



## MARCH IS WATER, SANITATION & HYGIENE MONTH



**HOLGER KNAACK**  
Trustee Chair 2025-26

## Trustee Chair's Message March 2026

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 centers of refuge — this time for the health, safety, and vitality of the entire community.*

*In Maharashtra, India, I witnessed how our Programs 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.



## Protecting tribal girls from cervical cancer

rotarynewsonline.org :: March 2026

By: Jaishree



Around 550 girls of Adhigam Bhoomi School, a residential institution in Pailan, Joka, in South Kolkata, recently received the first dose of the cervical cancer vaccine, thanks to an initiative by the Rotary Club of Salt Lake Metropolitan Kolkata, RID 3291. The programme, an important step in safeguarding the health of vulnerable adolescent girls, was supported by the Bengal Obs and Gynaec Society.

**Dr Aruna Tantia, member of RC Salt Lake Metropolitan Kolkata, with a student who was given a shot of HPV vaccine.**

Club member Dr Aruna Tantia explained that cervical cancer is one of the leading causes of cancer-related deaths among women in India. It is primarily caused by persistent infection caused by the Human Papillomavirus (HPV). The HPV vaccine, when administered between ages 9 and 14, is most effective in preventing this disease. It offers long-term protection and significantly reduces the risk of developing cervical cancer later in life. Recognising this, the club organised a two-day vaccination drive at the school, targeting girls in this critical age group.

Speaking about the need for such initiatives, she pointed out the stark healthcare gaps in regions such as Joka, the Sundarbans, Purulia and Bankura. “These areas lack adequate medical facilities. Women, in particular, tend to ignore their health problems in the struggle of daily life,” she said.

Adhigam Bhoomi School provides shelter and education to nearly 1,200 tribal girls from nearby villages. Run in a gurukul-style setting, the school offers training in weaving, pottery, organic farming and rainwater harvesting, along with formal education in English, Hindi and Mathematics. Most parents are daily wage earners who cannot afford proper education or healthcare for their children, making such interventions vital.

**Parents attending an awareness session on cervical cancer.**

Before administering the vaccine, the Rotary team conducted awareness sessions for parents. “We explained what cervical cancer is and how vaccination can protect their daughters. Once they understood its importance, they readily gave consent.” The girls will receive two doses, with the second scheduled after six months. The vaccines, procured from the Serum Institute of India at a subsidised cost of ₹2,230 per dose, are fully sponsored by the club.



The vaccination drive was complemented by the club's ongoing global grant project, Matri Raksha, which focuses on women's health. Launched in 2021, the project screens women for anaemia and menstrual disorders and promotes treatment through affordable, locally available nutrition. "Prolonged bleeding and lack of awareness often lead to severe anaemia. Many women hesitate to seek medical help due to embarrassment," she explained.

Through Matri Raksha, the club also screens children for thalassaemia and provides awareness sessions on menstrual hygiene and healthy diets. Vitamin supplements and iron tablets are distributed, usually for three months at a time. So far, 87 camps have been organised, benefiting over 400 women at each camp. Nearly 70 per cent were found anaemic, and 18 per cent had hypertension, said Aruna.

With support from three Rotary clubs in Switzerland and four clubs within the district, the project aims to reach at least 20,000 women.

## Governor's Official Visit – Rotary Year 2025-26



**Block Your Date: Rtn. (Dr.) Ramendu Homchaudhuri will be on the Official Club Visit to RC Calcutta Jadavpur on April 01, 2026 at Casa Broadway Kolkata, 6.30 PM onwards. Members are requested to be present and participate in numbers, to make this event a grand success.**

*Happy Birthday*

Ms. Krishnakoli Roy spouse of  
PP Rtn. (Dr.) Partha Pratim Roy  
falling on March 25

PP Rtn. Javdeb Banerjee falling on March 29

## New UN-Water GLAAS findings: stronger WASH systems needed for safe drinking-water, sanitation and hygiene for all

[www.who.int](http://www.who.int) :: Departmental update

January 26, 2026



Urgent action is needed to strengthen national water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) systems so countries can accelerate progress towards Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 6 and protect health, especially in the face of growing climate-related risks and recurring disease outbreaks.

New findings from State of systems for drinking-water, sanitation and hygiene: Global update 2025, the UN-Water Global Analysis and Assessment of Sanitation and Drinking-Water (GLAAS) report developed jointly by WHO and UNICEF, provide a comprehensive picture of what is holding WASH services back.

The analysis draws on data from 105 countries and territories (covering 62% of the global population) and 21 development partners, including UN agencies, multilateral financing institutions, and international nongovernmental organizations.

“With less than five years until 2030, we are at a critical moment to review SDG 6 and take decisive action to accelerate implementation,” said Dr Alvaro Lario, Chair of UN-Water and President of the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD). “The choices we make now will determine whether we achieve our common goals and ensure WASH is a catalyst for better public health and its transformational benefits, particularly for vulnerable people.”

### **Delivery capacity holds progress back**

Across countries, the pattern is clear: plans exist, but delivery capacity is thin. Many countries have policies and targets in place, but implementation is constrained by fragmentation, workforce gaps, and financing that does not reliably translate into results. For example:

- fewer than 13% of countries reported having sufficient financial and human resources to implement their WASH plans;
- sixty-four per cent of countries reported overlapping roles and responsibilities across government institutions – often leading to inefficiencies and uncoordinated efforts; and
- while most countries have national targets for drinking-water and sanitation, only 49% reported a national hand hygiene target.

Despite steady global progress, unmet needs remain vast. WHO/UNICEF Joint Monitoring Programme (JMP) estimates show that 2.1 billion people still lack safely managed drinking-water, 3.4 billion lack safely managed sanitation, and 1.7 billion lack basic hygiene services.

“Millions of lives continue to be lost each year due to inadequate access to safe drinking-water, sanitation and hygiene,” said Dr Ruediger Krech, Director a.i., Department of Environment, Climate Change, One Health & Migration at the World Health Organization. “This demands stronger WASH systems – how water and sanitation services are planned, resourced and run – and greater investment from governments and partners to deliver safely managed services for all.”

### **Financing, regulation and climate resilience**

The report identifies major opportunities to accelerate progress by improving how WASH resources are planned, executed and regulated. Data from 20 countries participating indicate a funding gap of 46% between identified needs and available funding to reach national targets. Efficiency losses further undermine services, with non-revenue water averaging 39% among reporting countries.

Less than half of countries reported that regulatory authorities publish publicly accessible reports on drinking-water quality, and only about one fifth reported drinking-water surveillance occurring at nearly all of the required frequency. While most countries include water safety planning in policies and regulations, implementation at scale remains limited.

Encouragingly, many countries are integrating climate considerations into WASH systems: 80% address climate risks in WASH policies and plans. However, targeted measures for populations disproportionately affected by climate change are much weaker – only 20% of countries reported having measures to finance actions that support these populations, and just 42% reported measures to monitor progress in this area.

“The new GLAAS findings underline how accelerating progress on SDG 6 depends on stronger WASH systems and sectors – including financing, policy, governance, capacity and data, which will promote sustainability and build upon what is already working,” said Cecilia Scharp, Director, Global Water, Sanitation and Hygiene Practice, UNICEF. “As countries prepare for the 2026 UN Water Conference later this year, this report provides timely evidence to inform shifts towards more resilient systems that ensure services reach the most vulnerable children.”

### **Health impacts remain severe**

These gaps have severe health consequences: at least 1.4 million people died in 2019 from preventable causes linked to unsafe water and poor sanitation, and in 2024 there were over 560 000 cholera cases and 6000 reported deaths across 60 countries.

The report was released at the opening of the High-Level Preparatory Meeting for the 2026 UN Water Conference (26–27 January 2026, Dakar, Senegal), co-hosted by Senegal and the United Arab Emirates, ahead of the main conference in December 2026.

## Minutes of the Virtual 2168<sup>th</sup> RCM of RC Calcutta Jadavpur held on March 05, 2026, on Google Meet at 6.30 PM.

President Rtn. Sudipta Kundu called the meeting to order and welcomed the members present.

- National Anthem was led by Rtn. Manas K. Ghosh and joined by all.
- Next, President Rtn. Sudipta briefly talked about the projects that have been carried out, in between:
  - On February 22, 2026, the club extended hands to help underprivileged residents at Sarenga, Bankura and distributed pre-owned clothes and pre-owned toys to nearly 27 & 25-30 children respectively. While most of the used clothes were collected from some of our club members, some used clothes and some used toys were collected from a Rotarian from another club.
  - On February 25, 2026 he had the opportunity of attending a seminar and discussion session at Jadavpur University regarding Glaucoma. In this program, role of RC Calcutta Jadavpur was highly praised and Rtn. (Dr.) Asim Sil was also recognised and praised hugely for his untiring efforts and contribution in treating the beneficiaries. PP Rtn. (Dr.) Kunal Ray, the Club Glaucoma Chair was also mentioned for his role as the coordinator of the above-said project. Apart from himself, PP Rtn. (Dr.) Mainak Sengupta, Rtn. (Dr.) Asim Sil expressed individual opinions in course of the discussions session. Other selected dignitaries present, also gave their valuable inputs to make the initiative for effective.
  - On February 28, 2026, the club conducted an awareness session on Health Education & Disease Prevention, including Thalassemia & Cervical Cancer at Nabin Manua Iswar Chandra High School in Daspur of West Midnapore District. 142 students from 8 schools participated in the event. PP Rtn. (Dr.) Chitra Mandal, addressed the students on health education and disease prevention. She specifically discussed measures to combat Thalassemia and shared insights on Cervical Cancer awareness. Her session focused on the responsibility of students in spreading health literacy within their communities. The unique music video on Thalassemia created by RC Calcutta Jadavpur was also played in course of the session.
  - The next batches of tailoring and beautician training courses at Sarenga Village are progressing satisfactorily.
  - Graphic designing course at Santospur Rishi Arobindo Balika Vidyapith is also continuing and Rtn. Subrata Kundu conducted another session on March 02, 2026.
  - That on February 28, 2026, “Shantihi” - an ICM on Peace Building & Conflict Prevention was organised at Rotary Sadan. This event was graced by Rtn. (Dr.) Ramendu Hom Chaudhuri, Rtn. Tapas Bhattacharya, PDG Rtn. Rajani Mukerji, PDG Rtn. Prabir Chatterjee & PDG Rtn. (Dr.) Krishnendu Gupta, PP Rtn. Debi Prasad Basu - District Membership Chair and many others. The main theme for the panel discussion was on “AI & Education as a tool for Peace & Sustainability” joined and moderated by renowned personalities from the field. Rtn. Manas K. Ghosh & himself represented the club. RC Calcutta Jadavpur was a Co-Host for the event.
  - The club has started providing monthly monetary support for a tuition teacher to the home for street children in Kalikapur, Kolkata as was decided.
- Further, President Rtn. Sudipta announced a few upcoming projects and requested the members to make it convenient to participate:
  - The tailoring & beautician training courses at Sarenga Village will continue. Also, the Graphic Designing course at Santospur Rishi Aurobindo Balika Vidyapith will continue.
  - That on March 06, 2026. the club will conduct a Cervical Cancer Awareness Session alongwith a Mental Health Session at Santospur Rishi Aurobindo Balika Vidyapith, led by PP Rtn. (Dr.) Chitra Mandal and Rtn. Sourish Choudhury from RC Calcutta Newbies, respectively.
  - Again on the same day, the club will distribute specs to the beneficiaries identified earlier through the eye camp conducted at Santospur Rishi Aurobindo Balika Vidyapith, a project that was initiated and handled by PP Rtn. (Dr.) Partha P. Roy.
  - Club members will visit the SOUL Children Home at Kalikapur on March 07, 2026 to oversee the coaching facility and assess the students learning for which the club has already started providing financial assistance.
  - That on March 14, 2026, the club will be participating and co-hosting RYLA, organised by RC Budge Budge, where PP Rtn. (Dr.) Chitra Mandal will be conducting a session. The program will be held at Dhyan Ashram, Diamond Harbour Road, Konchowki, Bishnupur, 24 Parganas (S), Kolkata- 743503. Fellow members are requested to attend the event alongwith PP Rtn. (Dr.) Chitra Mandal.
  - That the proposed cricket match would be held on March 29, 2026. All the members are expected to be present and participate.
  - Members should take note that AG Visit is scheduled on March 18, 2026, followed by the Official Club Visit of Rtn. (Dr.) Ramendu Homchaudhuri, District Governor – RID 3291, to the club on April 01, 2026. Members should make it convenient to attend in numbers, on both the occasions.
- In absence of Club Secretary Rtn. (Dr.) Saiful Anam Mir, President Rtn. Sudipta conducted the club business and informed that there are no birthday or anniversary falling within this timeframe.
- Minutes of the 2167<sup>th</sup> meeting, was confirmed by the members present and the meeting was concluded, with thanks to everyone.