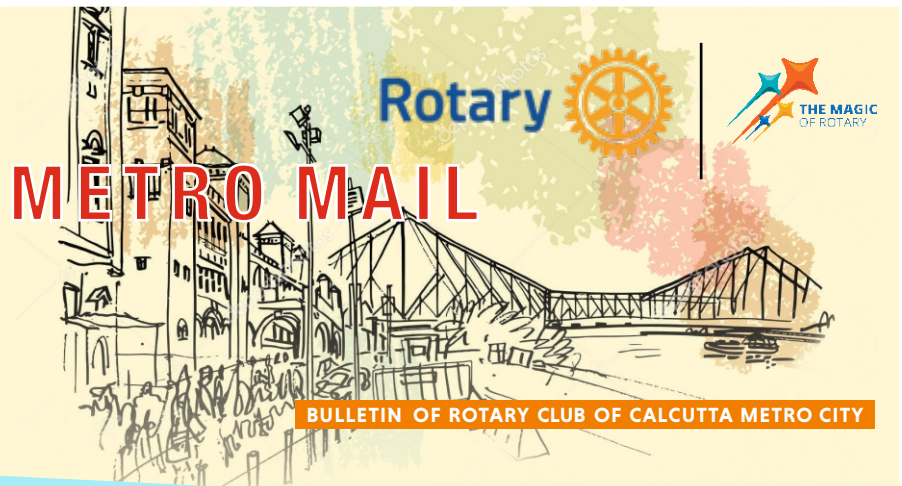


RI President: Rtn. Stephanie Urchick
Dist. Governor: Dr. Krishnendu Gupta
Club President: Rtn. Sunando Sen
Club Secretary: Rtn. Dipu Mullick
Club Editor: Rtn. Subhojit Roy

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As we observe another International Women's Day let us take stock about women and their rights in India, challenges and progress so far.

India has made significant strides in women's rights and gender equality, yet challenges persist. Women continue to face discrimination in education, employment, and political representation. Gender-based violence, wage gaps, and societal norms restrict their full participation in various spheres. While constitutional provisions like the Right to Equality and laws such as the Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act have strengthened women's legal standing, enforcement remains a challenge.

Progress is visible in rising female literacy rates, increasing workforce participation, and growing representation in governance. The Beti Bachao Beti Padhao scheme, reservations in local governance, and economic empowerment programs have furthered the cause. Women's self-help groups and entrepreneurship initiatives have also played a vital role in financial independence.

Rotary has been instrumental in driving change through education, healthcare, and economic empowerment projects. Rotary's literacy programs for girls, maternal and child healthcare initiatives, vocational training, and awareness campaigns on gender-based violence contribute significantly to fostering equality. In India, Rotary clubs actively engage in sensitization programs, skill development workshops, and advocacy campaigns that empower women at the grassroots level.

Despite the challenges, collaboration between government policies, civil society, and organizations like Rotary offers hope for a more equitable future. Continued efforts in education, legal reforms, and economic inclusion will be crucial in achieving gender equality in India.

Subhojit Roy

Rotary International

Young trailblazers find inspiration at Rotaract UN Days

The first **Rotaract UN Days** brought about 200 young people to the United Nations Office at Geneva for four days of inspiring discussions about human rights, health, economic development, peace, and science — and of course some fun (they're **Rotaractors**, after all).

We asked three participants in the 30 October-2 November gathering to tell us about the experience, their takeaways, and what it was like to enter the halls of the historic Palais des Nations.

DAY ONE : Arrival and welcome

Landing in Geneva feels surreal. Over the past year, I've traveled to events in Dubai, Mexico, and Chicago. But Geneva's been on my bucket list for as long as I can remember. Even better, I quickly run into my friend Christina from my Rotary district. What are the odds? Even better still, it's her birthday. We head into the city center to do some sightseeing and sample Switzerland's legendary chocolate. Let me tell you, it did not disappoint. We head back for the welcome cocktail ceremony and after running into more old friends, we celebrate Christina's birthday at a rooftop bar with a gorgeous view of the city. — **Zayne Sinclair**

In 2020, I was deputy secretary general for the National Youth Model United Nations in Sri Lanka. I made a promise to myself: One day, I would walk through the halls of the United Nations Office in Geneva. But little did I know that Rotary would bring this dream to life. I'm so excited to see inside the iconic Palais des Nations. — **Haneekah Rahil**

As an environmentalist, I'm very interested in working with the UN in Nairobi, where I'm from and the home to the **United Nations Environment Programme**, which partners with Rotary on clean water projects. So, I have dreamed of visiting the United Nations Office at Geneva for a long time. — **Lamech Opiyo**



Haneekah Rahil and her Rotary friends Shahd Elshazly & Noël Kutz

DAY TWO : United Nations office at Geneva

Zayne Sinclair attends the first Rotaract UN Days in Geneva on 30 October.

Courtesy of Zayne Sinclair



I stop to take a picture in front of the United Nations building. I'm not exactly sure why I feel compelled to do it, maybe as a silent promise to myself that one day I'll contribute to

service on this scale, far beyond Bermuda's pink shores. The morning session begins with a welcome address by Tatiana Valovaya, the first woman to serve as director-general here. She shares that only 20 percent of global diplomatic roles are held by women, a sobering statistic. Another eye-opener: Even Grammy-winning singer Gaby Moreno has self-doubts at times. The Rotary celebrity ambassador is speaking about the migration crisis, particularly in Latin America, when she acknowledges once doubting whether her music could make a difference. But she realized that just bringing people joy and comfort matters. My takeaway: Even the smallest acts can create ripples of hope. Then, as if to make that point, Moreno closes out the session with a heartfelt performance of her music. — **Zayne Sinclair**

In her speech, Rotary President Stephanie Urchick puts an emphasis on youth as leaders of today — not just of tomorrow. That is incredibly powerful and resonates deeply with me. Later, I have the honor of sharing a panel discussion with her. During my own speech on youth in humanitarian action, I discuss the role young people play in driving solutions to global challenges. It is my vision to see Rotaract working toward peace and reconciliation in my home country of Sri Lanka after decades of civil war. — **Haneekah Rahil**

I don't just get to meet Gaby Moreno, I have the honor of sitting on the same panel as her for a discussion about human rights, immigrants, and refugees. I've interacted with so many artists, but what stands out with her is how she uses her songs to advocate for human rights and to create something positive, which I find inspiring. She is very approachable. She shares her insights and encourages me to do the work that I do. Apart from the serious side, we are having lots of fun. The first evening we attend a VIP dinner and awards ceremony with cocktails. There is a DJ, so of course we dance a lot. Sometimes you almost forget to sleep! — **Lamech Opiyo**

DAY THREE : World Intellectual Property Organization

We are welcomed by the organization's Director-General Darin Tang with remarks on innovation as a driver of global progress. That is particularly impactful for me, as I focused on intellectual property law in my graduate studies. — **Haneekah Rahil**



Left: Gaby Moreno, image credit - Mihail Durnescu.

Right: Lamech Opiyo and

Rotaractor Daniel Zavala, image credit - Mihail Durnescu.

There is a lot of discussion about how we can apply technological advances and innovations to environmental and sustainability projects and maybe to drive climate action projects as well. Two of the speakers introduce us to **WIPO Green**, an online platform for technology exchange that supports global efforts to address climate change. Now I'm thinking about how I can apply some of these technologies, for environmental monitoring, for instance. — **Lamech Opiyo**

DAY FOUR: CERN (European Organization for Nuclear Research)



An outing to the birthplace of the World Wide Web! The **CERN** international physics laboratory on the Swiss-French border is also home to the world's largest particle accelerator and more than 12,000 scientists from over 70 countries exploring the origins of the universe and more. Its legacy is not just in scientific discovery but in proving that collaboration can overcome division. As CERN's former Director-General Rolf-Dieter Heuer told us a day earlier: "Science has no agenda; it belongs to everyone." I am struck by the similarity with our Rotaract values — collaboration, innovation, and the drive to create a better future. — **Zayne Sinclair**

Quantum tennis, anyone? Or maybe quantum karaoke? The interactive exhibits at CERN's Science Gateway bring science to life. Beyond the weekend events, I'm also embracing the adventure in me and taking time to explore Switzerland's stunning beauty. Visiting Jungfrau (aka the Top of Europe) and beautiful Lausanne is a dream come true. It reminds me of the joy of stepping into the unknown, conquering fears, and discovering new stories. — Haneekah Rahil

Rotary Honors Six People of Action : Champions of Peace

The honorees' projects empower farmers and refugees, heal postwar trauma, and establish dialogue among diverse groups

By **Etelka Lehoczky**

Rotary recognized six members and alumni as People of Action : Champions of Peace in January. This honor celebrates the recipients' work to build peace around the world. Their ambitious and wide-ranging efforts include teaching technical skills to refugee children and promoting sustainable agriculture. The honorees exemplify Rotary's values and the dedication it takes to make a lasting impact.

Anne Kjær Bathel

Germany

Rotary Peace Fellow

Area of action: Preparing refugee children for the digital world

Anne Kjær Bathel is a Rotary Peace Fellow, former Rotary Youth Exchange student, social entrepreneur, mentor, and founder of the ReDI School of Digital Integration.



Bathel helped develop and execute the concept for ReDI Digital Kids, which offers technical education to refugee children in Germany. The program fosters children's curiosity and creativity and encourages them to communicate and interact in group settings. It also builds digital literacy, empowering participants to navigate the online world safely

and confidently.

The initial stage of the project involved 296 children and 78 teachers. Continued engagement with the community has been a key aspect of the program's sustainability. Thanks to funding from corporate and government partners, it has now worked with more than 4,000 refugee and migrant children across Germany.

Bathel built strong partnerships with Rotary clubs in the community and abroad and secured critical long-term funding. Her background in peacebuilding and innovation allowed her and her team to create a program that has long-term social and economic benefits for the participants and their families.

María Cristina Cifuentes

Colombia

Rotary Peace Fellow

Area of action: Integrating peacebuilding into Colombia's Nationally Determined Contributions

María Cristina Cifuentes, a Rotary Peace Fellow, member of the Rotary Action Group for Peace, and global climate justice ambassador, leads a pioneering project to integrate a peacebuilding approach

into Colombia's Nationally Determined Contributions (NDC). The NDC is a climate action plan submitted to the United Nations. This marks the first time Colombia's NDC has incorporated peace as a critical element for sustainability and resilience against climate change.

The project establishes five pillars for Colombia's NDC: governance and transparency, social empowerment and human rights, sustainable development and Positive Peace, human security and climate resilience, and innovation and capacity building. It focuses on communities that are vulnerable and have historically been excluded from decision-making processes, including children, Indigenous peoples, and rural populations.

While studying for a master's degree as a Rotary Peace Fellow, Cifuentes designed a framework to foster peace in fragile contexts. She proposed this methodology to Colombia's Ministry of Environment, aligning it with climate goals. The framework was integrated into the NDC 3.0 update for 2025-2030. It incorporates ethical transition principles and the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals as well as a commitment to human rights, gender policies, and child-sensitive indicators. This innovative approach highlights the role of peace and social justice in driving transformative climate action.

Domino S. Frank



Chad
Rotary Peace Fellow
Area of action: Preparing women for work

Domino S. Frank is a Rotary Peace Fellow with more than 20 years of experience in humanitarian development and peacebuilding. He

is a strategic advocate and project coordinator for the Corridors of Peace program in Guéréda, Chad. He focuses on helping displaced women and young people in conflict zones, offering vital services such as vocational training, education, and health care.

In a region destabilized by conflict and displacement, many women and young girls lack educational and economic opportunities. As a result, they may get trapped in cycles of poverty and dependency. The lack of opportunity fuels deeper social and economic divides, exacerbating tensions within the community and contributing to instability.

Corridors of Peace offers training in literacy as well as sewing, agriculture, soapmaking, and other skills that are both marketable and sustainable. By learning these trades, women and girls can generate income, improve their living conditions, and achieve financial independence. The program builds peace by addressing the root causes of conflict: poverty, inequality, and disenfranchisement.

Swati Herkal



India
Rotary Club of Wai in Maharashtra
Area of action: Supporting farmers through regenerative agricultural practices

Swati Herkal is a past district governor and past chair of the Governor's Council of Rotary News Trust. She is also a member of The

Rotary Foundation Cadre of Technical Advisers. An active philanthropist, she has served other organizations in various capacities.

Herkal initiated a project to address economic instability and social challenges in rural farming communities. These communities face increasing poverty, unemployment, migration, and poor soil conditions. All of those challenges taken together contribute to social unrest and exacerbate inequality. Herkal's initiative encourages farmers to use composting and other sustainable agricultural practices to increase productivity.

In the project's first phase, 70 participating farmers reported reduced costs, increased crop yields, and improved soil fertility. They also joined a Rotary

Community Corps and served as mentors for more than 1,200 other farmers who were eager to adopt innovative methods. Women in these communities produced and sold compost, gaining a degree of financial independence. By demonstrating the success of regenerative farming, the project also offered a more promising career path for young people who might otherwise have left agriculture. The initiative is now being expanded to 50 additional villages.



Linda Low

USA
Rotary Peace Fellow, **Rotary Club of Global Partners in Peace**, North Carolina

Area of action: Starting dialogues on challenging issues

Linda Low is a Rotary Peace Fellow and the founder and charter president of the Rotary Club of Global Partners in Peace, which has members all over the world. Based in Seattle, Washington, USA, Low developed a process to facilitate dialogue among diverse groups to reduce divisiveness and polarization. The program, called Leadership Dialogues, was conceived in 2016 and is now used in communities across the United States and around the world.

Leadership Dialogues brings people together to discuss difficult issues and leaves participants with a clearer understanding of others' points of view. By emphasizing shared values, thoughtful listening, and empathy, Leadership Dialogues encourages people to engage in productive discussion and appreciate different opinions and experiences. As a result, communities become stronger and more collaborative. Low has personally facilitated dialogues with at least 2,000 people, around half of them Rotary members. She has also helped many Rotarians in the United States learn to facilitate dialogues, and some Rotary districts have integrated Leadership Dialogues into their awareness campaigns and community engagement initiatives. Most participants surveyed have said the experience changed how they engage in dialogue.

Sanela Music



Bosnia-Herzegovina
Rotary E-Club of Global Impact District 1990

Area of action: Building resilience, trust, and connection

As a child, Sanela Music was a refugee who fled the 1992-1995 war in Bosnia-Herzegovina. Today, she's an international human resources consultant, a Rotary representative to the United Nations in Geneva, and a dedicated peacebuilder working with The Rotary Foundation and the SANCHILD Foundation.

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Music leads the Harmony Project, which addresses postwar trauma by equipping communities to hold dialogues that promote healing and build lasting peace. Launched in 2021, it has carried out 47 initiatives that have benefited more than a thousand individuals and indirectly impacted nearly 50,000 people in 34 cities.

The Harmony Project in Schools empowers teachers and students to manage their emotions and build resilience and trust. Approved by two ministries of education in Bosnia-Herzegovina, the project reduces conflicts, stigmas, and cultural divides. It also enhances inter-ethnic connections. Participants report experiencing transformative changes in their relationships and an overall improvement in their well-being.

Inspired by the project's outcomes, Music is working with peace education experts and Rotary partners to expand it across the Balkans and beyond.

Polio Immunization



The club conducted SNID in its designated KMC Ward 61 with 849 immunized on the day. The club also conducted an extensive pre SNID miking across the KMC Ward covering a few lakhs residents. The club was represented by PDG Shyamashree Sen, President Sunando Sen, PP Rtns Subhojit Roy, Md Firoz, Jharna Mitra, Bandana Das, Arindam Ghosh and Amrita Basu.

Club News

Blood Donation Camp



The Rotary Club of Metro City in association with Krishnapur Pally Uniyon Samity, blood donation camp was a well-organized and impactful event on Sunday 16th February 2025. The venue was easily accessible, and the registration process was smooth and efficient. The medical staff were professional and friendly, ensuring donors felt comfortable and safe throughout the process.

The refreshments provided after donation were a thoughtful touch. Overall, the camp was a success, with 29 donors contributing significantly to the communities blood supply. Rtn Dipanwita Banerjee represented the club.

Club Fellowship Lunch Meet



PP Rtn Md Firoz hosted a lunch for the members of RC Calcutta Metro City at Karims Restaurant after a successful SNID at the clubs designated

KMC Ward 61. The luncheon was attended by PDG Shyamashree Sen, Club President Sunando Sen, PP Rtns Subhojit Roy, Arindam Ghosh, Md Firoz, Jharna Mitra, Navnit Banerjea, Amrita Basu, Rtn Dipanwita Banerjee and Honorary Rtn Tarun Bhattacharya

Greetings

Happy Birthday to Rtn Sunrita Sen on 2nd March
Happy Birthday to PP Rtn Subhojit Roy on 5th March

