able to get the remaining funds from the local NGO (Amistad Mission) who had a vested interest in the success of this project.

After their visit to Tarija, Geoff and Peter rendezvoused with Stan in Cochabamba (June 2008) and proceeded to go to Aramasi once again to witness the progressive state of the dam in the mountains above the village. Sure enough, the Tapacari Government had kept their word and built half a dam (before running out of money). Peter, Geoff, and Stan then met with the Dam Contractor to review his designs, costs, and schedule to complete the dam once the Rotary funds arrived in the Tunari-Cochabamba bank account. A final agreement was made during this visit, that the contractor would finish the dam in 100 days for the same amount he had quoted six months earlier (despite rapid inflation within the country). The local Rotarians (Tunari Club) were asked to keep a close watch on the contractor's progress and periodically report back to the Club and Peter Reichers (who had evolved into a dedicated consultant on the project). If all goes well, the project should be completed by October 2008.

