

MARCH 2026

Rotary

AFRICA | SOUTH

10 RI President
in Africa

25 When Rivers
Rose

30 Fields of
Opportunity



ROTARY INTERNATIONAL CONVENTION

TAIPEI, TAIWAN | 13-17 JUNE 2026



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WELCOME

Sarah van Heerden - Editor in Chief

There is a quiet momentum winding through this issue. It is not loud or obvious, but patient and steady.

It is there in a school where water now flows, in a field of rubble that became a sports facility, in a project recognised internationally, or at a cycle race that starts before sunrise. Different places.

Different projects. Different budgets. Same thread. Rotary moves.

Across Africa, some districts are expanding and attracting new energy. Others are adjusting and asking hard questions about growth and retention. What matters is not which column a district falls into, but whether it is moving.

Momentum in Rotary rarely comes from one big idea. It comes from accumulated action. From embracing diversity and progress, from sharing knowledge and skills. It may be a grant application, a club trying something new, a Rotaractor taking ownership of a project or a district leader showing up, having hard discussions and making hard decisions.

What stands out in this issue, and in Rotary, is not perfection. It is persistence.

Rotary projects do not always grab headlines, but the backstory is usually the same: someone kept going.

Rotary is sometimes described as traditional. Perhaps. Tradition, at its best, is consistency strengthened as it evolves to include the new, the young and the different over time. Consistency builds trust. Adaptation and inclusion build continuity.

We can embrace the core elements of our traditions and grow them. The danger comes from cementing them in place. Living in the past, shunning progress, clinging to the excuse that this is “the way Rotary has always been,” while insisting younger people do not want to join.

No. That perception kills clubs and turns people away. If you want people to join, show them the value it adds to their lives. The 2026 State of the World’s Volunteerism Report reinforces this and offers direction for better engagement. Membership is not number-driven; it is experience and needs-driven.

As for the very tired adage, “this is the way that Rotary has always been,” I say balderdash!

From its founding in the early 1900s, Rotary has been about progression, about embracing and delivering change. Paul Harris said, “If Rotary is to realise its proper destiny, it must be evolutionary at all times, revolutionary on occasion.”

He also wisely noted, “This is a changing world; we must be prepared to change with it. The story of Rotary will have to be written again and again.”

The challenge for every club, whether flourishing or finding its footing, is to protect that momentum. To ask not only what has been achieved, but what is next.

Rotary is not static.

It is in motion.

The question is whether we are prepared to keep it moving.



President's message

The reach of community

Water connects us all. From a river in a remote forest to a stream running past a city neighbourhood, freshwater ecosystems sustain humanity. Yet these waters are increasingly under strain. Pollution, overuse and climate pressures remind us that protecting freshwater is a global challenge.

Rotary has always believed change begins within communities. Now we are working to see how far the impact of community action can travel. When local service is connected, measured and shared, it becomes a force that extends beyond geography and borders.

A water project led by the Rotary Club of Panamá Nordeste exemplifies this idea. The project served indigenous communities in Panama's Darién province, a region accessible only by canoe and small boat. With no roads, limited electricity and reliance on untreated river water, families faced serious health risks.

To reach these communities, Rotarians had to rethink how supplies and services could be delivered. Working with a partner club in the United States and a specialised water

organisation, they introduced solar-powered water treatment systems for an area without access to an electrical grid. Local leaders were trained to operate and maintain the system, ensuring that clean water would flow long after installation crews departed.

The results were immediate. Children who once missed school due to illness returned to classrooms. No longer needing to haul water from rivers, adults gained time and strength to work and support their families. What began as a water project became a foundation for healthier, more resilient communities.

This is how we extend our reach: combine local leadership with global partnerships, technical expertise and long-term thinking.

That same spirit is at the heart of Rotary's partnership with the United Nations Environment Programme through the Community Action for Fresh Water initiative.

Around the world, Rotary and Rotaract clubs are restoring waterways, protecting wetlands and safeguarding vital freshwater sources. By collecting data to map and measure this work, we can better understand its impact and show how local service contributes to worldwide solutions. Data is not an end. It is a tool that helps us learn and improve so that Rotary's service delivers real, measurable change. Each project entered and waterway restored adds to a shared story of stewardship and responsibility (for more, see communityactionforfreshwater.org).

As we observe Water, Sanitation and Hygiene Month, I encourage you to reflect on the freshwater systems that sustain your community and the role Rotary can play in protecting them.

When we connect local action to a global vision, we strengthen Rotary's ability to make lasting change. Together, by extending our reach and working side by side, we truly Unite for Good.

FRANCESCO AREZZO
President, Rotary International



Foundation Trustee Chair's Message

It starts with water

Since 2013, The Rotary Foundation has invested more than \$230 million to support thousands of water, sanitation and hygiene initiatives. Behind these numbers is Rotary's unique approach. Rather than offering one-time fixes, we train communities to manage systems for generations, moving beyond charity to lasting change. Erica Gwynn, manager of Rotary's water, sanitation and hygiene area of focus, shares her perspective:

I have worked with hundreds of members, providing technical support to improve the sustainability and impact of their projects. During site visits, I am struck not only by their dedication but by how far-reaching their impact truly is, oftentimes in ways no one anticipated.

In northern Uganda for RI work, I met a Rotary member who had been a child soldier in the rebel

Lord's Resistance Army and escaped. During the conflict, he said, schools and health care facilities became places of refuge. Years later, after joining Rotary, he wanted to give back. He volunteered to improve water and sanitation in those same schools and facilities, which were once again centres of refuge, this time for the health, safety and vitality of the entire community.

In Maharashtra, India, I witnessed how our Programmes of Scale grant initiative, Partners for Water Access and Better Harvests in India, is bringing irrigation to a traditional farming region that gave women a voice. Though the women couldn't own land, the water project enabled them to engage in silviculture, or care for forests and other income-generating activities. They became knowledgeable about farming techniques, increasing their economic agency and dignity.

It's no coincidence that water challenges are most acute in areas affected by conflict. In Haiti, I have seen how these projects are central to rebuilding resilience in communities recovering from instability and violence. I see the same theme playing out everywhere: These projects deliver so much more than clean water. They boost Rotary's other areas of focus and are a source of safety, pride and hope.

Indeed, water projects improve health, foster economic opportunity and amplify education through increased school attendance, especially for girls who no longer spend hours fetching water. And they fight poverty.

By giving to our Foundation and volunteering in water projects, you are part of this success. Everything we do opens an opportunity for someone, somewhere.

HOLGER KNAACK
Foundation Trustee Chair



2026 Convention countdown

Only in Taipei

There are so many ways to find connection and fun at the Rotary International Convention.

Beyond the inspiring convention programme itself, you'll have your pick of special experiences when you go to Taiwan 13-17 June. Highlights include the opera, a gathering for Rotary Youth Exchange alumni and supporters and even an around-the-island bike trip.

Your friends in Taipei have organised Rotary nights at the national theatre for opera and at the National Symphony Orchestra. You're invited to a host hospitality night banquet with exquisite Chinese cuisine and exciting performances. Or raise money to end polio: Choose from a week long bike trip ahead of the convention that circles the island or a 3K or 12.5K run on 13 June.

Seeing the sights is simple with planned tours in Chinese or English, ranging from a half-day Taipei itinerary to five days exploring

Taiwan's diverse landscapes. One of the many shorter Taipei tours is sure to match your interests: national landmarks, nature spaces, "old streets" for shopping and traditional arts, to name a few.

Rotary Youth Exchange gets the spotlight at two ticketed events. At a banquet on 12 June, Youth Exchange leaders and alumni can mingle and hear speakers share their stories of how the programme promotes global understanding. The next day, the Rotary Youth Exchange Preconvention is the spot to network with leaders, participants and people interested in getting involved.

Rotary President Francesco Arezzo says something special happens when members come together at the convention. "It is this feeling that anything is possible," he says.

That feeling comes alive in Taipei and Arezzo has a request: Come experience it together.



Creating Member Value

How East Africa is Reshaping Rotary's Future

By PDG Alex Nyaga, District 9212

Across East Africa, Rotary is quietly undergoing one of its most important transformations in decades. In Districts 9212, 9213 and 9214, growth has not been accidental. It has been intentional, adaptive and member-centred. The result is a Rotary experience that is younger, more diverse, more flexible and more relevant to today's professionals and communities.

A defining shift has been the deliberate focus on enhancing the membership experience rather than simply increasing headcount. Clubs that have grown consistently over the years share a common philosophy: people stay where they feel valued, heard and able to make a real impact. Structured onboarding, meaningful early engagement and visible leadership

pathways have ensured that new members quickly find purpose within their clubs.

One of the most striking trends across these districts is that Rotary is getting younger. More young professionals are joining Rotary than ever before, driven in part by the intentional conversion of Rotaractors into Rotarians. These are individuals who already understand Rotary's values and are eager to continue their service journey, now with greater influence, responsibility and reach.

Clubs that have embraced this transition have benefited from fresh energy, digital fluency and new ways of thinking about service and fellowship.

This shift has been amplified through strategic public relations and storytelling. East

African clubs and districts are telling their Rotary stories on platforms where young professionals already engage: social media, digital publications, podcasts and professional networks. Rotary is no longer waiting to be discovered. It is showing up where conversations are already happening.

Equally transformative has been the adoption of diverse club models. Corporate clubs have enabled professionals to serve without disconnecting from demanding careers. E-clubs have opened Rotary to members whose schedules or locations make traditional meetings difficult.

New clubs in suburban and residential areas have taken Rotary closer to where people live, reducing barriers to participation and strengthening local impact. Together, these models have expanded Rotary's footprint far beyond traditional city centres.

Another powerful driver of growth has been

the increasing participation of women. Across these districts, clubs with intentional inclusion strategies have seen a steady rise in women joining Rotary, many of whom now occupy leadership roles. This has enriched club culture, broadened perspectives and strengthened service outcomes. Where women feel welcomed, respected and empowered, Rotary thrives.

The lesson for Rotary across Africa is clear: growth follows relevance and retention follows value. When clubs adapt to the realities of modern life, invest in people and boldly imagine how Rotary can be experienced, membership growth becomes sustainable.

The future of Rotary will not be built by preserving old models alone, but by courageously evolving them. East Africa's experience shows that when Rotary puts people at the centre, the organisation does not just grow, it renews itself.

Coming up...

MARCH 2026

27 March - **ROTARY CLUB OF STELLENBOSCH D9350 Charity Golf Day:** At Stellenbosch Golf Club. Betterball Stableford. R6,000 per fourball, includes halfway house and dinner (excludes beverages). To enter, sponsor or get involved please contact Rotarian John Whitehead on Cell: 083 303 2982 or on Email: John@pinpointpromo.co.za

JUNE 2026

13-17 June - **ROTARY INTERNATIONAL CONVENTION, Taipei, Taiwan:** Join fellow changemakers from around the world to share innovative projects, exchange best practices and form enduring friendships. The convention is packed with exciting breakout sessions, speakers and more. All RI events take place at Farglory Dome (Taipei Dome) and Taipei Nangang Exhibition Centre (TaiNEX) unless otherwise indicated.

20 June - **ROTARY CLUB OF HOEDSPRUIT, K2C Cycle Tour:** Ride 100km through Timbavati, Thornybush and Kapama. One day, 120 riders. R8000 entry. No under 16s. E-bikes permitted. Includes collectors edition apparel. Hosted by the Hoedspruit club for conservation and social upliftment. Visit www.k2c-cycletour.co.za for details.

Email info about your club's upcoming events to rotaryafrica@mwweb.co.za



Rotary International President Francesco Arezzo with dignitaries and learners in front of the newly installed elevated water storage tanks at Khongolote Basic School in Matola.

RI PRESIDENT IN D9400

Education's the First Step

Rotary International President Francesco Arezzo stood before more than 4,000 pupils at Khongolote Basic School as water flowed on campus for the first time.

The Rotary Club of Maputo Metro (D9400) welcomed the President on 3 February 2026 as he presided over the inauguration of the school's new water system in Matola, a fast-growing city outside Maputo. The visit formed part of his three-day programme in Mozambique.

Khongolote Basic School had operated for years without its own reliable water supply. The school relied on a neighbouring household that shared water when possible. Although generous, the arrangement provided limited and inconsistent access, leaving staff and pupils to manage daily activities under constrained conditions.

The Maputo Metro club, Mozambique's first English-speaking Rotary club founded in 2022, began working with the school nearly two years ago after a charter member introduced the need to fellow Rotarians. What followed was the development of a structured WASH project designed in three phases.

Phase one included drilling a bore hole,

constructing a water tower and installing a 5,000-litre tank. Water was sourced at 40 metres, tested and confirmed safe for use. Four taps were positioned at accessible points across the school grounds to serve pupils and staff throughout the day. From drilling to final installation, the construction process took about three months.

Future phases will focus on rehabilitating and building new bathroom facilities, followed by refurbishment and upgrades to classrooms.

President Arezzo's visit to the school came amid a full national schedule. During his time in



District Governor Angélica Salomão, RI President Francesco Arezzo and President Carlos Dos Santos of the Rotary Club of Maputo Metro



The new water supply system was opened at Khongolote Basic School.

Mozambique, he met with Rotary clubs across the country, attended a gala dinner, joined a church service and participated in a working lunch attended by former Mozambique President and Rotarian Joaquim Chissano. He also hosted a fellowship event with Rotaractors. At Khongolote, he was accompanied by his wife Anna Maria, Rotary International Director for Zones 21 and 22 Daniel Tanase, District Governor Angélica Salomão and District Governor-Elect Grace van Zyl. The delegation spent more than an hour at the school, engaging with pupils and staff and touring facilities that will form part of the project's next phases.

Addressing those gathered, President Arezzo underscored the link between infrastructure and opportunity, saying "Education is the first step to freedom."

Corporate partners helped bring the first phase to completion. TotalEnergies contributed \$10,000 towards the project, with additional support from ABSA Bank and Vodacom.



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The visit began with a full schedule that moved steadily from national health facilities to community outreach sites across greater Kampala.

PRESIDENT IN EAST AFRICA

Health, Peace and Foundation

From a national referral hospital in Kampala to a vaccination site in Kajjansi, Rotary's footprint in Uganda was mapped out across two days of community engagements. Rotary International President Francesco Arezzo's official programme, hosted by district leaders from Districts 9213 and 9214, placed health systems, peace education and Foundation stewardship under direct review during his visit to East Africa in February.

Friday 20 February opened at Kawempe National Referral Hospital, one of the country's busiest referral facilities for maternal and neonatal care. The delegation was received by hospital administrators and Uganda's Minister of Health, Jane Ruth Aceng.

At Kawempe, two major health initiatives were formally launched. The Oxygen as a service project is structured to stabilise oxygen supply systems within the hospital, ensuring

continuous access in maternity and neonatal units. Alongside it, the Mama Toto Care global grant (valued at \$500,000) was introduced to reinforce maternal and child health services through equipment support, systems strengthening and targeted interventions.

Hospital management outlined the daily patient volumes handled by the facility and highlighted the operational demands placed on staff. Rotary leaders were briefed on how the new initiatives are intended to align with existing government health priorities while addressing critical gaps in service delivery.

From Kawempe, the delegation travelled to the Rotary Peace Centre at Makerere University. The centre, which serves as a hub for postgraduate study in peacebuilding and conflict transformation, hosted an engagement with Rotary Peace Fellows and faculty members.

The session focused on how fellows are applying academic training in practical settings across Africa. Areas of work discussed included mediation, community reconciliation initiatives and social cohesion programmes in post conflict environments. Director-Elect Emmanuel Katongole outlined the role of Rotary Peace Centres in equipping leaders with structured training, regional networks and field experience.

Rotaractors participated actively in the exchange, presenting current youth led initiatives linked to peace education and community engagement. District leaders noted the increasing integration of Rotaract within district level programming and long term planning.

Friday evening concluded with a Rotary Foundation Recognition Dinner held as part of the official visit. The event was attended by senior Rotary leaders, District Governors, Rotaractors and members drawn from clubs across District 9213 and District 9214. The Katikkiro (Prime Minister) of Buganda

attended as guest of honour.

The programme recognised contributions to The Rotary Foundation at multiple levels, including new Paul Harris Fellows and Major Donors. District 9213 presented a cumulative contribution of \$900,000, while District 9214 announced a \$1,000,000 contribution. Foundation officers provided an overview of how such funds are channelled into global grants, district grants and strategic programmes across areas of focus.

Saturday 21 February shifted the emphasis from institutional engagements to community based outreach.

In Kajjansi, President Arezzo joined more than 20 Rotary and Rotaract clubs for a Mega Medical Camp led by the Rotary Club of Medical Stars. Temporary consultation areas were set up to accommodate high patient turnout, and volunteer medical professionals worked alongside Rotarians to provide services throughout the day.

By the close of the camp, more than 3,500 people had received medical attention. Services



The delegation visited the Makerere University Rotary Peace Centre and met the current Peace Fellows and faculty members.

included general consultations, specialist reviews, diagnostic testing and the dispensing of prescribed medication. Organisers coordinated registration, triage and referral processes to manage the flow of patients.

Later in Jjanyi, the delegation attended a polio vaccination drive led by the Rotary Club of Kajjansi in partnership with the Rotary Clubs of Kampala South and Kampala Blue Hearts, with support from DFCU Bank.

The immunisation programme has operated in the community for more than 20 years through monthly outreach. During the visit, district leaders marked the launch of a dedicated vaccination centre intended to provide a fixed site for routine immunisation and related health education activities.

Health workers demonstrated vaccination procedures and outlined record keeping systems used to track immunisation schedules. Rotary members reviewed logistics planning for vaccine storage and distribution, ensuring alignment with national health guidelines.

Across the two days, district leadership teams managed scheduling, club participation and protocol arrangements, ensuring continuity between each activity.



President Francesco visits a neonatal unit at Kawempe National Referral Hospital where maternal and child health services are receiving vital support from Rotary clubs.



Rotary International President Francesco Arezzo joins Uganda's Minister of Health Jane Ruth Aceng and district leaders at the ribbon cutting ceremony at Kawempe National Referral Hospital.

PRESIDENT IN D9350

Sicilian Warmth

A touch of Sicily settled over the Cape Winelands as Rotary's global leader stepped into District 9350 for the first time.

The Rotary Club of Stellenbosch (D9350) welcomed Rotary International President Francesco Arezzo and his wife, Anna Maria, during a focused one day visit that combined fellowship with hands on project engagement. Director Daniel Tanase accompanied the Presidential couple on their inaugural trip to South Africa.

The programme opened with a dinner in Stellenbosch hosted by District Governor Pam Rawbone and her organising team, where senior Rotary leaders gathered to greet the visitors. The following morning, Rotarians, business leaders and members of the diplomatic corps convened at the Devon Valley Hotel for a business breakfast.

In his address, President Francesco urged members to "Unite for Good, dream big and work without borders as one Rotary family." He outlined three priorities, growing membership, eradicating polio and advancing peace. Peace, he said, is reflected not only in the absence of war but in the presence of freedom and dignity. Partnerships with UNICEF, the World Health Organisation and the Gates Foundation have reduced polio cases by 99 percent, with the virus now endemic only in Pakistan and



Rotary International President at Oklahoma Primary School in Macassar: The Rotary Club of Helderberg Sunrise has been involved with this school for a number of years. The club equipped the renovated classroom as a computer room. Rotary in action, changing lives at grass roots level. The President has grandchildren so he was relaxed chatting to the children.



Left: Rotarians travelled from Namibia for the occasion. Richard Cook from the Rotary Club of Keetmanshoop, Martina and Frank Schwardmann from the Rotary Club of Windhoek Windhoek (Klein Windhoek Valley). Right: District Governor Pam Rawbone, Rotarian Chris Partiger from the Rotary Club of George and Past District Governor Tracey Wilson. Below: Surrounded by hospital staff are President Francesco, Anna Maria and District Governor Pam Rawbone.



Afghanistan. He encouraged clubs to remain adaptable and to welcome young people into Rotary.

Among those present was Past District Governor June Webber, who later reflected, “The privilege of listening to our President in person, in Stellenbosch on his one day visit, was a magic memory, mixed with emotion and gratitude.”

District Governor Pam Rawbone reaffirmed District 9350’s commitment to Rotary’s mission of service, fellowship and peace, highlighting the district’s emphasis on sustainable community impact.

Project visits formed a central part of the itinerary. At Stellenbosch Hospital, medical staff demonstrated ultrasound machines, handheld probes and a blood gas analyser

donated through collaboration between the Stellenbosch club and the Rotary Club of Hameln (D1800, Germany). Doctors explained that the equipment has strengthened diagnostic capacity in a busy facility where space is limited and patient demand remains high.

In Macassar, at Oklahoma Primary School, the President spent time with Grade 2 learners in a renovated classroom that the Rotary Club of Helderberg Sunrise (D9350) had converted into a computer room. With grandchildren of his own, he was at ease chatting with the children as they worked at their screens.

The visit concluded at Morgenster Estate with an olive oil tasting and dinner, a nod to President Francesco’s Sicilian heritage as an olive oil producer.



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The launch of Rotary Peace Centre at Symbiosis International University in Pune, India, will see up to 40 additional Rotary Peace Fellows welcomed into the programme annually.

Knowledge and Action

In a significant step toward supporting peace and development, the Rotary Peace Centre at Symbiosis International University (SIU) was inaugurated on 26 January 2026.

A culmination of the ethos, vision, mission and expertise of both Rotary International and Symbiosis, the centre is situated on Symbiosis' scenic 400+ acre Lavale campus in Pune. It offers a fully funded one-year postgraduate diploma programme in Peace and Development Studies. The programme has been designed for mid-career professionals working in different sectors of peace and development either within Asia or Asian communities.

"In this interconnected world, peace can no longer be viewed as an abstract ideal; it must be cultivated through institutions that combine knowledge, ethical leadership and action.

Rotary believes that sustainable peace is built when education empowers individuals to serve beyond borders and think beyond divisions," said Francesco Arezzo, Rotary International President (2025-26). "The establishment of the Rotary Peace Centre at Symbiosis International University reflects Rotary's commitment to nurturing leaders who understand and act with integrity towards a cause. Through this initiative, the centre will contribute not only to regional peacebuilding in Asia but to a stronger global framework for shared responsibility," he added.

For Dr. Vidya Yeravdekar, Principal Director of Symbiosis and the Pro Chancellor of Symbiosis International University, "The establishment of the Rotary Peace Centre at Symbiosis International University aligns

closely with the core values of Symbiosis and is especially meaningful as it coincides with our 55th anniversary. Founded by Prof. Dr. S. B. Mujumdar, based on the ideal of “Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam”, the mission of Symbiosis was to bring together students from across India and around the world to encourage international understanding and a spirit of brotherhood. Our visionary founder believed that providing quality education was the only way to promote international understanding.”

The Rotary Peace Centre at SIU will welcome up to 40 Rotary Peace Fellows each year.

“With India’s rich diversity and complex social landscape, the Rotary Peace Centre at Symbiosis International University will offer unique opportunities for cultivating leaders who can navigate conflict with empathy and innovation,” said Bharat S. Pandya, Trustee, The Rotary Foundation (2022-2026). “By collaborating with Symbiosis, we are creating a platform where emerging and experienced peacebuilders can gain the knowledge, skills and networks needed to address local and

global challenges. This centre will help in nurturing a new generation of leaders in Asia, dedicated to strengthening dialogue, understanding and sustainable peace,” he added.

Applications are open!

Applications for Rotary’s one-year postgraduate diploma programme at SIU will be open from 1 February – 15 May 2026. Visit rotary.org/peace-fellowships to learn more about Rotary Peace Fellowship programmes and how to apply.

“The Rotary Peace Centre at SIU will cater to the greater Asia region, integrating an interdisciplinary approach with experiential learning. The one-year postgraduate diploma programme will be offered in a blended learning format to empower mid-level professionals working in different spheres of peace and development, to advance their engagement in sustainable and actionable outcomes for social change in Asia,” said Dr. Sulakshana Sen, Centre Head, Rotary Peace Centre at Symbiosis International University.



Dr. Ramakrishnan Raman, Bharat S. Pandya, Holger Knaack, Prof. (Dr.) S. B. Mujumdar, RI President Francesco Arezzo, Dr. Vidya Yeravdekar.

Service through Water

Through WASH-RAG you can do more!

WASH-RAG brings together Rotarians, Rotaractors and water sector professionals to share experience, practical support and lessons learned, helping clubs deliver stronger and more sustainable projects.

As a recognised Rotary Action Group, it helps clubs shift from simply installing infrastructure towards building sustainable, community-owned systems.

How WASH-RAG membership benefits you and your club:

1. Enhanced Project Success and Sustainability

- **Expert Review:** The Professional Services Team reviews global grant proposals to improve technical design, sustainability measures and readiness for Foundation approval.
- **Funding Incentives:** A project that receives a successful review may be eligible for a \$2,000 contribution from the WASH-RAG Fund.
- **Long-Term Impact:** Beyond installation, WASH-RAG promotes structured sustainability planning, including the use of its Sustainability Index Tool, community training and behaviour change strategies to protect long-term impact.

2. Expert Network and Resources

- **Technical Expertise:** A global pool of experienced professionals offers advice on water quality, borehole construction and sanitation design to strengthen project quality and reliability.
- **Ambassador Network:** An international network of over 100 ambassadors helps link clubs with partners and technical resources across regions.
- **Best Practices:** Members have access to curated best practice materials and step-

by-step guides to support effective WASH implementation.

3. Collaboration and Networking

- **Finding Partners:** WASH-RAG helps clubs find international partners and form collaborative networks to support Global Grant projects.
- **Partnerships:** Through partnerships with organisations including WaterAid, Water For People, UNICEF and Engineers Without Borders, WASH-RAG enhances technical depth and long-term programme impact.

4. Direct Impact on Global Health

- **Targeting Core Issues:** WASH-RAG focuses on expanding access to safe water and sanitation, key factors in reducing preventable disease and strengthening community well being.
- **Education and Safety:** School-based initiatives, such as WASH in Schools (WinS), improve attendance and safety, through sanitation infrastructure and hygiene education.

5. Education and Advocacy

- **Knowledge Sharing:** Members receive and can contribute to newsletters, webinars and social media, staying updated on the latest in WASH.
- **Advocacy:** WASH-RAG supports members in advancing policy discussions that promote sustainable water and sanitation systems.

Membership is open to all, not just Rotarians, who want to join a diverse and knowledgeable community dedicated to solving the water crisis.

For more information about the WASH-RAG and membership, go to www.wash-rag.org

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Clubs across South Africa are invited to collaborate with local partners and community groups to distribute **EcoRollers**, to families still hauling water by hand.

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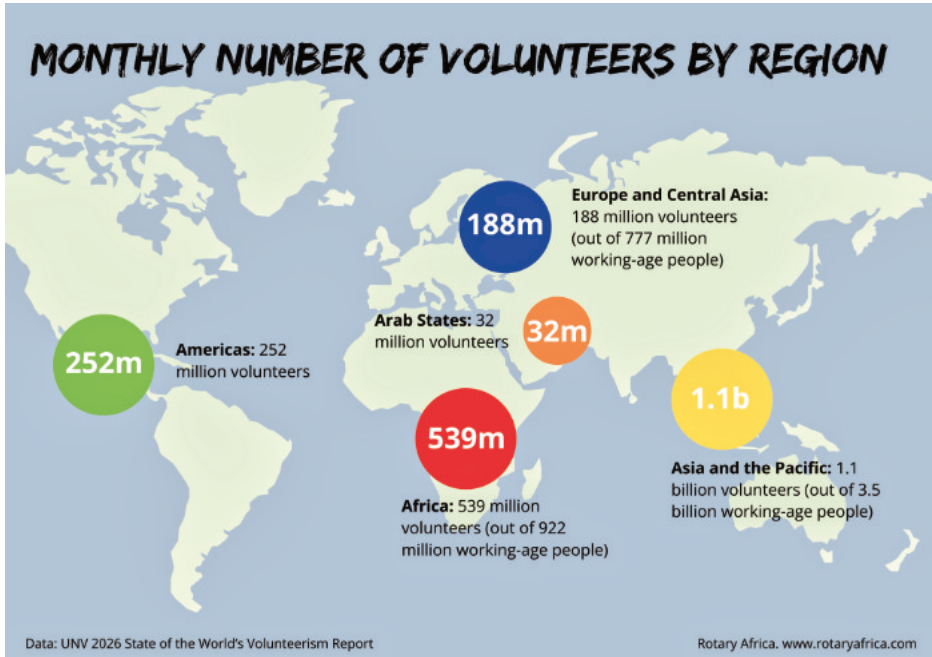
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Volunteerism is not declining. It is diversifying. The desire to serve is intact, but the format has evolved.

The Volunteer Reset

by Sarah van Heerden

Volunteerism is not dying. It is changing.

This may come as a surprise to anyone who has heard the familiar refrain: “Young people are not interested in volunteering anymore.” That statement is shockingly incorrect, as globally, around one in three working-age adults volunteers in some form or other. People are still serving. They are simply doing it differently!

This figure comes from the *2026 State of the World's Volunteerism Report*, published by United Nations Volunteers. The issue is not whether people are serving. The issue is how.

In many Rotary districts, clubs are thriving. Membership is strong. Rotaract is active.

Projects are bold. However, in districts which are struggling, the picture is different. Membership is ageing. Retention is difficult. The chartering of new Rotaract clubs is slow and the transition from Rotaract to Rotary remains uneven.

While it may appear to be a generational problem, the global report makes the case that it is, in fact, structural.

Volunteerism has shifted and informal action is rising. Short-term, cause-driven engagement is more common. Many people under 35 volunteer, but not always inside traditional systems. They organise online. They join specific projects. They support causes that feel immediate and tangible.

NGOs and service organisations, such as Rotary clubs, have historically measured service in hours and funds raised. That still matters. However, as the report notes, “Numbers alone do

not tell the whole story.” Hours do not explain motivation.

Younger volunteers often ask different questions. What will I learn? Will I lead something? Is there ownership? Is the impact visible? Does this fit into my career path and life stage? Leadership pathways matter to them. Skills matter. Flexibility matters. Digital engagement is assumed, not optional. Older generations may prioritise fellowship, continuity and long-term civic responsibility. It is simply a matter of balancing the two.

The United Nations Volunteers Executive Coordinator, Toily Kurbanov, captured the stakes clearly: “What we don’t measure, we don’t fund, what we don’t fund, we don’t sustain.”

The UN designated 2026 as the International Year of Volunteers. This creates an opportunity to reset the conversation and the 2026 State of the World’s Volunteerism

Report provides helpful guidance and insight into engaging volunteers of all ages.

The report reinforces that counting volunteers is not the same as understanding why they walk away. Counting attendance is not the same as nurturing growth. Treating young people as a pipeline or labour source instead of partners only weakens long-term engagement and numbers decline.

For NGOs to connect more effectively with volunteers, they should document not only what communities gain, but what volunteers gain as well. Leadership roles for under-35s should be clearly defined, and short-term, skills-based projects recognised as meaningful forms of service, not side contributions.

For organisations facing volunteer and membership retention challenges, this is not a crisis of relevance or a criticism. It is a call to adjust their structures to match motivation.

The cause has not changed. The volunteer has.

DIRECT & ORGANISATION-BASED VOLUNTEERING RATES BY REGION (%)



Rotary Africa. www.rotaryafrica.com

Across the world, people are about twice as likely to volunteer directly in their communities as they are through formal organisations, especially in the Global South where mutual support is part of everyday life.



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Flooded areas in the Kruger National Park following weeks of relentless rain. Photos: SAN Parks, Facebook.



White River Rotarians packing food parcels for distribution to affected communities.

When Rivers Rose

Rotary club members opened their hearts

The rain began in mid January and did not stop. Within two weeks, parts of Mpumalanga, Limpopo and southern Mozambique had received almost a year's rainfall, leaving rivers swollen and communities cut off.

The Rotary Club of White River (D9400) found itself at the centre of a fast moving crisis as floodwaters swept through low lying areas and access routes disappeared. Among the worst affected sites was the Kruger National Park, where large sections were closed for the first time in living memory. Roads became impassable, bridges were submerged or washed away and staff in outlying camps were stranded

without reliable access to food or clean water.

As conditions deteriorated, the White River club began coordinating relief. An early call from Peter Herweg of the Rotary Club of Benoni Aurora (D9400), offering a cash donation, set the tone. Contributions followed swiftly. Rotary clubs, individual Rotarians and family members abroad responded with cash, blankets and essential goods. Nearly R120 000 was raised, along with 2,000 blankets. Donations also arrived from the United Kingdom and Canada through Rotary family networks. The Rotary Club of Haenertsburg (D9400) contributed a ShelterBox to assist



Distribution of food and essential goods in rural areas cut off by floodwaters. Below: Aid delivered to Phalaborwa, including blankets, water and clothing.

displaced families.

Local support strengthened the effort. A school in White River launched a collection drive for clothing, food and household items. An empty shop in a shopping centre was offered as temporary storage, quickly filling with supplies as volunteers sorted and packed.

Distribution required careful coordination. Funds were channelled to the honorary rangers to enable food parcels to be flown into isolated areas of the Kruger National Park. Additional food parcels were purchased for communities in Nkomazi, while the Rotary Club of Phalaborwa (D9400) received funds to assist families in its area. Supplies were also directed to Bushbuckridge and Acornhoek, where homes and informal settlements had been inundated.

Logistics partners stepped forward. CTM provided a truck to transport blankets, water and clothing to Phalaborwa. In White River, Rotarians worked long hours packing food parcels for delivery to rural communities.

The flooding extended beyond South Africa's borders. A White River family working in a rural area north of Maputo, Mozambique, requested assistance for villagers who had lost homes and possessions. Goods, including the ShelterBox, were transported by truck to Maputo and then transferred to a boat



to reach the affected village. The ShelterBox provided temporary shelter to families who had lost everything.

Mercy Air delivered water purification tablets and other essential supplies into northern areas of the Kruger National Park and parts of Mozambique. With infrastructure damaged and water sources contaminated, access to clean drinking water became one of the most urgent needs.

Across District 9400, Rotary clubs coordinated efforts to ensure aid reached communities as roads reopened and assessments continued. What began as relentless rain evolved into a district wide response, mobilising funds, goods and volunteers across provincial and national boundaries.



The provision of water and sanitation to the 12 villages has changed daily life. The inclusion of nanofibre water filters has significantly improved the health of the villagers and their children.

12 Villages Transformed

by PAG Royce Gloria Androa and Chris Roesel

In Uganda's Yumbe District, Rotary clubs have helped bring clean water, which improved health and strengthened leadership structures for more than 18,000 people across twelve rural villages. The global grant project was led by the Rotary Clubs of Arua and Yumbe (D9213) in partnership with Rotary clubs and districts in Florida, Kansas and Missouri, USA.

The goal was to deliver community-driven change. Formal assessments were done by club members in each village, which included consulting with elders, youth, women's groups and health volunteers, to identify priorities. The result was a customised plan for each

location, rooted in local leadership and long-term sustainability.

Across the twelve sites, residents helped build 575 household latrines and 37 borehole wells. They also received 945 nanofibre water filters, with training on safe use. Local water user committees were trained to manage the wells and collect small user fees for maintenance.

Follow-up studies revealed dramatic results. Cases of diarrhoea in children under five dropped from nearly half to just 26 percent. In homes using the nanofibre filters, it dropped to 9 percent. Malaria cases fell sharply, from 52 percent to 11 percent among children aged two to five. Handwashing rates doubled. Every household in the participating villages now has

access to a latrine.

The health gains also freed up time. Before the project, households spent up to three hours a day fetching water. That's now under one hour. Women and girls reported less physical strain, improved safety, and more time for school and work.

Economic benefits followed. More than 85% of families said they could now use their savings on school fees. Others invested in housing or small businesses. For many, better health meant fewer short-term costs and more long-term planning.

In community interviews, residents described a visible change. Women and youth now lead water and hygiene committees. Households share decision-making. Local groups carry out borehole repairs without external help. The shift has been social as well as physical.

The Yumbe clubs see the model as replicable. By combining sanitation, clean water, local governance and health education, the project helped reduce disease and build household resilience.



Every home in the participating villages has access to a latrine. The time spent collecting water has been reduced and women and youth now lead community-based water and hygiene committees.





Cyclists took part in the gruelling Winelands Cycle Race from Wellington to Riebeeck Kasteel and back. The 102 km race was won by Sascha Weber (2:23:51), with Willem Visagie hot on his heels. The first lady home was Daria Pravilova (2:34:31)

Paarl Pedals Forward

The peloton rolled out of Wellington just after sunrise, wheels humming against the tar as nearly 1,800 cyclists took on the open road through the Cape Winelands.

The Rotary Club of Paarl (D9350) once again hosted its annual Rhodes Quality Winelands Cycle Race in January, a seeding event for the Cape Town Cycle Tour that continues to draw strong support from riders across the region. This year's event featured a demanding 102 kilometre route from Wellington to Riebeeck Kasteel and back, along with a shorter 52 kilometre option for less experienced cyclists.

About 1,500 riders lined up for the long route, tackling the undulating terrain in hot conditions. Sascha Weber claimed victory in the 102 kilometre race, crossing the finish line in 2:23:51, with Willem Visagie close behind and Wynand Hofmeyr in third place. The first

woman home was Daria Pravilova, finishing in 2:34:31.

From the early hours of the morning, members of the Paarl club were stationed along the route, serving as race marshals and helping to ensure that cyclists remained safe and hydrated. Water points were carefully managed and logistical teams worked behind the scenes to keep the event running smoothly.

The shorter 52 kilometre race provided an accessible entry point for riders building endurance or taking part for recreation. At the finish, cyclists gathered for refreshments and the traditional lucky draw, bringing the day to a close in a relaxed, celebratory atmosphere.

The Winelands Cycle Race has become a fixture on the regional cycling calendar and remains an important fundraising and community engagement initiative for the club.



Learners test out the newly completed sports grounds at Grosvenor Primary School in Atlantis, where upgraded facilities have replaced what was once a rubble-strewn site. Football, netball and athletics now share a safe, purpose-built space for daily training and play.

Fields of Opportunity

Pupils were already putting the new facilities through their paces as guests arrived at Grosvenor Primary School in Atlantis. Football drills, netball practice and athletics training unfolded across freshly completed surfaces where, 18 months earlier, builders' rubble had covered the ground.

On Friday 23 January 2026, the Rotary Club of Constantia (D9350), in collaboration with the Rotary Club of Atlantis (D9350), officially opened the school's new multipurpose sports fields. The development provides structured sporting space for the school's 1,000 learners at this non-fee-paying institution.

About 80 invited guests attended the ceremony, including senior education officials, Rotary district and club members, ward councillors and representatives of sporting bodies. Tents and gazebos were erected on the

former rugby practice field, creating a formal setting for the occasion. Proceedings began with the school choir performing the national anthem and the school anthem.

The project was made possible through a grant of R4 million from a family trust that has supported similar developments at Westlake, Capricorn and Siyazakha primary schools. The Constantia club's project team, made up of retired professionals, worked with the school principal and governing body to assess needs, design the layout, establish costs, appoint subcontractors and oversee construction.

The completed facilities include a multipurpose athletics field suitable for touch rugby and netball, a seven-a-side soccer pitch, a paved netball court, a rugby practice area and a bitumen running track. Sporting equipment, clothing and funding for professional coaching

formed part of the broader project package.

District Governor Pam Rawbone and Western Cape Education Department Director Wendy Horn addressed the gathering. The ribbon was cut by President-Elect Ross Kelly of the Constantia club, standing in for President Sandy Whitehead, together with Grosvenor Primary Principal Terence Adams, who also serves as secretary of the Atlantis club.

Adams thanked the donor, contractors and Rotary project team, noting the positive impact the facilities would have on both the school and the surrounding community. The president of the Atlantis club, Danny Pietersen, presented memento plaques to the donor and project leaders in appreciation of their contribution.

Guests and learners shared refreshments before departing less than two hours later, leaving behind sports fields now ready for daily use.

The sports field at Grosvenor Primary School before construction began. The Constantia project team worked with the school principal and governing body to assess needs, design the layout and plan the upgrade.



Ross Kelly, President-Elect of the Rotary Club of Constantia (D9350), standing in for President Sandy Whitehead, with Terence Adams, principal of Grosvenor.



Multipurpose athletics field for touch rugby and netball; paved netball court; rugby practice area and bitumen running track.



Handmade dolls (right) produced and sold in Italy helped fund a support project for girls in Vanderbijlpark.

Dolls Across Borders



Hundreds of small handmade dolls were stitched and sold through Rotary networks in Italy to raise funds to provide practical support for school girls in Vanderbijlpark.

The idea began with Susan Claasen, sister of Assistant Governor Jackie van Waveren (D9400), who proposed producing and selling the dolls as a fundraising initiative. She worked alongside former exchange student Bepa Mellis, now a Rotaractor and District Rotary Representative in Italy District 2080, to market the dolls through Italian Rotary clubs.

An initial batch of 300 dolls sold out at one Euro each. Further production followed, along with handmade crosses to continue generating funds. The Rotary Club of Vanderbijlpark (D9400) partnered with Rotary clubs in Italy's District 2080 to direct the proceeds into a structured support project for girls from under-resourced communities.

Funds raised were used to source backpacks

for girls identified through selected schools and organisations. The bags were branded with the names of the participating Rotary clubs. Each backpack was packed with essential items to support school attendance and personal care.

Bepa Mellis travelled to South Africa with Rotary representatives Alessandra Sanna and Giulia Vicario to assist with distribution. Teachers at participating schools identified recipients. Distribution days included the handover of the backpacks and a shared meal. Additional stock was left with schools to allow continued allocation where needed.

Remaining funds were allocated to the Mission Vision project, initiated by Rotarian Gerrit van Bremmel. The programme provides spectacles to girls with impaired vision to assist with their schooling.

Corporate sponsors El Paso Spur and Mahindra supported the implementation of the initiative.



Rotary International President-Elect Olayinka Babalola's address featuring images from Knysna club's global grant Early Childhood Development Project.

Knysna on Stage

Knysna's early childhood development work has reached the international Rotary stage. What began as a local Global Grant initiative was recently highlighted at one of Rotary's most significant annual gatherings.

At the International Assembly in Orlando, Florida, USA, which was attended by more than 500 incoming District Governors, Rotary International President-Elect Olayinka Babalola referenced the Rotary Club of Knysna's global grant project during his address. Screenshots shared by District 9350 Governor-Elect Anton Lubbe showed slides featuring images from the club's Early Childhood Development initiative in partnership with Knysna Education Trust.

The Rotary Club of Knysna (D9350)

launched the project in 2019 with the objective of ensuring that all children in the greater Knysna area would have access to quality early childhood development services by 2025. Working with Knysna Education Trust and local stakeholders, the club assessed community needs and focused on building sustainable capacity in underserved areas.

In his address, President-Elect Babalola cited Knysna as an example of Rotary clubs creating lasting educational impact. He referred to the project's role in enabling women in underserved communities to open and manage early childhood education centres, reaching thousands of children and families.

The initiative was supported through a global grant and structured to strengthen local systems

rather than provide short-term assistance. Community involvement formed part of the planning and implementation process, with local partners central to delivery and continuity.

Knysna Rotary President Murro-Wayne Spies said the recognition was significant for the club and its partners. He described it as an honour to receive acknowledgement from the worldwide Rotary community and a privilege

to work alongside Knysna Education Trust in expanding access to quality ECD services.

The global grant close-out presentation was delivered to Knysna Rotarians and stakeholders by Knysna Education Trust General Manager Angelina Smith. A subsequent report back at a Rotary lunch meeting included members of the Trust leadership team and the club's Foundation Committee.



At the Knysna Education Trust team report back, which was held at the club's lunch meeting, are President Murro-Wayne Spies, Knysna Education Trust Head of Media and Publishing, Ciara Mayne, Knysna Education Trust SmartStart Coach, Zonke Ndzwana, Knysna Education Trust Registration Manager and SmartStart Lead, Nella Gysman, Knysna Education Trust General Manager, Angelina Smith, and the club's Foundation Committee Chair Clive Reed.



Global grant close-out presentation to Knysna Rotarians and other stakeholders by Knysna Education Trust General Manager Angelina Smith.



The first 36 Hippo Rollers have already arrived, thanks to the generosity of the Rotary Club of McMurray (Pennsylvania, USA) and Griffin Daybreak Rotary Club, (Georgia, USA), and a member of the First Baptist Church of Griffin, Georgia. Photos: www.unitywater.life

Carrying Hope Forward

The walk for water begins long before sunrise in many parts of South Africa. For some families, it means a long journey each way, balancing heavy containers drawn from springs or communal taps that cannot always be trusted.

The Rotary Club of Pietermaritzburg Azalea (D9370) chose to confront that daily reality as it marked 100 years of service by partnering with the Unity Water Foundation and the African Co-operative Action Trust to place 100 Hippo Rollers into the hands of 100 families across KwaZulu-Natal.

The first 36 rollers have already arrived, funded through support that travelled thousands of kilometres. Thirty-two rollers were sponsored by the Rotary Club of McMurray (D7300), three by the Rotary Club of Griffin Daybreak (D6900) and one by a member of Griffin First Baptist Church who chose to give personally.

The involvement of Griffin Daybreak began with children. After learning about water challenges in South Africa, young children, mostly under the age of 13, at Griffin First Baptist Church in Georgia raised \$2,000 to help the Unity Water Foundation give Hippo Rollers to families in Njijini Village in the Eastern Cape. Rotarians heard the story and decided to follow suit.

“The Rotary Club of Griffin Daybreak, Georgia is excited to reach out across the globe to begin helping persons in other countries who need our help. While we regularly strive to help in our local community, we are also pleased to provide assistance internationally,” says President Debby Daniel-Bryant.

Informally known as the PMB100 project, the project was designed to deliver more than water access alone. Working alongside ACAT’s Sustainable Agriculture and Entrepreneurial Development programmes, Hippo Rollers

become a tool to give families improved access to water for household use, irrigation and small-scale farming. The partnership supports water, sanitation and hygiene, food security, community economic development and women's empowerment.

Past President Marlene Larter of the Pietermaritzburg Azalea club says the partnership model stood out from the start. "What we specifically liked about the ACAT programme is that they walk alongside their participants, helping them move from subsistence farming to surplus farming and into economic development as families begin to sell their produce."

ACAT Executive Director Rodney Spencer describes a process built on continuity rather than once-off intervention. "The strength of our programme lies in consistent, long-term support. By working alongside families over several years, we can help them move from survival to stability and ultimately towards sustainable livelihoods."

The Hippo Rollers were delivered to communities in the KwaZulu-Natal Midlands and on the South Coast. Despite being far apart, the communities shared many water problems. communal taps fail without notice and people still walk long distances to water sources, in many instances springs or rivers that are contaminated by livestock and waste. The Hippo Roller does not replace infrastructure, but it reduces the physical burden of carrying heavy loads, increases carrying capacity and improves reliability when rainwater harvesting fails.

As the Pietermaritzburg Azalea club moves through its centennial year, the focus remains on the families behind each delivery. "We are proud to say that we are now more than a third of the way to reaching our target to support one family for each year that Rotary has been delivering Service Above Self to the greater Pietermaritzburg community," says Larter.

Should you wish to support the project, email: admin@unitywater.life



The Rotary Club of McMurray read a Rotary Africa feature that was republished in the Rotary magazine and contacted the Unity Water Foundation and offered its support.



For families who rely on rain tanks or long walks to the river, the arrival of a Hippo Roller is more than a tool - it's a relief.

AFRICA IN BRIEF



Baking trays, colourful snacks and Christmas parcels were loaded into cars as learners from Outeniqua Primary School set off on their final outreach of the year. The EarlyAct Club, supported by the Rotary Club of George (D9350), spent the day at the Milestone Development Programme at Bethesda, where 40 members delivered handmade gifts and played alongside children aged two to six living with developmental delays. With support from parents, the learners prepared



the treats themselves before spending the afternoon connecting through games and shared activities.



District 9400 Governor-Elect Grace van Zyl and members of the district leadership team attend a February training seminar in preparation for the 2026 to 2027 Rotary year. The session focused on planning, alignment and district priorities for the year ahead.



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