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Plumbers Without Borders

May 5, 2015 by [Charli K. Matthews](#)

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“It takes a whole lot of people to make something happen,” declares Domenico DiGregorio, President and Volunteer Plumber for [Plumbers Without Borders](#). “Safe water and sanitation are basic human rights. We’re trying to help people in developing countries alleviate water and sanitation poverty by connecting volunteer plumbers and industry professionals with the non-profit organizations that are initiating projects to address these water and sanitation problems.”

Since its founding in 2010, [Plumbers Without Borders](#) has been very active in trying to build their database of volunteer professionals and affect change in countries with overwhelming poverty and poor infrastructure. DiGregorio was contacted in April 2012 by the doctors and nurses of [Seattle Alliance Outreach](#). The SAO team who had already been in operation for several years helping bring much needed surgical improvements to Ethiopia, requested support from PWB to design the plumbing system for a new dialysis clinic (KFDCO) in Addis Ababa. The Kidney Failure Dialysis Charity Organization is in the process of building the new clinic in an effort to save the lives of Ethiopians with kidney failure disease. While construction of the new dialysis clinic is underway, DiGregorio and his partners, Fred Volkers and Fred Schilling,



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continue to make important connections. One such connection is HaitiTec, a Haitian community college preparing young Haitians to rebuild their country.

HaitiTec partnered with Plumbers Without Borders after a project was initiated in 2012 by a student group from Seattle University. The students had designed a special filtration system and originally contacted PWB for help installing these systems in a clinic in Haiti. DiGregorio's partner, Fred Schilling, volunteered to go to Haiti to help them install the filtration systems. When he arrived in Haiti, Schilling connected with HaitiTec to train local students on how to install these systems. The students from HaitiTec actually installed these systems in the clinic, with Schilling providing support and oversight. The clinic got clean water as soon as the filtration systems were working, and thousands of people coming through the clinic were positively impacted. And equally importantly, the people were taught how to maintain all the components of the system. "It is great to put the equipment in, but they also need instruction on how to maintain these systems," explains DiGregorio, pointing out the dire need for education.

Education and global networking are the driving forces behind Plumbers Without Borders' efforts. DiGregorio is in the process of applying to the Gates Foundation in an effort to financially support their collaborative initiatives in Haiti. PWB has partnered with HaitiTec to help train local women to become plumbing workers. "This grant we are applying for is specifically designed to empower women. Empowering women is a big deal. They are half of society and are just as capable as men to act as plumbers as well as any other industry professional. They just need the training. We are trying to create this program with HaitiTec to train 50 women per year for the next 2 years." The program they are working with HaitiTec to design involves training students on how to install and maintain SaTo toilets, among other skills. SaTo toilets were invented and are manufactured by American Standard, who has also partnered with PWB to support their sanitation initiatives in Haiti. The SaTo sanitary toilet pan closes off latrine pits eliminating sewage gas odors, decreasing the transmission of disease improving the hygienic health of the household. "There are 10 million people in Haiti and almost 8 million do not have access to sanitary facilities. Haitians still recovering from the natural disaster that leveled their country are experiencing cholera and chronic diarrhea as a result of not

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having any real facilities to use. We want to mobilize people to help the situation,” said Digregorio.

Mobilizing individuals takes time, but DiGregorio and his partners are committed to building up their database. With about 400 plumbers currently in the PWB database, they are working to connect plumbers and industry professionals around the world to non-profit groups that need immediate support for their projects.

DONATE MAY 5th – GIVEBIG 2015 Event

Help improve the lives of people living without access to safe water and sanitation. The Seattle Foundation is hosting a ONE-DAY Online Giving Event for Plumbers Without Borders on Tuesday, May 5th. During this event, **all donations will be doubled** (up to \$1500). All donations to PWB, no matter the amount, will be entered in drawings throughout the day, midnight to midnight, to win a bonus \$1000 for Plumbers Without Borders!

For more information about [Plumbers Without Borders](#), or to learn how you can help people alleviate water and sanitation poverty, please visit www.plumberswithoutborders.org.

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