

# OBSERVER

## New Zealand Rotary Revisits Tongoa with Amazing Results

Over the last 3 years a small group of Kiwi Rotarians have been visiting the villages of Bongabonga and Meriu on Tongoa Island one of the Shepherds Group.

Their primary aim, following a request from a Peace Corps worker on the island and the Port Vila Rotary Club, was to help the community to complete a much needed First Aid Post at Bongabonga. This was achieved in June of last year which coincidentally was just after a large earthquake struck. The team noticed that there was considerable damage done to many of the concrete water reservoirs and on hearing this immediately arranged for 2 polytanks to be shipped in and installed while they were there.

Although the Vanuatu Disaster relief agencies have supplied several polytanks to affected areas on the island Bongabonga Village had lost the use of a huge 64000 litre concrete tank which served over 100 people. The village was keen to see the tank repaired but despite all efforts to patch the cracks caused by the earthquake, the tank just wouldn't hold water. This was conveyed to the Rotary group in New Zealand who devised a scheme to permanently reinstate the tank.

The villagers immediately cleaned out 15 years of debris, smoothed any rough edges of concrete, installed the strapping around the tank using specially designed tension clamps and then fitted the liner – all in the first 4 hours of arrival.

The system worked brilliantly and overnight rain immediately began filling the tank.

The Rotary team had always been concerned about keeping insects, especially mosquitoes, out of these water tanks and a simple horticultural shade cloth cover was provided as a cover rather than the usual sheets of corrugated iron. The villagers have been urged to construct a simple thatched cover over this to provide shade and protect the fabric from sunlight.

Also, as a trial, a new type of plastic hand pump was provided to avoid the regular opening and closing of the cover and damage to the liner by buckets and lifting sticks.

This also was a success and the pump was quite capable of lifting water even up to 10 metres in depth. The refurbished tank is equivalent to 10 polytanks!



Funds in this instance were provided by Rotary and other charitable groups in New Zealand and amounted to little more than the cost of one polytank.

It is hoped that in the future this method of repair could be used as a model for reinstating the dozens of similarly damaged and unusable tanks throughout Vanuatu.

With the tank nearing attention was drawn to the state of disrepair of the school building which had also sustained damage during the same earthquake and had been abandoned. At present up to 50 school children are temporarily housed in a small uncompleted and sub standard building near the abandoned school.

One of the Rotary team was a Structural Civil Engineer and he investigated the possibility of reinstating the school building.

The building had originally been extremely well constructed and whilst some cracks were evident, these were considered to be repairable using modern epoxy fillers and adhesives in conjunction with specially designed reinforcing plates.

The foundations were exposed and checked and an Engineers report is being prepared to present to the Vanuatu Education Board. It is hoped that the agencies responsible for the provision of school buildings will assist with the cost of repairs. Rotary groups are keen to provide the expertise and assist where they can.