

## **WATER & SANITATION IN A TIME OF CRISIS**

*(Contributed by John Boot, Director  
of the Nakuru Water and Sanitation  
Team)*



*A shelter box camp in Kenya*

As the tragedy unfolds in Kenya, Rotarians are rallying to alleviate the suffering of many Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs). This is a major crisis with as many as 300,000 IDPs, but the number may be much higher with recent problems in the Rift Valley.

Rotary clubs in Summerland (British Columbia) and Nakuru have partnered on a water and sanitation program in the Rift Valley since 2002. During that time over 1200 Rainwater Harvesting Tanks have been built and a team of trainers supports 22 Rotary Community Corps (RCC) on sanitation, health, agriculture and micro-finance. Currently the program is supported by The Rotary Foundation through a 3H grant which is matched by the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) through the Canadian Rotary Collaboration for International Development (CRCID).

Sadly most of the people serviced by the program were displaced as a result of clashes after the 1992 and 1997 elections. Most settled in permanent camps or on small landholdings along large estates. The late John Mbugua was instrumental in creating this very effective program that helped the resettled IDPs survive and work themselves out of poverty.

After the latest disputed elections the entire process seems to be repeating itself. Initially the problems were primarily focused around the western town of Kisumu and Eldoret resulting in numerous IDPs fleeing to Nakuru for safety.

Shelter Box, a Rotary organization from Cornwall (England) responded almost immediately with shelters for over 6000 IDPs, mostly in Nakuru, and small camps in Rongai and Molo. The RC of Nakuru and local Rotaractors were very active in setting up the camps and supporting the IDPs. Rotarian Phill Cozens, working with Shelter Box, is playing a critical role in setting up the camps. Since the Nakuru Water & Sanitation Team has been unable to get out to the RCCs in the countryside they took responsibility for water and sanitation in the camps.



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After the camp was set up violence spread to Nakuru. As a result of the increasingly tribal nature of the conflicts the camps had to be separated along tribal affiliations. The Kikuyu were based on the Nakuru Showgrounds with about 230 tents and the Kalejin and Kisii based in the Afraha Stadium with another 190 tents. Employees from the Nakuru Water & Sanitation Team, Caroline Karuku and Rebecca Mwangi, administer the camps. George Maini and John Mwangi have been responsible for installing 18 plastic water tanks (5000 litres) and artisans are building latrines as required.

With an increased police and military presence in Nakuru the violence has subsided but IDPs continue to arrive and the need for support continues. The team is now planning a camp with 200 tents for Naivasha but the situation is still precarious. Shelter Box is in great need of financial support with over \$1 million already committed to Kenya. There is also an urgent need for food, clothing and financial support for transport and logistics. The most immediate need is for food supplies and the resources of the IDPs are running low.

While the immediate focus has to be on the displaced people of Kenya, the team continues to focus on the longer term program of supporting communities with a systematic water and sanitation program. Focusing on a combination of short- and long-term strategies the team plans to contribute to a sustainable future for our friends in Kenya.

To learn more check out:

[www.shelterbox.org](http://www.shelterbox.org)

<http://vigilantejournalist.com.blog/>

<http://www.internal-displacement.org/>

<http://www.rotary9200.org>

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