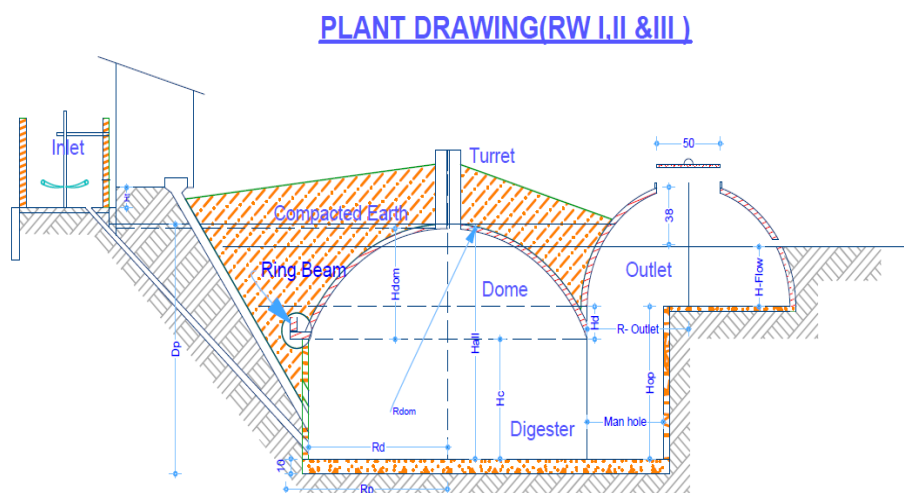


One of our very good friends and a regular visitor to Sidcup RC, Martin Steel, works out in Rwanda for Veterinaires Sans Frontières (VSF) on a project financed by the Belgian Government. Martin is also the Secretary, soon to be President, of the Butare RC in Huye District in Southern Rwanda. Martin is also a Sidcup man, having attended Chislehurst & Sidcup Grammar School.

A couple of years ago he approached Sidcup RC to initiate a joint project to provide biodigesters to 100 very poor farmers living in poor conditions on less than \$1.7 a day (supporting a family, too).

Biodigesters are simply a mortar and bricks basic construction of a hole about 4m<sup>3</sup> volume, sealed with a dome, into which water, animal dung and other vegetable wastes – even human wastes – are deposited. In this sealed chamber, anaerobic digestion takes place and gases suitable for cooking with are produced, as well as a very useable (not so harsh) manure slurry, ideal for crop fertiliser. The benefits to the poor farmers and their families are huge.

A diagram of a constructed biodigester looks like this:-



and here's a photograph of a biodigester under construction:-



Martin proposed that a Global Grant be applied for from The Rotary Foundation (TRF) which is located at the its HQ in Evanston, Illinois in the USA.

Bill Head-Rapson, last year's President of Sidcup RC, took up the challenge and, working with Martin, via lots of e-mails, Skype calls to Rwanda and visits to UK, worked up a project financing and management plan to implement the project. Both Bill and Martin made many presentations to RCs in Rwanda and UK so as to provide an understanding of the project, generate interest in it and raise funds.

The total project value is \$50,224 and, whilst Rwandan RCs have managed to input \$4,750, 12 RCs in District 1120 (Kent and East Sussex area) managed to raise \$18,030 to ensure that the project could proceed. TRF has provided the balance of funding, \$27,464 and these funds have been transferred to the project account in Rwanda, under a controlled draw-down scheme, to get the project under way.

Management of the funds and project activities is essential and this is the responsibility of Bill, Martin and other trusted Rotarians in Rwanda. Disbursement of funds is being responsibly done via micro-finance institutions (MFIs) and they are overseen and closely controlled by VSF, government departments and the farmers themselves via a farmers' co-operative organisation named IMBARAGA.

Training and sustainability are the key objectives, as well as improvement in life style and quality of life for these most disadvantaged people. Training, especially, is a key element and an important costing, taking up 14% of all project costs. Material and installation costs – sand, cement, concrete blocks, pipes, cookers, labour - are half the project costs. Other costs include travel (there are many miles between sites and a limited number of project trainers, managers, etc.

After all this patient preparation work, project implementation is imminent and, to ensure that it gets off to a good start and in a structured way, Bill Head-Rapson visited Rwanda in May to check out how the project will be run and that the monies will be properly used. It all looks very positive. The exciting times are have started. We wish all concerned will enjoy turning this imaginative scheme into positive, healthy futures for the Rwandan farmers.