



August, 2024
Volume 9 Issue 2

Rotary partnerships scaling up circular economy

This month ESRAG celebrates the huge potential of partnering beyond Rotary to scale up circular economy as a solution to the world's environmental crises. Our August writers report on partnerships in the US, The Netherlands, Chile, Italy, Mexico and India. Speakers for our August Projects + webinars report on innovative environmental work in Uganda, Kenya, and Zimbabwe.

We are also thrilled to share links to the presentations at ESRAG's 2024 Annual General Meeting, which you can watch and share to publicize the resources we offer free to Rotary, Rotaract, and Interact clubs around the world. Our reach is growing thanks to the gifted young professionals who are now working for ESRAG part-time. Read about our amazing social media editor Martina Lastikova and share our Task Force Coordinator job posting.



Here is the lineup for August, 2024:

- Help lithium-ion battery recycling sweep the US.
- Annual General Meeting abounds in news and tools. Share the videos!
- Team up with worms to turn trash into treasure (Chile)
- RigenereMI: how Italian Rotaractors advance digital inclusion + circular economy.
- Recycling solar panels: a huge opportunity (The Netherlands)
- Great news! Reusing solar panels counts towards million panel goal.
- Mexican students gain safe water without plastic waste.
- Erase e-waste! (India)
- Lower the carbon footprint of your favorite summer recipes.
- Welcoming Martina Lastikova
- ESRAG seeks Task Force Coordinator: apply by August 11.
- Mourning MK Sivabal (ESRAG South Asia Chapter)
- August 2024 Projects + Seminars

Seeking your news and skills: Here are the upcoming topics for ESRAG's newsletter and blog:

September is on pollution solutions, and October is on food systems. Please send your articles or story leads to newsletter@esrag.org by August 15 for next month's issue, or by Sept. 15 for October. Let us know if you'd prefer to be interviewed. Also, ESRAG co-founder Karen Kendrick-Hands has been asked to coordinate ESRAG's presence at the **2025 Rotary International Convention in Calgary, Canada**. There are a lot of opportunities! Contact her at kdkhands@esrag.org if you'd like to be part of the team.

Photo: restoring used computers in Milan. Credit: Rotaract Club of Milano Sforza.

Help lithium-ion battery recycling sweep the US

By Ariel Miller, ESRAG Newsletter Editor



American Clubs have an unprecedented opportunity to accelerate the recovery of lithium, cobalt, copper, and nickel from the lithium-ion batteries that consumers discard in the United States. In April, 2024 ESRAG and Redwood Materials published a [website](#) with instructions and marketing materials to make it seamless for clubs to organize recycling events for rechargeable electric devices that abound in American households, from electric toothbrushes to power tools. *Graphic: a template from the ESRAG-Redwood resource kit for Rotarians.*

Currently only 5% of the lithium-ion batteries in the US are recycled.

By signing up your Club, you can help vastly improve that statistic as we work together to expand lithium-ion recycling awareness and action across the entire nation through the vast network of Rotary, Rotaract, and Interact clubs. ESRAG has already succeeded in organizing collection events in 15 of the 50 states, and has worked with Redwood to streamline the process so it can be rapidly expanded.

The resources ESRAG and Redwood have developed include posters, social media templates, volunteer forms, news releases, and a safety video. Redwood is developing agreements with retailers to serve as drop-off sites, and is organizing systems for safely delivering devices to the recycling plant at no cost to consumers.

[Read More](#)

AGM abounds in news and tools. Share the videos!

By Laurie Zuckerman, ESRAG Director and Communications Chair

Feeling overwhelmed by the world's environmental crises? ESRAG is catalyzing worldwide Rotary teamwork to meet the challenge. More than 300 people registered to attend or watch the recordings of the 2024 ESRAG Annual General Meeting: [the Climate](#)



**Yasar Atacik,
ESRAG Chair
(2023-24)**

[Roadmap](#), addressing the crisis with solutions for a thriving planet. Over 200 attended in real time, with many staying well after the meeting to join Q&A or join ESRAG's Open House Meet & Greet Zoom rooms.

You can keep the eco-energy going, too. Each five- to ten-minute presentation (links below) would be ideal for starting group discussions in clubs or environmental meetings.

2023-24 ESRAG Chair Dr. Yasar Atacik outlined the stark studies on the climate, biodiversity, and pollution crisis, then pivoted to list what ESRAG leaders are doing to solve this, including how they are working with Rotary International at the highest levels. Please listen and share his motivating [Introduction to Climate Roadmap](#). [Read More](#)

Team up with worms to turn trash into treasure

By Alex Arancibia Quintana, DVM, Past President, Rotary Club of Los Ángeles, Chile, D 4355



"Feliz como una lumbriz," or "Happy as an earthworm:" that's what the Rotary Club of Los Ángeles calls our newest environmental project. On May 18, 2024, one day before World Recycling Day, we held our first provincial workshop on how to use vermiculture to transform organic waste into valuable compost. The workshop was attended by 31 teachers from educational units in the Biobío Province of Chile, five individuals, and officers of the Los Ángeles Army Detachment, who will use vermiculture to treat the manure generated by their horses and mules.

The Happy as an Earthworm project operates primarily with schools, but we also invited a representative of PRODESAL, a local development program of the Chilean Ministry of Agriculture. Each municipality has a PRODESAL team providing technical assistance to micro-producers: farmers struggling to support their families despite having to work in fragile ecosystems under pressure from climate change, water shortages, and other challenges. In many locations, PRODESAL uses school facilities to develop activities with the parents of the students and the wider community. Depending on the results of this first outreach, we hope to expand the project to other communes with PRODESAL.

Pollution by organic waste is a global problem. Vermiculture is an economical way to transform the problem of organic waste into a valuable resource: vermicompost. Teachers in our province have

supported this project and are planning to incorporate it into their curriculum. Counting just the educational units represented by the 31 teachers, this workshop has the potential to reach 6,000 students and 700 teachers as direct beneficiaries. By disseminating information about vermiculture, schools have the potential to greatly multiply the impact in students' homes and in the community at large.

The total cost of the project was only US\$1,500: US\$1,000 from a Rotary Foundation District Grant (D 4355, Chile) and US\$500 from the Rotary Club of Los Angeles. Click to read more about how we launched this project, and resources your club can use to replicate it.

Photo credit: Rotary Club of Los Angeles

[Read More](#)

RigeneraMI: digital inclusion + circular economy

By Ariel Miller, ESRAG Newsletter Editor

The Rotaract Club of Milano Sforza is winning international recognition for [RigeneraMI](#), its high-impact, low-cost solution to the growing crisis of e-waste. Partnering with several Italian Rotary Clubs and the Rotaract Club Città Metropolitana di Milano, they solicit donations of used PCs and tablets, refurbish them, and donate them to schools and nonprofits who need them. You can translate "RigeneraMi" as "fix me up!" in English, but the clever project name also honors the Club's home city of Milan, which is abbreviated "MI."

"Our focus on e-waste was actually entirely serendipitous," explains Rotaractor Elisabetta Cervellini. "Initially, our only focus for the project was digital inclusion. We had a standing collaboration with a nursing home, where we would go and teach senior citizens how to use phones and tablets so that they could be independent, FaceTime with their families, and fight boredom."

"Secondly, RigeneraMI was born in 2021, on the back hand of the pandemic. Something that captured our attention was the fact that the computer had become a basic need. Each child needed their own device to follow school, and each adult needed their own device to work. However, if you're from a poor family and have two or three kids, that means every kid needs to have their individual device, and that can get very costly. Therefore, we wanted to find a way to refurbish used computers and give them to those in need for free. It was only later that we realized the huge potential of the project around sustainability and waste reduction."

This circular economy project is a powerful climate action. "The average CO2 emissions during the production of a new laptop are approximately 331 kg, along with the extraction of 1,200 kg of stones, gravel, residues, and slag," the Rotaractors explain in a [White Paper](#) about the project. In just three years, they calculate that they have prevented 71,827 kg of CO2 emissions by restoring 217 devices- 83.55% of those donated to date!



For an average cost of only €30-100 per device, RigeneraMI volunteers had restored and donated 271 desktops, laptops, and tablets by June of 2024, and delivered them to communities in Italy, Norway, Guinea Bissau, and the Democratic Republic of Congo. They have been able to get diplomats or NGO staff to carry devices to the African countries, saving on shipping costs.

[Read More](#)

Recycling solar panels: a huge opportunity

By Geert Jan Pastoor, ESRAG Renewable Energy Task Force

Solar panels are gradually becoming an indispensable part of our society. Clean energy is an important answer to the climate problem, and therefore an indispensable link in the transition from fossil to renewable energy. But both in rich and developing countries, the capital cost of solar installations is still far beyond reach for many people and organizations that could benefit from this power source. Rotary and Rotaract Clubs can help by sponsoring used or surplus solar panels which have been certified for re-use in the kinds of projects I will describe here.

ZONNEXT The orphanage for solar panels

Become a partner!



Though many solar panels are replaced before the end of their useful life, many of our old Dutch panels disappear into concrete in Belgium. To offer a better alternative, we submitted plans with a consortium and experts in 2021 to enable high-quality raw material recovery and reuse of solar panels. Here is a [video](#) about the circular economy opportunities, created for the MBO College in Lelystad.

One of the experts was scientist and circular economy expert and former Dutch environment minister Professor [Jacqueline Cramer](#). [TNO](#) (the Netherlands Organization for Applied Scientific Research) also helped us in this process. Unfortunately, the responsible producer organization, the OPEN Foundation, did not want to cooperate with the plans. Without this cooperation we have not yet been able to set up a factory for this.

But that has not stopped us from working with renewed enthusiasm on making the reuse of solar panels possible, because why would you throw away solar panels that are still working? To do so, we organized the [ZonNext](#) Foundation, which matches discarded solar panels to a suitable applicant. As Weee Nederland points out, "when a panel is tested to high standards and found suitable, we will provide a full report." Second hand panels can be very effective in regions such as in Eastern or Southern Europe where land costs are lower than the Netherlands, or in regions with more intense or longer hours of sunshine, like Africa.

[Read More](#)

Great news! Reusing solar panels counts towards million panel goal

By Elizabeth Henke, MD, Lead, Million Solar Panel Challenge



Great news!

Reusing older solar panels qualifies for the Million Solar Panel Challenge. Rotarians and Rotaractors who deploy used solar panels are encouraged to log these panels as part of the Million Solar Panels Challenge.

Whether you buy new or used solar panels for yourself or for those less fortunate, please log your solar panels [here](https://esrag.org/million-solar-panel/) to help us get to our million panel goal.

Mexican students gain safe water without plastic waste

By Natalia Luque Sánchez, ESRAG Latin American correspondent

How can we prevent 500 plastic water bottles from being bought and discharged every day? And become the inspiration of a circular economy project to bring water to a community?

This question was posed by the Rotarians from the Cuernavaca Juárez Rotary Club of District 4185. The Club members found that the students and personnel from many local schools have no drinking water available at the facilities. Usually a tanker truck comes to the schools four times a week to supply non-potable water for the running and maintenance of the facility, so the easiest way for students and workers to hydrate every day is to buy water in plastic bottles. So, an average of 400 to 500 water bottles are thrown away every day in the location.



The Club, looking at this difficult situation for the communities and using the experience from a previous project in San Juan Tlacontenco, came up with a clever solution that will not only prevent the use of so much disposable plastic, but establish a permanent solution to the need for potable water.

Photos, RC Cuernavaca Juárez. Above: the project team at the water kiosk at the school. [Read More](#)

Erase e-waste!

By SK Gupta, Director, ESRAG South Asia Chapter

The [IT industry alone is responsible for around 2% of greenhouse gas emissions](#): as much as the entire airline industry! Indian Rotary clubs in RID 3131 are



On 21st April, 2024 (10am -1pm)

MAESTROS
Salunke Vihar Road , Wanawadi



E - waste : Awareness and Collection Project

E-waste

- TV, Microwave
- Mobile, Pen drives
- Headphone, Camera
- Computer, Mouse
- Washing machine, Fridge

Plastic waste

- Polythene bags
- Bottles & cans
- Packaging wrappers
- Storage/food containers
- Plastic toys & games

E - waste contains lead, cadmium, chromium, nickel, mercury, cobalt etc. apart from any other dangerous chemicals and metals. Plastic and E - waste pollute the environment and is harmful for people's health if disposed unscientifically.

We conduct E-waste Awareness and Collection Drives. And dispose it scintifically through authorised recyclers.

Connect - 9146010629, 8380913904 Rotary- 9503535384

taking action to reduce the exponential growth of e-waste and teach our communities how to replace crude and unsustainable methods for its disposal.

When e-waste is discarded without being recycled, all the natural resources that went into its production are lost. In addition to resource loss, e-waste contains toxic additives or hazardous substances, such as mercury, brominated flame retardants (BFR), chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs), and more. Low collection rates, inefficient disposal, and poor treatment put at risk both the environment and human health.

We're working to educate our communities to extend the useful life of their electronics and to connect them to the best available ways to dispose of these devices responsibly at the end of their useful life.

Here are the elements of our campaign:

- Create awareness among masses of the impacts of e-waste on the environment.
- Reduce the volume of e-waste by teaching people to apply the 5R principle: **Rethink** the idea of buying a new device, **Repair** the one you have, **Reuse** it (such as projects delivering used PCs to people in need), **Recycle** the components, and connect consumers to an authorized **Recycler**.
- Bridge the gap of connection between residents and authorized recyclers.
- Route the e-waste disposal through authorized recycler for formal disposal.

Project implementation: In the Pune District, RID 3131, we began working on this problem in December of 2019 by spreading awareness, and our campaign has been building momentum.

[Read More](#)

Lower the carbon footprint of your favorite summer recipes

By Kris Cameron and Dawn Angela Byford, Co-Chairs, ESRAG Plant-Rich Diet Taskforce

For those of us who live in colder climates, warmer weather means cooking outside or barbeque season. While barbeques and cook-outs typically include putting meat on a grill, those who choose lower carbon, more planet-friendly foods for their own health, as well as the climate and environment, have many delicious options to fill their plates.

Burgers and Hot Dogs: There are a variety of plant-based burger options on the market, such as Impossible, Beyond, and Boca. You can even make



your own, like this recipe for [Smoky Black Bean Beet Burgers](#). Beef has the [highest carbon footprint](#) of any of the foods we eat, and excessive consumption is associated with many chronic illnesses. There are many delicious plant-based hot dog, bratwurst, and sausage products available as well. The [World Health Organization](#) has published data on the link between cured meats and cancer risk.

Side Dishes: Swap out pork and beans for regular baked beans. Many brands offer this summer staple without animal ingredients.

Making a salad that calls for mayonnaise? Traditional mayonnaise contains eggs. It takes a whopping 53 gallons of water to produce a single egg! Plant-based mayonnaise is easily found in most grocery stores. Depending on the flavor profile you're after, tahini can also add a creamy texture to your dishes.

In lieu of mozzarella or feta cheese for bruschetta or salads, [drained and marinated tofu](#) is a tasty and healthy substitute. Want cheese on that burger? There are many delicious plant-based cheeses on the market to enhance your plant-based burger. Double bonus points!

The Plant-Powered Potluck group, hosted by Wenatchee Confluence Rotarians, gathered at the Ridge 2 River Animal Sanctuary for a summer barbeque. Here are some of their favorite recipes for delicious, low-carbon, super-healthy summer fare:

- [Crunchy Broccoli Salad](#)
- [Vegan Potato Salad](#)
- ["No Tuna" Salad](#)
- [Icebox Salad](#) (simply use plant-based yogurt)
- [New Mexican Bean Salad](#)
- [Collard Green Spring Rolls](#)
- More [vegan summer salads](#)

Learn more from the ESRAG Plant-Rich Diet Task Force: visit our [webpage](#), email us at plantrich@esrag.org, like us on [Facebook](#) or [Instagram](#), and take our [15-Day Plant-Rich Diet Challenge](#).

Photo: an August 2023 dinner in Wenatchee, Washington USA which inspired many guests to sign up for ESRAG's Plant-Rich Diet Challenge.

Welcoming Martina Lastikova

By Ariel Miller, ESRAG Newsletter Editor



An extraordinary young leader, Martina Lasikova, has joined ESRAG's communications team as Content Creator. In just a few weeks, she has already significantly increased the reach of ESRAG news and project reporting through her skilled work on our blog and social media accounts.

But her contributions go far beyond communications expertise. Just 30 years old, she brings a passionate commitment to peacemaking and environmental solutions, honed by her front-line work designing and implementing programs to empower young people from African refugees to Rotaractors in northern Europe. Because of her multinational

experience in building solutions to humanitarian challenges, she understands the potential impact of the content we're trying to share.

Her ardor for ESRAG's mission and her strong support for her new colleagues at ESRAG is a huge boost to our morale as we strive to engage the worldwide Rotary network in action on the world's growing environmental crises. "I always believed in the power of storytelling as a tool for advocacy," she says. This has led her to take on leadership roles in content creation, PR, and social media, giving her insight into "the power of effective strategic communication."

As a sample of her wonderful writing, read her essay, "[Cool to Care](#)," on the ethical consumerism of young adults. Giving vivid examples to make her case, she says, "far from being snowflakes, we would argue that millennials and generation Z are at the forefront of leading robust efforts to ensure our future is liveable." We are thrilled she can help ESRAG connect to the determination and experience of these generations.

[Read More](#)

ESRAG seeks Task Force Coordinator: apply by Aug. 11

By Laurie Zuckerman, ESRAG Director and Communications Chair

Are you passionate about the environment and want to make a positive impact on the world? Would you enjoy assisting in the management of ESRAG's Task Forces? These teams:

- Are incubators for activities that address the climate, biodiversity, and pollution crisis.
- Inspire Rotary clubs around the world to take personal and community change.
- Provide technical assistance and facilitate new projects and initiatives.

Position Overview: As a Part-Time Task Force Coordinator, you will play a crucial role in helping us promote sustainable, environmental projects and



practices. You assist in managing the development of new Task Forces, expansion of existing Task Forces, and essential reporting and record-keeping activities that align with ESRAG's strategic goals and objectives and promote the key programs and initiatives of ESRAG's Task Forces.

The application deadline is Sunday, 11 August at 11:59 UTC.

Click "read more" for a summary of the responsibilities, qualifications, compensation, and how to apply. Please share this opportunity with qualified people in your network!

[Read More](#)

Mourning MK Sivabal

By Dr. Mina Venkataraman, ESRAG Chair for Communities Action for Safe Water



MK Sivabal, Co-Chair of ESRAG's South Asia Chapter, died May 24 to the shock and grief of our colleagues.

He was 58.

Past President of the Rotary Club of Erode in the Indian state of Tamil Nadu, MK Sivabal was an agronomist and an entrepreneur. His passion was working with the Rotarian community and creating collaborations to get big projects off the ground. During the COVID lockdown, his team in Rotary District 3202 put up a 400-bed hospital in 45 days. As an ESRAG member, he and three co-presidents of their period canvassed almost all of the districts in Zone 5 to popularise ESRAG.

His active rallying for environmental projects gave impetus to pollinator park projects and record-breaking seed ball projects. He was the driving force in getting the whole district behind adopting the restoration and protection of the 206-km River Bhavani as a long-term project of the District. As coordinator of the project, he set up subcommittees in Rotary Clubs along the river and organised the presidents in those areas in conducting cleanups and meetings

with local administration and community leaders. He coined the name "Namma Bhavani" - "our Bhavani" for the project, and he was instrumental in negotiating an MoU with the World Wildlife Fund to provide technical help, as well as the MoU with the National River Conservation Directorate.

His current focus was on launching biochar projects to improve the fertility of farmlands by increasing the carbon content of the soil, and in organising teams to remove invasive species.

We have lost in him a good leader, a great friend, and a committed environmentalist. His teams have committed themselves to continue his vision.

August 2024 Projects+ Seminars

Starting with a webinar on effective climate communication, our August 2024 schedule showcases programs in Africa. ESRAG's weekly Projects +

Seminars are free and open to all via Zoom: invite your friends and colleagues within and beyond. These meetings draw a lively worldwide group of people to hear and discuss an expert presentation on environmental issues and effective solutions. If you register for any of the webinars, you can sign up for notifications of upcoming events. These will include links to recordings of past talks, which are an ideal length for a club meeting.



August 7: Being an ambassador for climate solutions in your community. 2 pm UTC

Dr. Brett Matulis

Brett Matulis will introduce and provide an overview of a Climate Ambassador training course where you can learn about climate solutions and effective ways of communicating about climate change. He is the Communities Program Director at ecoAmerica, where he works to engage and activate America's communities in climate action and advocacy. He is formerly an academic and has worked in international development on projects with the UN Environment Programme, World Food Programme, and UNICEF. His work is guided by the priorities of people whose voices are too often neglected or ignored within environmental decision-making. [Register here.](#)

August 13: Refugees and climate change. 2 pm UTC

Jules Mongane

Refugees are very vulnerable to and highly affected by climate change across the globe. Jules Mongane will give his front-line perspective as a refugee from the Democratic Republic of Congo who is currently living in the Nakivale Refugee Settlement in Uganda. He is a community activist who is passionate in fostering positive change among refugees living in Nakivale, and founder of Oasis Organisation Nakivale. [Register here.](#)

August 21: The role of youth in advancing climate action. 2 pm UTC

Cinderella Ndlovu

ESRAG Director Cinderella Ndlovu, an environmental engineer from Zimbabwe, explains the importance of supporting youth-led initiatives in climate action. She will provide first-hand examples from her experience as director of [Green Hut Trust](#), a youth-led environmental non-profit based in Zimbabwe which is committed to combating climate change, addressing environmental degradation, and battling pollution through innovative, tailored programs. [Register here.](#)

August 28: Solar Safe Water - supporting all 7 of Rotary's Areas of Focus. 2 pm UTC

Gunilla Östberg

The Solar Safe Water initiative provides essential support to people in off-grid areas who need access to clean water for drinking, cooking, and hygiene. The project has proven to have a remarkable impact on sustainable development, aligning with Rotary's seven areas of focus and the UN's Agenda 2030. ESRAG Director Gunilla Östberg has over 30 years of experience from leading business positions in various industries. Her focus has been to use sustainability as a strategic tool to create competitiveness, growth and profitability in companies and cities. [Register here](#) for the seminar.

Photo (from top left, clockwise: Brett Matulis, Jules Mongane, Cinderella Ndlovu, and Gunilla Östberg)

The Environmental Sustainability Rotary Action Group

operates in accordance with Rotary International policy, but is not an agency of, or controlled by, Rotary International.

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