SHARING A SENSE OF COMMUNITY

n its quest to improve quality of life for the less-advantaged, Reach Out To Asia (ROTA) empowers individuals to make a difference to their local communities by investing in, and building, the infrastructure to support education. By giving individuals the opportunity to unlock their own potential, ROTA is helping to meet one of Qatar Foundation’s primary goals. Our achievements, however, would not be possible without the tireless efforts of our volunteers, who give so freely in assisting those in need across Asia. While much work is undertaken to develop ROTA’s overseas programs, our volunteers also seek to support those within Qatar in many of our activities.

It was a pleasure for ROTA to welcome delegates of the 20th Annual iEARN International Conference and 17th Youth Summit to Qatar. The event, hosted in July, offered youth the opportunity to learn the skills necessary to utilize Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in education. ROTA is also indebted to its young volunteers who gave their time to support in the organizing and fulfillment of activities at the Conference.

During the Holy Month of Ramadan, ROTA’s focus was on sharing and supporting underprivileged members of society. In collaboration with ROTA’s corporate partners, our volunteers made a difference to less fortunate communities. They packed basic groceries for distribution to those in need. They participated in celebratory iftars, by sharing their meal with elderly and special needs members of society. They helped children in the Hamad Hospital Pediatric Unit and the Children’s Rehabilitation Centre take part in the festival of Garangao, bringing joy and laughter to the event. They renovated the homes of two families in need, undertaking home maintenance, repainting, and furniture assembly.

During this time of reflection on the poverty and hardship of others, our volunteers never fail to communicate to us how they feel they too have benefited. In gaining an insight into the lives of others and finding enrichment in the act of giving, they feel a sense of learning.

Shared experiences are fundamental to the act of volunteering and we at ROTA are proud to acknowledge the efforts of our volunteers. International Volunteer Day on 5 December will give a focused opportunity to thank some of these committed individuals.

Throughout this newsletter issue you will see examples of volunteering in action and the tremendous results it can bring about.

Essa Al Mannai, Executive Director, ROTA

EDUCATING FUTURE GENERATIONS

ROTA AND ACTION IN NEPAL GIVE CHILDREN AN EDUCATION SO THAT THEY CAN GROW UP TO SUPPORT THEMSELVES AND THEIR COMMUNITIES.
Rota has been iEARN’s official Qatar representative since 2008. Since then, 411 teachers have attended ROTA’s iEARN Qatar workshops, and participated in a range of projects.

Rota Chairperson Visits Cambodia to Assess School Project

Hun Sen school is one of ROTA’s largest projects in South East Asia

Hun Sen students performed a folk dance for Her Excellency Sheikha Al Mayassa bint Hamad Al Thani.

He Excellency Sheikha Al Mayassa bint Hamad Al Thani, ROTA Chairperson, recently visited the Hun Sen ROTA School in the Kandal Province of the Kingdom of Cambodia to assess one of the largest and most important educational ROTA projects. The school, which covers 75,000 square meters, has 1,000 students and 70 teachers at present, and is expected to accommodate 2,500 students when it reaches full capacity in a few years. Cambodia is currently one of ROTA’s top priorities as the country strives to overcome issues such as a lack of qualified teachers and training.

During her visit, Her Excellency Sheikha Al Mayassa bint Hamad Al Thani toured the school’s buildings, attended a briefing by the school’s acting director on the ongoing modernisation and development of the educational process, and participated in a tree planting ceremony in the school’s garden to emphasise the importance of preserving the environment.

Her Excellency concluded her school tour by watching a folk dance performance, before visiting the house of one of the Hun Sen female students who has close ties with the Qatari female students who previously visited her school.

The student’s family expressed their sincere appreciation to Her Excellency for visiting the school.

The Hun Sen-ROTA secondary and technical public school was constructed in Kandal Province during 2009-2010, under the terms of a Memorandum of Understanding entered into with the Cambodian Ministry of Education.

The first-of-its-kind school in Cambodia not only gives internationally recognized levels of education, but also supports the local community.

Commenting on the visit of Her Excellency, Labor and Social Affairs Minister Dr. Mohammad bin Ali Al-Dawoody, the Ambassador of Qatar to Cambodia, said: “Cambodian officials, led by His Majesty King Norodom Sihamoni, have expressed their admiration for this ROTA educational project. The local officials thank the State of Qatar and appreciate its efforts in supporting education in the Kingdom of Cambodia.”

Rota helps iEARN celebrate its 25th anniversary

ROTA helped the International Education and Resource Network (IERN) mark its 25th anniversary from 1 to 6 July, 2013, by welcoming the event to the region for the first time.

In hosting the 2013 International Conference and 25th Youth Summit, IERN brought together 700 teachers, students, and ICT specialists from 50 countries to discuss how technology is deployed in the classroom. ROTA provided scholarships for 50 teachers and students to travel to Qatar to attend.

Essa Al Mannai, Executive Director, ROTA, explained how important IERN was: “This year’s forum proved that the IERN agenda has never been more relevant. We are working together with all the educators to achieve progress and to realize our aspirations of a world where everyone is connected, and where everyone can benefit from and participate in the digital world,” he said. In hosting IERN, ROTA was partnered by the Supreme Education Council (SEC), with RasGas as Gold Sponsor and Qatar Vinyl Company as Bronze Sponsor.

The conference programme encompassed eight plenary sessions, two panel discussions, and over 50 workshops and presentations.

Students participated in cultural activities highlighting their traditions and celebrating the diversity of the event.

Rota also hosted a special iftar for 20 people at ROTA’s official Qatar representative since 2008.

Since then, 411 teachers have attended ROTA’s iEARN Qatar workshops, and participated in a range of projects.

Helping teachers to help children

 Numerous educators and students in Indonesia have benefited from ROTA’s Teacher Quality Improvement Program (TQI) over the last three years. The TQI program, appeared in collaboration with Worldline Qatar, has been successful in improving teachers’ educating techniques throughout the whole of the country. It is estimated, that by the summer of 2014, 4,500 teachers will have attended TQI workshops, which will benefit 180,000 students across 500 schools.

Launched by ROTA in 2010, the program, designed to help teachers develop their educating and delivery skills, is being implemented by the Tolatu Foundation. Through a series of workshops, teachers are helped to prepare better plans and understand classroom dynamics.

“Our TQI program has allowed an extraordinary opportunity for teachers and students to access quality education that will be instrumental in shaping the future of many young people,” said Jonathan Mee, ROTA International Program Manager.
ROTA and Vodafone Qatar celebrate ongoing partnership

Five-year collaboration benefiting communities in Asia

In 2012, Vodafone Qatar confirmed the strength of its partnership with ROTA by donating $2.5 million to support education and community initiatives implemented in Qatar, Nepal, and Indonesia.

“ROTA is grateful to Vodafone Qatar for its generosity in allowing us to continue our mission of helping people affected by crisis across Asia and around the world to have continuous access to relevant and high-quality primary and secondary education,” said Essa Al Mannai, Executive Director, ROTA.

“Our partnership has contributed directly to the mission of community service alliance, and helped us meet the needs of those we serve.”

Senior executives and project managers representing ROTA and Vodafone Qatar attended a review meeting recently to assess the progress of their education and community projects, and to establish future plans to take the partnership forward.

Working together, ROTA and Vodafone Qatar have created a number of life-changing educational initiatives, bringing hope of a better future to individuals and communities across Asia.

“With Vodafone’s help, ROTA has been able to support innovative and exciting education projects in countries that need them most. Here in Qatar, youth leaders have benefited from the establishment of ten ROTA Youth Service Clubs that are changing the shape of community service in Qatar,” said Al Mannai.

“Vodafone’s purpose has always been to make a world of difference, whether in the way people communicate, or in improving their quality of life,” explained Dana Haidan, Head of Corporate Responsibility, Vodafone Qatar.

“Our partnership with ROTA has resulted in life-changing programs and initiatives for tens of thousands of adults and children living in troubled communities across Asia. We are proud of our relationship with ROTA, and we look forward to collaborating on new projects in the years ahead,” added Haidan.

Indonesia
Teachers in Bayat, Indonesia, along with Indonesian Ministry of Education officials, are learning modern teaching skills through the Teacher Quality Improvement Initiative.

The Qatar-Titian Scholarship Fund, sponsored by Vodafone Qatar, provides access to higher education for 200 disadvantaged students in the village of Bayat, which was devastated by an earthquake in 2006. In 2012, 46 students moved on to pursue further tertiary education, while others were offered well-paid jobs.

Nepal
Teachers in Nepal are reaping the benefits of learning modern training techniques. In a country where many towns and villages are prone to natural disasters such as earthquakes and flooding, ROTA and Vodafone Qatar are helping to build the capacity of communities to withstand disaster through risk reduction and safe school standards.

Qatar
During 2012, over 650 students, 50 teachers, and 400 families benefited from volunteer trips to Cambodia, Bangladesh, and Indonesia, sponsored by ROTA and Vodafone Qatar. Student and adult volunteers experienced the true spirit of volunteerism, and fostered bonds across cultural boundaries, achieving a broader understanding and new respect for the educational and social needs of communities in Asia.

In Qatar, ten ROTA Youth Service Clubs, designed to unlock the potential of the country’s youth, have been established. To date, more than 300 Youth Service Club members have taken part in Youth Service Leadership training to develop skills needed to tackle community projects.
**ACTING TO HELP COMMUNITIES**

**RANIA ABOU MOSELEH, ROTA INTERNATIONAL PROGRAM SPECIALIST, TALKS ABOUT HER ROLE IN NEPAL AND LEBANON.**

In my current role as a ROTA International Program Specialist, I am responsible for the organization’s projects in Lebanon and Nepal.

Being with ROTA since 2006, I have witnessed the organization grow in terms of its capacity and the number of programs supported, and I am grateful for the opportunities I have been given. ROTA is flexible enough to respond efficiently and acts with a high level of responsibility. The role has really defined who I am because the pleasure derived from seeing an individual change and grow has stayed with me. I cannot give this up; I mean, I couldn’t just work in a bank, for instance.

One of our initial programs was to assist a school reconstruction program in south Lebanon, rebuilding 22 schools, and this was really a springboard start for ROTA development in terms of structure and strategy. The role of the International Program Specialist developed from these first projects. We are constantly making assessments of the current situation, identifying why the key program stakeholders are, and deciding which organizations ROTA should be working with. We assess strategy, follow-up and evaluate programs to find the niche ROTA should fill in a country.

No two days are the same. Some are spent in the office but others are in the field, meeting those putting plans into action, and some of the individuals and communities being supported.

Our largest project in Lebanon is at the Nahr El-Bared Palestinian refugee camp, where ROTA operates through a local partner An-4-all. The support scheme gives pupils the facilities to complete their homework. Many are living in cramped conditions and simply do not have the space to study.

**COMMUNITY VOICES**

**GGPS DHERO KABAL, PAKISTAN**

Supported by ROTA, the GGPS Dhero Kabal INSPIRE project phase-II school is located in a remote area of Pakistan, home to a strongly conservative community. The school had a poor infrastructure after a period of militancy and new enrollment had fallen to zero. Following intervention and comprehensive teacher training, community engagement was undertaken along with rebuilding and securing the school’s water supply. Families were involved and convinced of the importance of female education through an active Parent Teacher Committee (PTC). Principal of GGPS Dhero Kabal, Mrs Shaheena explains: “Security was one of the major excuses of parents for not sending their girls to school but I am thankful to all PTC members, who with the support of the project, have made me a proud head of an institute where girls come not only to get educated, but also love coming to.”

In recognizing the benefits a closeness to nature can bring, a garden was established for the pupils. Anuela, a physically challenged student, says: “I love coming to school as I have friends here and my teacher tells me that I can be a doctor and help other children to get better every day.”

**COMMUNITY EDUCATION PROGRAMS IN AFGHANISTAN**

Hamida is a ten-year-old student studying under the Community Based Education (CBE) system, which is operated in Khost, Ghazi, and Kapisa Provinces and is implemented by CARE International Afghanistan and ROTA. She explains how CBE allows her to pursue her dream of becoming a nurse. She says: “I asked my mother to persuade my father to allow me to go to school. Finally, my father agreed to our scheme Hamida helped her family on their farm. She says: “I am thankful to my parents, teachers, and the project’s support, which has made a difference in my ability to stay enrolled and pursue my education beyond elementary school.”
Central to ROTA’s mission is a vision of a world in which individuals - particularly young people - are empowered to realize their full potential through the ability to shape the development of their own communities. In Qatar, ROTA engages individuals, especially the youth community, in addressing educational and development challenges both at home and abroad. The recent activities shown below emphasize this commitment.

Qatar
The home of a disadvantaged family in Al Shamal received a makeover thanks to ROTA’s Ramadan 2013 Project, sponsored by Oxy Qatar. During the three-day renovation in July, a team of ROTA volunteers carried out essential maintenance and repairs, painted, assembled, and installed new furniture to transform the house. ROTA collaborated with Qatar Foundation’s Facilities Management Directorate in the projects and received expertise from engineers, architects, and contractors.

Qatar
ROTA volunteers visited Nepal on 19 September, 2013, as part of Vodafone Qatar-sponsored ROTA project in the country to support the role of schools in disaster risk reduction. Twenty-four professionals from Qatar Foundation, Vodafone Qatar, and ROTA’s own Volunteer Database taught students, took part in team building activities, and got to know the local community and the environment in which they live.

10th Annual iEARN International Conference and 17th Youth Summit
ROTA successfully organized the 20th Annual iEARN International Conference and 17th Youth Summit at Qatar National Convention Centre in July 2013. Around 700 teachers, students, and specialists in information technology from 50 countries participated, sharing their knowledge and learning how technology is being used in education through an interactive program of events.