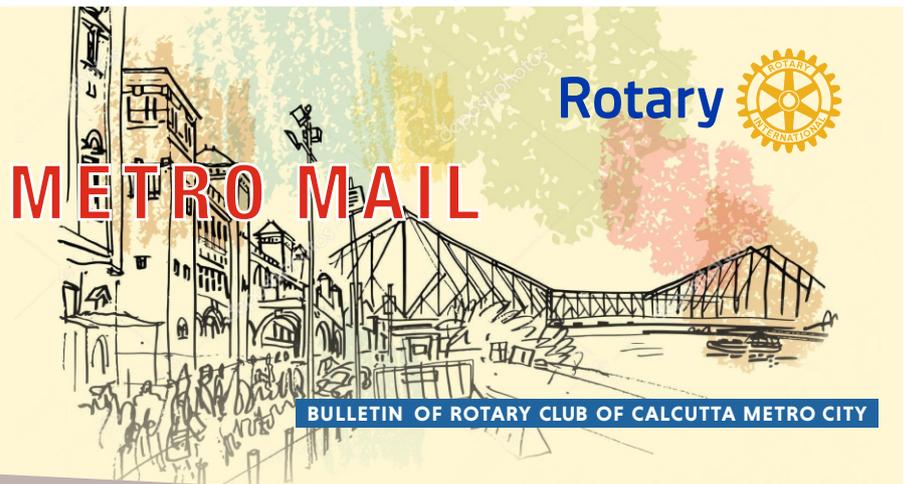


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The Rotary Foundation: How Service Becomes Sustainable Development

In a world where aid often stops at relief, the **Rotary Foundation (TRF)** stands apart by quietly demonstrating how structured philanthropy can become a catalyst for lasting development—especially in the world’s most backward and underserved continents. From remote African villages to conflict-prone regions of South Asia and Latin America, TRF has shown that progress is possible when global vision meets local ownership.

What distinguishes the Rotary Foundation is its **development-first approach**. Rather than dispensing charity, TRF invests in systems—clean water infrastructure, primary healthcare, education, and livelihoods—that allow communities to stand on their own. Its **Global Grants** are not impulsive responses to crisis but carefully designed interventions rooted in needs assessment, sustainability planning, and community participation. The result

is impact that endures long after funding cycles end.

Perhaps no initiative illustrates this better than **Rotary’s leadership in polio eradication**. In continents long crippled by preventable disease, Rotary’s sustained commitment helped build immunisation networks, disease surveillance systems, and trained health workers. Africa’s certification as polio-free was not merely a public health milestone; it was a testament to how focused global cooperation can strengthen fragile health systems across an entire continent.

Equally significant is TRF’s insistence on **local capacity-building**. Development projects are executed through local Rotary clubs in partnership with community leaders, ensuring relevance and accountability. Teachers are trained, healthcare workers empowered, technicians skilled, and entrepreneurs supported. This approach replaces dependency with dignity and transforms beneficiaries into stakeholders.

The Rotary Foundation also understands that underdevelopment is not only economic—it is often political and social. Through **peace fellowships and educational scholarships**, TRF invests in human capital from conflict-affected and impoverished regions. These fellows return home equipped to lead, govern, and rebuild institutions, addressing the deeper causes of instability that keep continents trapped in cycles of poverty.

Economic empowerment remains another cornerstone. By supporting vocational training, women-led enterprises, and micro-economic initiatives, TRF helps communities generate income, create jobs, and break intergenerational poverty. In regions where opportunity is scarce, such interventions quietly rewrite futures.

What lends credibility to the Rotary Foundation’s work is its **rigorous governance and transparency**. Strict financial oversight, measurable outcomes, and global accountability ensure that resources reach where they are most needed—an essential safeguard when operating in regions with limited institutional capacity.

Ultimately, the Rotary Foundation’s success lies in its philosophy: **development is most effective when driven by partnership, not patronage**. By blending global resources with local leadership and ethical stewardship, TRF has shown that even the most backward continents can move towards stability, health, and prosperity—one sustainable project at a time.

In an era where development aid is often questioned, the Rotary Foundation offers a compelling editorial lesson: **true service is not about how much is given, but how wisely it is invested**.

Subhojit Roy

Arizona Daily Star : Pedaling Toward a Polio-free World

This article originally appeared in the Arizona Daily Star's National Opinion Section

By John Hewko

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RI General Secretary and CEO John Hewko rides for polio eradication at the El Tour de Tucson.

I first heard about El Tour de Tucson in the unlikeliest of places: aboard a water taxi in Bangkok in 2012. Several Tucsonans struck up a conversation when they learned I was an avid cyclist. They told me how Rotary clubs in Southern Arizona had begun using Tucson's annual bike ride to raise money for global polio eradication.

RI General Secretary and CEO John Hewko rides for polio eradication at the El Tour de Tucson.

Their enthusiasm touched me. By the time our short ferry ride was over, I had agreed to join them. That November, I traveled from Chicago to Tucson for my first El Tour, a rigorous 102-mile ride that starts in downtown Tucson. I've returned 12 more times since. Through our participation, my Rotary teammates and I have raised more than \$72 million to help provide polio vaccines for children.

It's fitting that Tucson hosts this event because Arizona once played a pivotal role in America's fight against the virus. In 1946, the polio epidemic hit the state, with 88 recorded cases, a number that would multiply dramatically in the years ahead. As panic spread, officials closed swimming pools, theaters, and public spaces in an effort to contain the disease.

In 1962, when Dr. Albert Sabin's oral polio vaccine became available, Arizona launched one of the country's first mass immunization campaigns, in

Maricopa and Pima counties. On Sundays, children lined up at churches and schools to receive the polio vaccine on sugar cubes. These "Sabin Oral Sundays" became so successful that health advocates across the nation copied the Arizona model in their own communities. By 1964, more than 100 million Americans had been vaccinated, and no further polio outbreaks were recorded in the U.S.

While the virus was under control in the United States by the late 1970s, it continued to paralyze more than 350,000 people annually in 125 countries. In response, Rotary and its government and nonprofit partners founded the Global Polio Eradication Initiative in 1988. Since then, global vaccination drives have reduced cases by more than 99.9%. Only Pakistan and Afghanistan still report infections caused by the wild poliovirus. When polio is finally gone, it will become, after smallpox, only the second human disease ever eradicated. To achieve that goal, Rotary members worldwide have contributed \$2.9 billion and countless volunteer hours through community events such as El Tour de Tucson.

My journey to cycling and El Tour began out of necessity. I had been a lifelong athlete, playing lacrosse, soccer, and squash in high school and college, and later taking up running. But arthritis, especially in my right hip, eventually forced me to stop. At my wife's urging, I turned to biking and soon grew to love the sport.

Over the years, I've tackled many rides, yet none match El Tour's combination of endurance, camaraderie, and cause. My personal goal for each El Tour was to break the five-hour mark; many Rotary supporters pledged to double or triple their donations if I reached that elite level. I first achieved it in 2015, finishing in four hours and 55 minutes. Crawling off my bike, I just sat for an hour, exhausted but elated.

This year, recovering from another hip surgery in April, I drew inspiration from Minda Dentler, a polio survivor and the first female wheelchair athlete to finish the Ironman World Championship triathlon. Her determination will push me toward a six-hour finish.

Though we are close to ending polio, the threat isn't over. Government funding gaps, shifting priorities, and vaccine hesitancy in many countries are jeopardizing progress. Recent detections of poliovirus in New York and Gaza show that polio anywhere is a threat everywhere in our interconnected world. If vaccination rates decline, the virus could return to polio-free places. That's why El Tour and similar events remain vital. They help raise money and awareness that vaccines are safe, effective, and lifesaving.

On Nov. 22, as thousands of riders roll out at dawn beneath Tucson's pink skies, I will be reminded what this moment represents: communities coming together to protect future generations. With every mile, we move closer to a world where no child will ever again suffer from polio.

An avid cyclist, John Hewko, CEO and general secretary of Rotary International, is traveling to Tucson from his home in Evanston, Illinois, to participate for the 13th time in El Tour de Tucson and raise money for Rotary's global polio eradication efforts.

Rotary's History in Korea



The first Rotary club in Korea was chartered in Seoul on 10 November 1927. Since then, Rotary members in Korea have maintained their commitment to fellowship, service, and leadership through difficult times — growing membership, leading our organization, offering hospitality to the Rotary world, and showing themselves to be people of action.

Early years

Rotary members expressed interest in starting a club in Korea as early as 1922, but action was deferred while Rotary focused on expanding in countries that already had clubs.

The idea was reignited in 1926 when two clubs in the United States contacted Rotary leaders about Americans living in Korea who could organize a club. A club in the state of Kansas suggested an honorary member who was doing missionary work for the Presbyterian church. From Iowa came the recommendation of a man who was working for the YMCA.

Rotary members and students deliver freshly packed lettuce to a local restaurant that purchases produce that is grown and harvested in the greenhouse at Andong Young-Myeong Special Education School in Andong, Korea. 2014.

James Davidson, who organized the first Rotary clubs in Australia and New Zealand, and other leaders who were guiding Rotary's efforts to establish clubs in new countries hesitated to change course quickly. They also had reservations about giving this responsibility to people with little Rotary experience.

Instead, work began in earnest in 1927, when members of the Rotary Club of Tokyo, Japan, advocated founding a club in Seoul. Hachisaburo Hirao of the Rotary Club of Osaka, Rotary's special commissioner for Japan, oversaw its organization. At the time, Korea was under Japanese rule, and the new club included both Japanese and Korean members.

The Seoul club received visitors from near and far. It joyfully reported an occasion in 1931 when Rotarians from the United States attended a club meeting when their cruise ship docked nearby at Incheon. The club also hosted annual family outings; 1934's took place on the grounds of the Chosun Beer Company, where guests hunted for chestnuts and enjoyed food from different cultures.

The Rotary Club of Seoul was the only club in Korea until Rotary chartered clubs in Busan in May 1935, Pyongyang in July 1937, and Daegu in June 1938. This growth was short-lived. All clubs in Korea disbanded in 1940 as Japan adopted a strong nationalist stance opposed to Westernization and entered World War II. The clubs' membership in RI officially ended in December of that year.

Rotary returns to Korea

The Rotary Club of Seoul was formally re-established on 15 March 1949 with 25 members. When Seoul was occupied by the North Korean Army in 1950, club members were among those forced to flee. Some went to Busan, about 325 km (200 miles) southeast of Seoul, where they began helping other refugees and holding meetings that echoed their former Rotary club meetings. As a result of their efforts to make connections and serve the community, the Rotary Club of Busan was officially re-established on 3 January 1952.

In January 1961, Rotary International placed the 10 clubs in the country in an administrative group known as a Rotary district. Although it was unusual for a district to have so few clubs, Rotary leaders believed that the organization's growth in Korea would be more successful using this approach than it would if clubs were grouped with clubs in other Asian countries.

Indeed, by Rotary's centennial in 2005, Korea boasted more than 1,200 Rotary clubs and 48,900 members. Twenty years later, it had more than 1,600 Rotary clubs and 64,000 members.



Rotary Presidents

It is a great honor to be elected to lead Rotary International, and members from Korea have twice been selected to serve as president of the global organization.

Dong Kurn "D.K." Lee of the Rotary Club of Seoul Hangang was president in 2008-09. Reflecting at the start of his term on Rotary's growth in Korea, he noted that the country was very poor during and after the Korean War of 1950-53. "Many international organizations and governments helped build the economy back up. Now our economy is booming, and all Koreans want to give back some of what was given."

SangKoo Yun of the Rotary Club of Sae Hanyang, Seoul, was chosen to

serve as president for 2026-27. Yun, a consummate Rotary leader and businessman, died in September 2025 before taking office.

Building on the tradition begun by the first club in Seoul, Korean members continue to host visitors from around the world. They welcome guests, participate in Rotary Youth Exchange, and host large-scale events.

Rotary's 1979 Asia Regional Conference in Seoul drew nearly three times more participants than any other regional Rotary conference at the time. The opening ceremony had to be split into two sessions because the audience was so large. James L. Bomar Jr., the 1979-80 RI president, called the occasion "a significant tribute, providing great visibility to the growth of Rotary" in Asia and Korea.

The 1989 Rotary International Convention was held at Olympic Park in Seoul, the site of the 1988 Summer Olympics. Prime Minister Kang Young-hoon gave the welcome address. At the time, it was the second-largest convention in Rotary history, with 38,000 participants. The 2016 convention in Seoul attracted 44,600 participants, becoming the new second-largest convention.

People of action

Korean members have shown themselves to be people of action over the decades. In a country that once primarily benefitted from service projects initiated by clubs in other countries, today's Rotary members are proud to lead positive change in their own country and beyond.

In 1963, nearly all 600 Rotary members in Korea led a reforestation effort in the mountainous region west of Seoul. The area was heavily deforested during World War II when trees were used for fuel because of electricity and coal shortages, and more were damaged during the Korean War. The project protected the few trees that remained and planted more, in hopes that the seedlings would "grow as high as the sky."

Environmental concerns were again a priority in 2008, when members in Korea and Mongolia used a grant from The Rotary Foundation to counter desertification and erosion in the Gobi Desert. People involved in the multiyear initiative planted trees, built infrastructure, and worked with farmers to find solutions to overgrazing by livestock.

In 1989, members of the Rotary Club of Seoul purchased winter clothes, shoes, and medicine to support Vietnamese refugees in Busan. One club member donated new clothing from his textile company. The project helped almost 300 refugees endure the winter in a climate they were unaccustomed to.

Rotary clubs in South Korea have long supported North Korean defectors by building schools, offering scholarships, and providing health screenings. The Rotary Club of Ulsan Freedom, started by immigrants in 2016, combines personal experience and the Rotary network to **help immigrants from the North** who don't have family or friends nearby adapt to an unfamiliar economic system and culture.

Members also seek to help people outside Korea. The Rotary Club of Yeongju Moran and District 3630 in Korea collaborate with U.S. Rotary members on a job training program near Chicago, Illinois, USA, for Korean, Asian American, and Pacific Islander people with developmental and intellectual disabilities.

Rotary Korea, one of Rotary's official regional magazines, has featured Rotary members' work in Korea since 1963.

— November 2025

The Secrets of their Success

Rotary Action Groups Have a Lot to Teach About Volunteer Organizing

By **Etelka Lehoczky**



When Rotary club members thousands of miles apart decide to collaborate, something has to bind them together. For Marion Bunch and Stephen Mwanje, it was a shared awareness of the devastation of AIDS.

Bunch, a member of the Rotary Club of Dunwoody, Georgia, USA, experienced that devastation when her son died from an AIDS-related illness. Mwanje, a member of the Rotary Club of Mukono, Kampala, Uganda, had seen how the disease ravaged his country.

The two met when Bunch visited Uganda, and they began talking about the complexities of fighting AIDS in Africa.

"In some African countries, mentioning AIDS was a taboo. People didn't want to know their status," says Mwanje. "So I wanted to have Rotary Family Health Days. AIDS testing would be just one of the activities. There would also be malaria screening, blood sugar testing, family planning, and so on."

That idea became the signature initiative of the **Rotary Action Group for Family Health and AIDS Prevention**, which Bunch founded. It was one of the first groups created as part of the Rotary Action Group program, now celebrating its 20th year. Today the expert members of Rotary's 26 action groups advise Rotarians on service projects and initiate projects of their own. They're terrific repositories of wisdom about making an impact.

In honor of the 20th anniversary of action groups, we asked the CEO of the Rotary Action Group for Family Health and AIDS Prevention, Sue Paget, for some tips on carrying out effective projects.

Start small and learn as you go

Successful social change initiatives almost always start small. Circumstances can vary hugely from place to place, so it's wise to limit a project's scope at first. A pilot project's successes and failures show what needs to change before it can be scaled. By expanding slowly and deliberately, Paget says, the family health action group has had time to thoroughly test its approach.

"There's a methodology when we go into a country," says Paget, who's a member of the Rotary E-Club of Eagle Canyon, South Africa. "You go to the Rotary clubs and get their buy-in, then you go to the ministries of health and get letters of intent. It takes a lot of work, but if you follow the steps, it can be done."

Partnerships are magic

Government agencies, nonprofits, and businesses can supercharge a project. Partners from the same city or region appreciate local concerns. Or a potential partner might address the same issue at a national or international level.

A partner organization can help fund the project, share valuable expertise, or simply lend the strength of its brand to the effort — which makes it easier to recruit even more partners. And the benefits don't stop there, says **Thembisile Xulu**, CEO of the South African National AIDS Council, one of the action group's partners.

The Rotary Action Group for Reproductive, Maternal, and Child Health has achieved significant results, including through its flagship program, **Together for Healthy Families in Nigeria**. Some of its leaders offer their tips.

We usually have a meeting before we start any project. We call together religious leaders, opinion leaders, women leaders, adolescents, heads of households, and we have a discussion. We don't just go to them and say, 'I want to start this, come and join me.' No. We build it from scratch together. That way, they have ownership.

Emmanuel Adedolapo Lufadeju *cofounder and technical adviser*

You need to get correct data to really know the situation. Find out the metrics [to determine] where you can make the most significant impact in terms of planning, implementation, evaluation, and moving on to scale [the project]."

Angela Benson *Chair of the board of directors*

Don't be frightened if you have a failure. Keep an open mind so you can be innovative and adapt.

Himansu Kumar Basu *Medical Director and technical adviser*

The family health action group "is a shining example of how public-private partnerships can multiply impact,"

Xulu says. "Its wide network of partners prevents duplication, ensures resources are used effectively, and fosters innovation."

To find partners, start by looking at existing connections, Paget says. When Bunch founded the action group, she already had relationships with the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in Atlanta and the Coca-Cola Africa Foundation from her previous nonprofit work.

"They sort of kick-started us," Paget says.

Build a reputation

When carrying out a project, aim to leave a positive impression on everyone you work with. Paget says the dedication of the family health action group's members has won the support of important people all over Africa.

It's that kind of thinking that helped the family health action group become a nonprofit powerhouse. Since the official inception of Rotary Family Health Days in 2011, 3.5 million people in 16 countries have received free medical services at the events.

Club News

Child Marriage & Pregnancy



On 4th November 2025, our club, in association with RC Calcutta Pointers and supported by West Bengal Commission for Protection of Child Rights, Co-Hosted an awareness camp on Child Marriage &

Pregnancy at Kalikatala Milan Vidyapith, Kalikatala, South 24 Parganas.

The awareness talk was conducted by Mr. Sobhan Mukherjee of Afflatus Foundation, and attended by 180 students, girls and boys, of Classes 8 & 9 of the school. At the end of the talk, the students took a vow not to marry below the age of 18 years and to share their knowledge gained with their parents, relatives and people of their neighbourhood.

Only President Rtn Sunando Sen from our club and 3 members from RC Calcutta Pointers attended the program. The nearly 2 hours drive through rough and narrow roads was worth the time spent at the program.

