Adopt a River for Sustainable Development

Processes and Procedures

Contents

Introduction

Adopt a River for Sustainable Development (Adopt-a-River) aims to reduce the global water crisis through focused action on freshwater ecosystems at a local level. The initiative provides a vehicle for engagement and action by community members, private enterprise and other stakeholders concerned about degradation of freshwater environments and the impact this has on sustainable development. Harnessing the power of communities - linked through a global initiative and backed by strong technical expertise - to protect, restore and sustain local freshwater ecosystems and ecosystem services to contribute to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals.

The Adopt-a-River initiative is a partnership between Rotary International, currently represented by Rotary District 9212, and the Freshwater Ecosystems Unit of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP). The objective of Adopt-a-River is to encourage and facilitate Rotary Clubs to protect, restore and sustain local waterbodies in partnership with local communities and other key stakeholders. The primary actors of the initiative are Rotary Clubs that designate a section of a local waterbody on which to focus protection and restoration activities with a goal to improve the ecosystem and the ecosystem services it provides.

This document is aimed primarily at participating Rotary Clubs and those clubs considering joining the Adopt-a-River initiative. The document aims to lay out the general procedures and processes for participating clubs which are designed to give guidance and direction to Adopt-a-River activities while still leaving clubs the freedom to design programmes that best meet the needs of their waterbody and community. Although the initiative is called Adopt a River for Sustainable Development the "adoption" is not restricted to rivers and can include any freshwater system or waterbody including all or parts of aquifers, rivers, lakes, wetlands or estuaries.

Adopt-a-River Programme Strategy Development.

The Adopt-a-River for Sustainable Development, known as Adopt-a-River, is an initiative primarily aimed at Rotary Clubs. The initial focus is on clubs within Rotary District 9212 with a view to expanding the initiative globally. It is intended that the relationship between Rotary Clubs and the waterbody they adopt will be long term.

The steps required for clubs to develop an Adopt-a-River Programme are shown in Figure 1. The first steps involve confirming there is the long-term commitment and interest within the club for the programme and identification of an appropriate waterbody and defining the geographical boundaries of the intervention. It is then important to collect information on the waterbody prior to developing the programme strategy. This can be done by following the

Clean-Up + protocol which combines a clean-up of solid waste in the waterbody with information and data gathering. This data and other information from consultation with the community and other stakeholders can then be used to design a programme strategy to identify the interventions that the club plans to initiate to improve the river. Once the programme strategy has been put in place the main work of implementing the projects can begin. Further information on each of these steps is given in the various sections below.
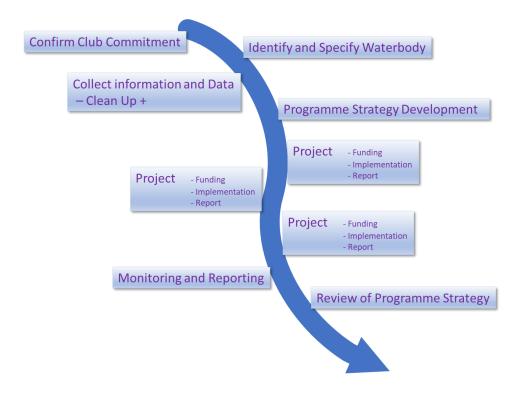
Confirm Club Commitment

Identify and Specify Waterbody

Collect information and Data – Clean Up +

Programme Strategy Development

Project - Funding - Implementation - Report

Project - Funding - Implementation - Report

Project - Funding - Implementation - Report

Monitoring and Reporting

Review of Programme Strategy

Figure 1. Steps required in the progression of an Adopt-a-River Programme

Programme Start-Up

The key first step in an Adopt-a-River programme is to identify a waterbody that is in need of and would benefit from restoration and protection. Identifying and selecting a river or part of a waterbody for adoption will involve a broad investigation of local water bodies, discussion with local community leaders and government agencies. A key aspect of this is determining if the Rotary Club has sufficient commitment, interest and personal for a long-term Adopt-a-River programme. Rotary Clubs may also consider joining forces with one or more other clubs to form a coalition focused on a single waterbody. Irrespective of if it is an individual club or coalition of clubs it is important that a single person is appointed as the key Adopt-a-River contact to ease communication between clubs and the parts of the initiative.

Before beginning an Adopt-a-River programme it is useful to understand the commitment required and clubs are encouraged to contact other participating Rotary Clubs and or the Adopt-a-River Programme Manager for more information. The Adopt-a-River Technical Advisory Group may also be included in these initial discussions to provide technical advice on the resources and commitment required by clubs, and which (section of the) waterbodies would benefit the most from adoption. Once a waterbody has been selected by a Rotary Club, the Adopt-a-River Programme Manager should be notified (a template for this notification is provided in the annex section).

Clean Up +

It is important to gain as much information as possible about the adopted waterbody before decisions are made on the interventions that need to take place. Key inputs into the strategy could be; an understanding of the communities' concerns, priorities and levels of engagement, an identification of the major threats to the river, and a baseline assessment of the state of the river against which programme outcomes can be measured. An understanding of the feasibility of potential projects, and their likely effectiveness is also important.

Clean-Up + is a methodology developed for Adopt-a-River to help communities gain this information whilst also proactively engaging the community in a hands-on intervention in restoring the waterbody. Clean-Up + as the name suggests involves collection of solid waste from the waterbody and assessing the type and source of the waste. In addition, information is gathered about key aspects of the waterbody. This process allows as assessment of which stakeholders and potential partners are interested and engaged and to develop a deeper understanding of the threats facing the waterbody and the resources available to intervene.

Programme Strategy

Once a waterbody has been identified and agreed upon, a broad programme strategy should be created to guide the ongoing projects and activities. The programme strategy should identify the major threats that are impacting the waterway now and may do so in the future. It should identify key stakeholders including community groups and representatives that have been consulted and may be involved in the programme. The programme strategy will then outline the projects that will be implemented to achieve the objectives of the strategy and how success will be measured. The strategy should be linked to broader strategies such as government policies and plans, and the Sustainable Development Goals.

A template has been development for the creation of Adopt-a-River programme strategies and is available as an annex to this document. The Adopt-a-River Technical Advisory Group and Programme Manager may be of assistance in developing and reviewing the programme strategies.

Community Engagement and Communication

Community engagement is critical to the success and sustainability of Adopt-a-River programmes. The community are critical stakeholders and should be included in planning and decision making as well as implementation and monitoring of projects. Communities can be mobilized through their local political, administrative, and cultural leaders to provide input into the programme strategy, its objectives, and priorities.

Communities are not single homogenous groups and identifying different community groups and their relationship with the river can be complex. It is important to understand that opinions, concerns, needs and priorities will vary within and between communities. Clear and active communication with community groups and the public is important to manage the broader community's expectations, settle their possible misinterpretation of the programme and influence their acceptance and participation in project implementation. The media can be used for sensitization, especially for the benefit of stakeholders with low interest in the freshwater ecosystem.

Monitoring and Evaluation

To better understand the successes and achievements of an Adopt-a- River programme it is important to instigate a strong monitoring and evaluation strategy. A monitoring and evaluation framework will also be able to identify and address problems that arise during the implementation process and to allow real-time adjustments to the strategy. An important component of a good monitoring and evaluation plan is strong baseline data of the state of the waterbody before any activities begin and clear objectives of what the programme aims to achieve. Monitoring may involve testing of water quality through accredited labs as well as other indicator measures such as measuring solid waste build up, public satisfaction surveys or ecological assessments.

Within the broader programme each individual project will require monitoring and evaluation to measure success and learn lessons for future projects and the overall programme. Identifying successful projects and activities and communicating this success, to the local and broader Rotary community is important to generate support and enthusiasm for the programme.

The Adopt-a-River Technical Advisory Group and Programme Manager will assist Rotary Clubs in developing and articulating objectives, and indicators for monitoring and evaluations of programmes. The Programme Manager will also collect and disseminate reports on programmes, projects and activities to help build and support the Adopt-a-River Initiative and identify best practice to further enhance future projects.

Projects

The programme strategy will guide the specific projects to be implemented to protect and restore the selected waterbody. Projects will either be directly implemented by the Rotary Club or by an implementing partner such as a community group or other agency. The individual projects will target the specific threats impacting the river as identified during the assessment and combiner to create an overall improvement in the freshwater ecosystem as envisioned by the programme strategy. Projects may be single 'one-off' activities or made up of multiple activities implemented over a longer period. While all projects should fall within the overall programme strategy some may be relatively opportunistic taking advantage of changing events and attitudes, funding opportunities, or links to other projects. The project activities will be related but not limited to:

- River clean-up from solid waste
- Water quality monitoring and management
- Riverbank restoration / beautification including tree and grass planting
- Improved rural sanitation and sewage treatment
- Addressing return flows and wastewater treatment from commercial farming, urban settlements, industry, hotels, and lodges
- Freshwater ecosystem (and ecosystem services) protection and restoration
- Promoting community policing/surveillance
- Awareness raising and education campaigns
- Sustainable farming and land-use practices to mitigate erosion and river pollution
- Restoration of riverine habitats for fish, birds and other animal species

To ensure efficiency, effectiveness and sustainability of project interventions, community based, and participatory approaches will be used throughout the planning, implementation, and monitoring phases. The communities living near the rivers will especially be involved in the design and implementation of project interventions. Projects should also be designed to link local level action with district and national level policies, authorities and associated strategies.

Depending on the issues being addressed, the Rotary Club will develop a project to be implemented in a section of the adopted waterbody or its catchment area. The projects will, where appropriate, promote nature-based solutions with the aim of maximizing positive impacts to the environment and sustainability. Projects should aim to have a component of community empowerment - for example through creation of awareness on pollution of the rivers and the impacts of the same to the communities, responsibility of the communities and links to other stakeholder groups and to authorities.

Even if projects will be locally focused, the ambition of the initiative is that projects should be strategic in nature, should take a multi-stakeholder perspective and be innovative, replicable and scalable (both in terms of scaling up and scaling out). Emphasis should also be given to projects with a policy integration and institution building potential. Alignment with national and

international goals and priorities, such as national Sustainable Development Goal strategies and plans should be ensured through linkage with the programme strategy.

Funding Sources and Options

Resources for projects and activities should, as much as is possible, come from the broader community surrounding the adopted river. Engaging the community to provide time, labour and skills is important to build a sense of ownership which can lead more sustainable programmes. Local private enterprise may also be a source of funding or in-kind support. In addition, the Adopt-a-River Core Fund, which will cover the costs of the management and oversight of the initiative, will also provide a source for small to medium size grants to selected projects submitted by participating Rotary Clubs.

Community Support

The key to long term sustainable action is strong community engagement and support. It is vital that the community, including community-based organisations, private enterprise and local government are actively involved in participating and supporting the Adopt-a-River program. This support can take the form of the donation of labour or skilled work, donation or loan of equipment and supplies as well as direct financial support through the donation of funds.

Public fundraising activities for specific projects can also be an excellent way to engage and mobilise the community in protecting the river. In addition, designing projects to allow community members to contribute by donating their time, labour and skills can be both cost effective and lead to longer term participation and ownership from individuals and groups

Rotary Funds

Rotary Clubs may apply for Global Grants from The Rotary Foundation which may require additional matching funds from the Adopt-a-River Core Fund or other community sources. The total amounts will be recorded as part of the resources and impact of the club programme and reported as a component of the broader initiative.

The Core Fund

A central tenet of the Adopt a River for Sustainable Development Initiative is the creation of the Adopt-a-River Core Fund, which will be populated by interested partners and influential members of both UNEP and Rotary, including from the private sector and, potentially, national authorities. Additionally, Rotary Clubs from around the world, that are interested in participating in the program for the positive effects intended on the environment, will directly contribute to the Core Fund, which will be considered as part of the World Community Service programme.

The purpose of the Core Fund is to support and encourage the ongoing Adopt-a-River programmes at the Rotary Club level by funding specific interventions and projects to address root causes and improve the adopted site.

The Core Fund will be held and administered by UNEP and the use and disbursement of funds will be governed by the Adopt-a-River Steering Committee. Funds will be used exclusively for the communication, management and running of the Adopt-a-River initiative and disbursed, upon application, to Rotary Clubs for the completion of Adopt-a-River projects. The assessment of proposals and decisions on disbursements will be made by the Steering Committee based on predetermined priorities set each year.

Applying to the Core Fund

Rotary Clubs that have adopted a waterbody and developed and submitted a Programme Strategy to the Adopt a River Steering Committee are eligible to receive funding. Currently, the Adopt-a-River initiative is only being run within Rotary District 9212 so only clubs within this district are able to submit funding proposals. Guidance on the current priorities and targets of the Core Fund can be obtained by contacting the Adopt-a-River Programme Manager. The Adopt-a-River Technical Advisory Group may provide assistance to clubs to prepare appropriate proposals to the Core Fund.

Projects should be designed to positively impact the adopted waterbody and should fall with the programme strategy for that waterbody. Depending on the issues being addressed, the proposed project will be implemented within the waterbody or it's broader catchment area. The projects will, where appropriate promote nature-based solutions with an aim towards maximizing positive impacts to the environment and sustainability. Projects should aim to actively engage with the community and have a positive impact on community empowerment. Although projects will, necessarily, be locally focused, the ambition is that they would be strategic in nature, take a multi-stakeholder perspective and be innovative, replicable and scale-able (both in terms of scaling up and scaling out). Alignment with national and international goals and priorities, such as national Sustainable Development Goal strategies and plans will be prioritised.

Submission of Proposals

Proposals should be submitted by Rotary Clubs following the outline provided in the request for proposal. Participating Rotary Clubs will be informed by the Adopt-a-River Programme Manager when proposals should be submitted. Proposals should clearly identify the activities that will be carried out and the linkages with the Programme Strategy previously submitted by the club. Proposals should highlight the linkages of the proposed activities with the community and other stakeholders as well as with broader local, national or international projects, plans or initiatives.

An expected budget will be submitted as part of the project proposal. The Core Fund will cover expenses that are necessary for carrying out the activity, comply with the principles of sound financial management, in particular best value for money and cost-effectiveness and will be incurred by the Rotary Club or their Partners during the implementing period of the project and be recorded in the Beneficiary's or the Beneficiary's partners' accounts be identifiable and verifiable, and be backed up by originals of supporting documents. Such expenses may include:

- purchase or rental costs for equipment and supplies (new) specifically for the purposes of the project, and costs of services, provided they correspond to market rates

- the cost of consumables
- costs arising directly from the requirements of the contract (dissemination of information, evaluation specific to the action, audit, translation, printing, insurance, etc.) including financial service costs (in particular the cost of transfers and financial guarantees)

The following costs are not eligible for inclusion and payment by the Adopt a River for Sustainable Development Core Fund:

- debts and provisions for losses or debts
- salaries of government official and civil servants
- project preparation activities
- costs already incurred before the signing of the agreement
- non-project related expenditures
- interest owed
- items already financed in another framework
- purchases of land or buildings
- currency exchange losses
- credits to third parties
- any acts of terrorism, corruption, child labour, purchase of arms or other activities banned by the UN.

Assessment of Proposals

Proposals will be assessed by the Adopt a River Steering Committee The proposals will be assessed with reference to a predetermined list of priorities which will be made available to Rotary Clubs preparing proposals. Important areas for assessment of the proposals will be:

- Strong plans for community engagement and evidence of strong links with communities that live in close proximity to or depend upon the waterbody and
- Evidence of consultation and linkage with relevant government and non-government entities
- Plans and evidence for the long-term sustainability of either the project to be funded or the clubs Adopt-a-River programme.
- Awareness of and alignment with broader local, regional or national goals and strategies that may impact the water body. In addition, alignment with the broader goals of both Rotary and UNEP including the SDGs
- Evidence that the planned project is strongly relevant to the water body in question and addresses an area of concern for that specific waterbody
- Proposals that include plans to monitor the outcomes of the project at both in terms of the actions of the project and their broader impact on the health of the waterbody
- Proposals with a high level of co-financing
- Projects that are innovative or expand the scope or scale of newly proven concepts and are able to be scaled up within or between waterbodies.

Dissemination of Funds

Funds for successful proposals submitted by Rotary Clubs will be disseminated from the Core Fund through the Rotary District, initially this will be restricted to Rotary District 9212. The Rotary District will complete an agreement with UNEP and will be responsible for the use and reporting of funds to the Adopt-a-River Steering Committee.

Monitoring and Reporting of Funds

The monitoring and reporting of project outcomes and the use of funds is important not only for accountability but also to identify successes and best practice to further enhance the Adopt a River Initiative. It is the responsibility of Rotary Clubs receiving funding from the Adopt-a-River Core Fund to maintain appropriate records and documentation and report the use of funds to the Adopt a River Steering Committee through the Rotary District in line with UNEP defined fiduciary standards. In addition, Rotary Clubs should report project outcomes for those projects supported by the Core Fund as well as other projects and the progress of their Adopt a River Programme as a whole.

The Adopt a River Programme Manager is responsible for the collection and assessment of spending reports as well as completing the appropriate reporting to donors and supporters. The Steering Committee will also work to identify key successes and best practice and communicate this to other clubs in the Adopt a River initiative and well as the broader freshwater conservation community.

Further Information

Freshwater ecosystems are complex environments that are impacted and impact many other ecosystems and communities both nearby and at distance. These complex interconnections can mean understanding and planning restoration work can be difficult. It is important to seek guidance from the Adopt a River Steering Committee but also to work with local government agencies and research institutions. In additions some useful references are provided below.

UNEP Programme (2018), A Framework for Freshwater Ecosystem Management. http://www.unenvironment.org/resources/publication/framework-freshwater-ecosystem-management
UNEP (2018), Nature-based Solutions for Water Management: The Quick Guide (forthcoming August 2018). Draft at http://www.unepdhi.org/

Marline Litter Network, best available technologies and best management practices (including for rivers), http://marinelitternetwork.engr.uga.edu/resources/batbmp/

UNEP (2018), Two minutes on oceans with Jim Toomey. At https://www.unenvironment.org/news-and-stories/story/two-minutes-oceans-jim-toomey

Annex

Annex 1: Site Identification and Selection Template

Name of Waterbody and Site Name :
Rotary District :
Country :
Rotary Club :
Club President :
Service Projects Lead :
Adopt-a-River Focal Point :

Location of waterbody

- *Provide GPS Coordinates and/or an attached map and also include a written description of the site e.g. River C from the confluence with Stream B downstream to the edge of the city boundary.*

Description of Site

- *Include the type of waterbody and other waterbodies connected to it. e.g. River C is a mid-sized river that flows through Townsville city. It is joined by stream B which drains Lake A.*
- *A description of the current state of the waterbody. A visual description is adequate including general appearance, bankside and aquatic vegetation, presence or absence of notable fauna e.g. fish species. If water quality or waste assessment data is available then it should be included.*
- *A summary of the major threats impacting the waterbody e.g. water extraction, high sediment load from upstream erosion, solid waste from dump site or stormwater inflow, high nutrient levels, other point source pollution.*

Stakeholder Mapping

- *Summarize the key stakeholders that impact and are impacted by the waterbody. Identify key community groups and their contacts or points of entry, relevant government agencies with a mandate or interest in the waterbody, and any other agencies or entities with ongoing projects or interest in the waterbody*

Potential Projects

- *Briefly describe why this waterbody/site was chosen and summarize the potential projects envisaged to protect, restore, and sustain the waterbody*

Annex 2: Programme Strategy Template

Name of Waterbody and Site Name :

Rotary District :

Country :

Rotary Club :

Club President :

Service Projects Lead :

Adopt-a-River Focal Point :

Location of waterbody

- *Provide GPS Coordinates and/or an attached map, also include a written description of the site location e.g. River C from the confluence with Stream B downstream to the edge of the city boundary.*

Description of Site

- *The type of waterbody including connectivity to other waterways.*
- *A description of the current state of the waterbody. A visual description including general appearance, bankside and aquatic vegetation, presence or absence of notable fauna e.g. fish species. Include other data that is available such as:*
  - o *Seasonal river flow or water level data*
  - o *Water quality data such as turbidity, trophic status, nutrient concentration, and concentrations of pollutants such as heavy metals*
  - o *Solid waste assessments*
  - o *Ecosystem assessment*

Major threats

- List of all major threats or activities impacting the waterbody. This may include
  - o *water extraction*
  - o *high sediment load from upstream erosion*
  - o *solid waste from dump site or stormwater inflow*
  - o *high nutrient levels*
  - o *point source pollution*

Stakeholders

- *Identify the key stakeholders consulted in the development of this program strategy or who will be actively engaged in future projects. Include:*
  - o *Mapping of community groups and interests*
  - o *Relevant government agencies and national or regional strategies or initiatives that may impact the waterbody*
  - o *Other Agencies with ongoing projects impacting the river if known*

Objectives and indicators

- *Identify the key objective(s) of the programme and indicators that will identify success e.g.:*
    - o *Make Lake A swimmable – E. coli and pollutant concentrations are below levels that will harm human health*
    - o *Improve the recreational value of River C – Recreational users of River C are positive about the experience*
    - o *Restore freshwater fish to Stream B – Freshwater fish are seen in Stream B within 5 years.*

Project Identification

- *Indicate projects that have been identified to achieve the objectives of the strategy.*
    - o *State how the projects address the impacts that are causing a negative outcome in the waterbody, the planned timeframes and how success will be determined*
    - o *Note that this does not restrict further projects being added to the programme strategy as opportunity allows*

Monitoring and Reporting Strategy

- *Indicate how the success of the programme will be determined and how this will be communicated to the community and other stakeholders and the Adopt a River Steering Committee. Include baseline data or information than can be used to measure changes and improvements against.*