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Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene (WASH) are fundamental to public health and environmental sustainability. In India, and particularly in Bengal, significant strides have been made in this sector, yet challenges remain, especially for underprivileged communities. Rotary's focus on WASH can significantly impact underprivileged communities and help mitigate ecological risks. By collaborating with stakeholders, leveraging technology, and ensuring community participation, Rotary can be a game-changer in making water, sanitation, and hygiene universally accessible and sustainable.

Some of the challenges are in **Urban Slums and Rural Backward Areas**; Lack of proper sanitation facilities and access to clean drinking water, The growing hazard of **Groundwater Depletion and Contamination**; Arsenic poisoning is a significant issue in Bengal, **Waste Management and Pollution**; Poor disposal of plastic and human waste leads to ecological hazards, **Climate Change Impact**; Rising sea levels, floods, and cyclones in Bengal (Sundarbans region) threaten freshwater sources.

Rotary's Role in Strengthening WASH Efforts by constructing **community toilets** and hand-washing stations in slums, rural areas, and schools, Installing **rainwater harvesting systems** to mitigate water scarcity, Setting up **wastewater treatment projects** in high-risk areas.

It is also playing an important role in creating Awareness and Education by conducting **hygiene education programs** in schools and communities, especially targeting women and children, Organizing **sanitation awareness drives** with local bodies to encourage toilet use and water conservation.

Partnerships and Advocacy with **government bodies, NGOs, and corporates** to scale up water and sanitation projects is an area or scope that Rotary Clubs can actively take up.

Advocating for **policy changes** to ensure sustainable water and sanitation management along with **Ecological Sustainability** to Implement **solid waste management and composting initiatives** to reduce pollution is the way forward..

The club can actively support **Sundarbans and other vulnerable ecosystems** with clean water solutions thereby promoting **eco-friendly sanitation technologies** such as bio-toilets.

There are many Rotary clubs in D 3291 who are playing key roles but what we need for the immediate future is a collaborative approach of the most of the clubs, big or small to make an impact in our community.

Subhojit Roy

Rotary International

Presidential Message- March 2025



March is here, and for Rotary International, that means celebrating Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene Month — a time to shine a spotlight on one of the most transformative areas of our work.

This month is an opportunity to reflect on *The Magic of Rotary* and the profound impact we create when we come together with determination and purpose.

Years ago, I experienced this magic firsthand in the Dominican Republic. When a group of members helped people install water filters, three children watched with amazement as dirty water entered one end of a filter and clean water emerged from the other. When we paused the demonstration, one child tugged at my sleeve and pleaded, “Show me the magic again.”

To them, it felt magical. It was also the result of countless hours of effort — planning, transporting, and installing the filters — alongside local partners who were dedicated to making clean water accessible. In that moment, I realized that what seemed like a small act

could change residents’ lives. *That is The Magic of Rotary.*

This story is a testament to the incredible potential of our global family to create change. Water projects exemplify our reach, our partnerships, and our unwavering commitment to improving lives. Consider Rotary’s work with USAID. That partnership has enabled us to work with communities and governments to improve access to sustainable water and sanitation services for thousands of people in the Dominican Republic, Ghana, the Philippines, and Uganda.

Partnerships remind us that Rotary’s impact is amplified when we work together. Through our strategic alliance with the United Nations Environment Programme, we’re advancing the Community Action for Fresh Water initiative. This program equips Rotary members with the tools and resources to protect, restore, and sustain freshwater ecosystems. When we make use of Rotary grants and advocate for clean water in our communities, we create a ripple effect that extends far beyond individual projects.

As we embrace the spirit of the month, I encourage every Rotary member to seek out new partnerships. Collaboration multiplies our efforts and helps us reach more people in need.

Whether it’s joining forces with local organizations, forming alliances with international agencies, or mobilizing your community, every step we take together brings us closer to a world where everyone has access to clean water and safe sanitation.

The Magic of Rotary shines brightest when we work in harmony with others to create lasting good. Together, we can turn dreams into realities that transform lives and communities. The result may feel like magic at times, but we know it’s from the power of our collective commitment and compassion. Let’s harness this magic to make a difference this month and beyond.

Stephanie A. Urchick
President 2024-25

Rotary Honors a Teacher and Mentor with the 2025 Sylvia Whitlock Leadership Award

*This Turkish Rotarian has promoted women’s financial literacy, funded scholarships
for girls, and provided relief to earthquake victims*

By **Etelka Lehoczky**



Ayda Özeren, a member of the Rotary Club of Izmir-Gündoğdu, Izmir, Turkey, is the 2025 recipient of Rotary’s Sylvia Whitlock Leadership Award.

The 2025 recipient of Rotary’s **Sylvia Whitlock Leadership Award** combines a longstanding commitment to empowering women with a talent for teaching and mentorship. Ayda Özeren, a member of the Rotary Club of Izmir-Gündoğdu, Izmir, Turkey, is an author, mediator, and professional speaker whose work has touched the lives of as many as 11,000 women and girls.

“We have to change the leadership process. We should make more women leaders,” she says.

Özeren has spent years conducting financial literacy workshops for women as well as organizing mentorship opportunities and tutoring programs for girls. She published a book and donated all the proceeds to funding girls’ scholarships. In 2023-24, as governor of Rotary District 2440, she took the lead in relief efforts for victims of the 2023 Turkey-Syria earthquakes.

"I find her remarkable and inspiring, because whatever she does, she does it with her heart," says Yeşim Yöney , a member of the Rotary E-Club of District 2440, who co-nominated Özeren for the award. "She's a hard worker, a good planner, and she is somebody who is positive, who embraces people. I think that's a very important thing in a leader." Özeren studied political science, international relations, and marketing. While pursuing a career in the banking industry, she learned how to be a teacher. She began conducting financial literacy seminars after her bank developed a program to provide startup funding to female entrepreneurs. Through Rotary, she led similar classes for women in rural areas, factories, and schools. She visited more than 100 factories and small manufacturing companies, educating around 8,000 women about finances and economic empowerment. It was by teaching others, Özeren says, that she learned how to lead.

"As a result of doing so many coaching programs, I became a facilitator. I became a trainer," she says. "At the same time, I started tutoring in a university, giving lessons in strategic management. It was a little tough, it was very challenging for me, because I had to study each subject first before I could give a lecture to the students."

Özeren found her next avocation almost by accident. She decided to try writing a blog, called Diary of a Banker, and discovered her talents as a communicator. In 2021 she published a book, "Aziz Coguz Biziz" (the title, she explains, translates roughly to "We are more when we are together"). She resolved to donate her royalties to pay for scholarships for girls, funding around 1,000 scholarships.

"Nobody pushed her to write a book," Yöney says. "She just said, 'I'm going to donate all the proceeds to empowering girls with scholarships.' She's a strong personality. As a woman leader myself, I really admire her."

Özeren pursued many economic relief projects after the **2023 earthquakes in Turkey and Syria**. She led efforts to provide mobile health care and dental facilities. Through a project called The Golden Needle, she helped women find work making traditional textiles. She also collaborated with city governments to distribute olive and sumac saplings to women in the farming sector, enabling them to continue farming after their crops were destroyed. The latter initiative helped keep the farmers on their land and is expected to employ more than 2,000 people by the time its finished.

"I was the district governor-elect at the time, so I just worked a lot to raise funds and get funding to the right places," she says. "In those times you don't think, you just help."

A Rotarian for more than two decades, Özeren has served as her club's president, a Rotary Public Image Chair, and her district's executive secretary as well as the governor of District 2440. She is a member of **The Rotary Foundation's Cadre of Technical Advisers**. She got her start in Rotaract and still maintains close relationships with her **Rotaract** friends.

"I'm still proud of being a Rotaractor. I still have that Rotaract spirit," she says. "I always keep in touch with Rotaractors and try to get them involved in the international world of Rotary."

— March 2025

Empowering victims of gender-based violence in Argentina

Participants in From Pain to Hope join hands in a powerful symbol of the program's motto: "We are not alone."

By María Julia Moreyra —



As a lawyer in Argentina who specialized in the fight against gender violence, I have been grieved by recent developments in my country. Argentina has a history as a pioneering country in addressing gender issues and had even made significant legal advances to protect women and promote diversity. But recently, the country has taken several steps back with the closing of the Ministry of Women (at national level), the elimination of subsidies for victims of gender-based violence, and the shrinking in size of the number of people manning hotlines by which victims of violence or human trafficking can report their situation or seek help.

I am a Rotary Peace Fellow, having gained invaluable experience in the complicated issues surrounding human trafficking during my time at Chulalongkorn University in Thailand. I have also completed **Rotary's Positive**

Peace Academy; and in 2020 was selected to become a Positive Peace Activator. The Pillars of Positive Peace, a cornerstone of that program, serve as an important guide for addressing issues like gender-based violence and human trafficking. Coupled with more than 25 years' experience addressing gender-based violence, I was highly motivated to draw upon all that I have learned to help the women of my country.

Out of this milieu, a special project was born, with the help of local and international NGOs such as **FULAC**, Fundación 100% Platense, Proyecto Palomas, and **Network SE4U**, the Rotary clubs of La Plata Sur and Berisso, to whom I am extremely grateful, and the **Institute for Economics & Peace** (IEP).

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From Pain to Hope brought together a group of 15 women, all victims, and survivors of gender-based violence, for a six-month program in La Plata, Buenos Aires, Argentina, where they were guided on a path of healing by an interdisciplinary team of psychologists, social workers, lawyers, medical doctors, and government officials.

These women were treated to an atmosphere of listening, empathy, and discretion. They were allowed to share their personal stories of long-term suffering, experience with the systemic failures in the justice system, and lack of a support network to lean upon. Their stories were met with compassion and understanding.

The need for such programs is evident. La Casa del Encuentro **conducted a study** in 2024 that documented 318 deaths at the hands of gender violence, the equivalent of one every 27 hours.

In another report, the government's office in charge of prosecuting human trafficking and exploitation said it had received 5,776 reports of trafficking through a special hotline between 2021 and 2024, of which 321 included victims with mental health conditions or disabilities. Of those, 68% were women, 75% were adults, and 60% involved sexual or labor exploitation.

As part of From Pain to Hope, each case was analyzed through the lens of the eight Pillars of Positive Peace. This served to identify what pillars had been weakened, and which they could draw upon for strength, to empower them to be able to build lives free from violence and to build support networks so they would no longer have to face feeling all alone in their struggles.

A particular moving and emotional part of the program came during a carpentry workshop led by a local architect at the San José Seminary in La Plata. Thanks to the generosity of Priest Andrés Rambeaud, this serene, century-old setting surrounded by nature allowed the women to relax, enjoy each other's company, and express their creativity.

The project represented a turning point for these women with many ongoing benefits:

An increased resiliency demonstrated by each participant
Increased support from local and international organizations like FULAC, the Fundacion 100% Platense, the Palomas Project, and SE4U (an organization linked to the United Nations.)

The opening of new institutions such as Caritas and Nuestra Señora de la Piedad Parish, both in La Plata, to help victims of gender-based violence and human trafficking

Increased access to authorities for urgent assistance

The creation of a solid support network between the participants

The project ended on 30 November 2024, but the healing and empowerment continues. It remains an example of the transformative power that is available thanks to Rotary, the IEP, and the guidance of the Pillars of Positive Peace.

María Julia Moreyra is an attorney in Argentina and magister of international relations, specializing in gender-based violence and human trafficking. She is one of the directors of the Rotary Action Group Against Slavery (RAGAS), Speaker Chair at the Rotary Club End Human Trafficking, a Rotary Peace Fellow, and a Rotary Positive Peace Activator.

Club News



On 7th March 2025, Rotary Club of Calcutta Metro City conducted a Study Tour at the Victoria Memorial. 39 girls & boys students of Classes IX & X from St Stephen's School participated in a collage making workshop on the topic of "Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao".

After the workshop, the students were taken for a guided heritage tour of the Victoria Memorial. The collage workshop was well organised and all required materials for making the collage were provided to each student by the Victoria Memorial staff. The students had a great time and were all smiles for their visit to the Victoria Memorial.

For this project, our club was represented by PP Rtn Jharna Mitra, Rtn Dipanwita Banerjee and President Rtn Sunando Sen. A big Thank you goes out to Ms Ashwani Verma and the staff of Victoria Memorial Education Department for organising the collage workshop and the heritage tour, to our Club Treasurer PP Rtn Subhojit Roy for facilitating the project, and to our club members who could make time to attend this project.

(Reported by Club President Rtn Sunando Sen)

Greetings

*Happy Birthday to PP Rtn Bandana Das
for 24th March*



Coming Up...

16th March 2025, 4pm - DG's OCV at Outram Club

25th April 2025, 6pm - ICCR - Swayam Siddha 16

Edited & Published by PP Rtn Subhojit Roy

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