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Rotary at the Crossroads : Why Global Decline Contrasts India's Growth – Wake-Up Call for District 3291

Rotary International, a beacon of global service and fellowship, finds itself at a crossroads. While India, continues to exhibit growth, global membership trends paint a concerning picture. This editorial delves into the statistics and underlying factors contributing to this paradox.

Global Membership Decline : A Stark Reality

North America : Rotary's birthplace is witnessing a significant decline. The United States and Canada have experienced a 20% drop in membership, with the U.S. losing over 100,000 Rotarians since 2004. Currently, North America's share of global membership has fallen below 30%.

Europe : The continent faces a mixed scenario. While countries like Germany show stability, others have reported a 3% decrease in membership. Overall, Europe is experiencing a downward trend.

Africa : Contrastingly, Africa is witnessing robust growth. Countries like Nigeria, Uganda, and Ghana are experiencing increasing membership, characterized by a high proportion of young and female members.

Asia : Asia is a bright spot for Rotary. India, Japan, and South Korea have collectively shown a 26% increase in membership, with India leading this surge. This growth is attributed to a burgeoning middle class, increased awareness, and a strong culture of service.

District 3291 : India's Growth Paradox

Despite India's overall positive growth, District 3291, faces unique challenges:

Socio-Economic Factors : The district comprises both urban and rural areas with varying socio-economic conditions. While urban centers like Kolkata show promise, rural regions face infrastructural and awareness challenges.

Engagement Levels : Clubs in the district report fluctuating engagement levels. While some clubs are vibrant and active, others struggle with member participation and retention.

Youth Involvement : Engaging the younger demographic remains a challenge and their impact is inconsistent across the district.

Attrition Rates: A Persistent Challenge

Globally, Rotary faces an annual attrition rate of approximately 14.7%. This trend is concerning, as it indicates that for every new member joining, an equal number are leaving, leading to stagnation.

In District 3291, attrition data suggests that factors such as lack of engagement, limited professional networking opportunities, and the perceived value of membership contribute to higher dropout rates.

Subhojit Roy

Presidential Message - August 2025



August is Membership Month, but our commitment to growth and connection is year-round. When we focus on growing Rotary, we grow our ability to serve, to lead, and to bring lasting change.

Membership growth isn't just about numbers. It's about opening doors. It's about inviting more people who are ready to give their time, talents, and hearts to a cause greater than themselves. When we welcome new members, we bring in fresh ideas and new energy. We expand our impact, strengthen our clubs, and ensure that Rotary continues to evolve with the world around us.

Remember, there is now great flexibility in fashioning nontraditional club models. I'm inspired when I see these innovative clubs thrive by offering new and prospective members more ways to connect and serve.

In Korea, the growth of satellite clubs has created opportunities for nearly 1,000 new members to find their place in Rotary. In Romania, the close collaboration between Rotarians, Rotaractors, and Interactors has built a pipeline of future leaders. In India, some Rotarians gather around a shared interest — whether it's professional development or a passion for service — and those connections deepen their commitment and their joy in being part of Rotary. And we've seen cause-based clubs thrive in regions as diverse as Southeast Asia, Africa, and Europe.

There's a common thread: Where clubs are growing, membership is a priority and there is a willingness to try something new. Rotary is not limited to one structure or tradition. We are a global network of people of action, and that means there is room for many kinds of clubs, many ways to serve, and many paths into our organization.

This spirit of innovation is also guiding our efforts to reach new communities. In places where there has never been a Rotary club — or where a club once existed and faded — Rotarians are finding ways to grow Rotary. They are identifying areas of potential and building clubs that reflect the character and needs of their communities.

Every member plays a part in this journey. Whether you introduce a friend to your club, support a new meeting format, reconnect with program alumni, or simply share your Rotary story, you are helping our organization grow stronger and more vibrant.

No one owns a Rotary club. It is a gift we pass on to the next generation. When we nurture that gift, when we invite others to share in it, we ensure that Rotary continues to be a force for good.

Let's prioritize membership growth — not just in August but every month of the year. Together, through friendship, creativity, and shared purpose, we will grow Rotary and Unite for Good.

Francesco Arezzo
President 2025-26

Larry A. Lunsford selected to be 2027-28 Rotary International President

By **Etelka Lehoczky**



Larry A. Lunsford, a member of the Rotary Club of Kansas City-Plaza, Missouri, USA, is the selection of the nominating committee to become Rotary International's president for 2027-28. He will officially become the president-nominee on 15 September if no other candidates challenge him.

Lunsford attended Truman State University in Kirksville, Missouri, on an academic scholarship, earning bachelor's and master's degrees in accounting. He first encountered Rotary when he received a Rotary Foundation Ambassadorial Scholarship to spend the 1981-82 academic year at the University of Newcastle in Australia.

A certified public accountant, Lunsford spent seven years working for Ernst & Young before joining a family-owned business, Bernstein-Rein Advertising, in 1990. He is currently executive vice president and chief financial officer for the Bernstein group of companies. He has held positions on the boards of the Kansas City Spirit Festival and the Variety Club as well as serving as director of a local bank and treasurer of the Epilepsy Foundation for the Heart of America. He has also served on Truman State University's alumni and foundation boards and received the university's Distinguished Service Award.

Lunsford joined the Rotary Club of Kansas City-Plaza in 1991 and has since served as district governor (2001-02), RI

director (2013-15), and trustee of The Rotary Foundation (2021-25, vice chair 2024-25). He has been a member of RI committees, including the Executive Committee (chair 2014-15), Membership Growth Committee (chair 2016-18), and Nominating Committee for President of RI (chair 2023-24). He also has served on The Rotary Foundation's Executive Committee (chair 2023-24), Finance Committee (chair 2022-23 and 2024-25), and Participant Experience Committee (chair 2023-24).

Lunsford has been awarded The Rotary Foundation Distinguished Service Award, The Rotary Foundation Citation for Meritorious Service, and the RI Service Above Self Award. He and his wife, Jill Lunsford, have two children and one grandchild. They are Major Donors, Bequest Society members, multiple Paul Harris Fellows, Benefactors of The Rotary Foundation, and Sustaining Members.

Special events recognize donors and highlight their impact

By Etelka Lehoczky



2025-26 Rotary International President Francesco Arezzo (right) delivers a celebratory toast at the Magic of Connection Dinner, which honors active and substantial donors to The Rotary Foundation, during the 2025 Rotary International Convention in Calgary, Canada. He is joined by 2025-26 Rotary Foundation Trustee Chair Holger Knaack.

The donors whose contributions enable much of Rotary's work gathered at a variety of special events during the 2025 Rotary International Convention in Calgary, Canada. Thanks to its donors, **The Rotary Foundation** hopes to increase its endowment to US\$2.025 billion this year while continuing to change lives around the world.

"From supporting the environment to funding peace centers, you are making your mark and leaving a legacy of generosity and profound respect for others," 2024-25 RI President Stephanie Urchick told donors at one ceremony. "You inspire each of us to give a bit more, work a bit harder. Thank you for creating *The Magic of Rotary*, and for leaving this earth a little bit brighter than how you found it."

Rotary Foundation Trustee Chair Mark Daniel Maloney celebrated donors' commitment and optimism at the same gathering, which honored members of the Arch Klumph Society. The society recognizes donors who have contributed US\$250,000 or more to the Foundation.

"You have chosen to leave a lasting legacy through Rotary, and for that, I am most grateful," he said.

The theme of legacy echoed frequently at the events. At The Rotary Foundation Donor Summit, Endowment/Major Gifts Adviser Eric Kimani shared thoughts inspired by the birth of a grandchild a few weeks earlier.

"As I marvel at this new life, I cannot predict where he will be 70 years from now, nor can I foresee the impact of my hard work or savings on his future," Kimani said. "But one thing I know beyond any doubt: My gift will outlive me, my children, and even their successors. And so will yours. Each of you in this room has made the extraordinary choice to leave a legacy that transcends your physical existence."

Because of contributions from members and other supporters, the Foundation funded more than 1,800 grants worldwide in 2024-25. That includes over 1,400 global grants and more than 400 district grants. This support totaled over US\$88 million in global grant funding and more than US\$28 million in district grant funding.

Donor Summit host Amanda Drury, a news anchor with CNBC in Sydney, Australia, praised Rotary's ability to accommodate a wide range of philanthropic interests.

"Rotary's programs are as diverse as its membership base," she said. "It's part of what makes Rotary so unique – there is truly something for everyone to find their own way of doing good."

Maloney agreed, noting that Rotary's areas of focus allow for great diversity in **the causes** that members address. They are promoting peace, fighting disease, providing clean water and sanitation, improving maternal and child health, supporting education, growing local economies, and protecting the environment.

"Whether you're focused on tackling environmental issues, educating communities, or expanding access to quality health care, Rotary has the knowledge and infrastructure to turn your philanthropic passions into reality," Maloney said. "Our seven areas of focus are all interconnected, allowing for thoughtful, holistic, and sustainable solutions to some of the most pressing global issues."

Guests at the Donor Summit learned about the **Rotary Healthy Communities Challenge**, which is working to reduce severe disease and death from malaria, pneumonia, and diarrhoea in four African countries.

Donors also heard about the on-the-ground reality of Rotary's fight against polio.

"Visiting polio workers in Pakistan was one of the most profound experiences of my life," said Jennifer Jones, a Foundation trustee and past RI president. "The gratitude in a mother's eyes, the trust of a child receiving the vaccine — these moments will stay with me forever. Every drop of vaccine, every step taken, brings us closer to a world where polio exists only in history."

Additional events for donors at the convention included the Magic of Connection dinner, which recognized substantial donors and those who increased their giving in 2024-25, and The Rotary Foundation Unity Ball, which recognized Arch Klumph Society and Legacy Society members.

Mission Outreach for Public Image Initiatives of District 3291



The Mission Outreach for public image initiatives of District 3291 took off at the historic FreeMason Lodge on Sunday 20th July 2025. Led by the District Chair for Public Image, PP Rtn Subhojit Roy, the program began with a panel discussion on How Media Sees Rotary and revolved around a free flowing fireside chat with host PP Rtn Samrat Sengupta and a panel

comprising of Joyjit Ghosh of The Telegraph, Malini Banerjee, journalist & author, Sourjyo Bhowmick, Journalist, ABP, Noel R Stephen, COO, Selvel & RJ Gargi Batyabal aka Mirchi Mohor and also joined by PP Rtn Subhojit Roy, Media Content strategist. The discussions threw several interesting factors those Rotary needs to implement to make it more relatable for media presence, also modernise approach in the new media. Also the fact that Rotary clubs need to understand the nuances and also budget their media expenses was stressed on.

The program was graced by IPRID Anirudh Roychowdhury and District Governor Dr Ramendu Homchaudhuri spoke on Thalassaemia.

DPIC PP Rtn Subhojit Roy discussed the Impact Stories of Rotary and invited PP Rtn Kaushik Sen to give a brief insight into Rotary Means Business

The final segment had PP Rtn Aanton Mookerjee interact with the assembly, locate their aspirations to be more visible and also give a way forward in their approach.

The formal expression of gratitude was given by PP Rtn Partha Sengupta, while PP Rtn Tuhin Podder along with PP Rtn Subir Dutta conducted the Proceedings. Rtn Subir, himself a DGM of Masonic Lodge personally also took the guests on a tour of the historic precincts of the FreeMason Lodge.

More than 100 participants along with PDG's Ravi Sehgal, Rajendra Khandelwal, Rajani Mukeri, Shyamashree Sen, Mukul Sinha & Prabir Chatterjee made the first Rotary's PI initiative a grand success at a historic site with a promise to many more such initiatives.

The Club was also represented by the President Rtn Sunando Sen and Club Secretary PP Rtn Arindam Ghosh.

Club News

Workshop on Cyber Security



On 30th July, our club in association with RC Calcutta, RC Calcutta Laban Hrad and Encourage Pathways conducted a workshop on Cyber Security for students at Rotary Sadan.

The workshop was conducted by Professor Dr. Moutushi Singh of Institute of Engineering & Management and Professor Rtn Saswati Mukherjee of RC Calcutta and Jadavpur University.

The workshop was attended by 60 students, girls & boys, of Classes 9-12 from 10 schools of which 6 students were from St Stephen's School Bowbazar, where our club has an Interact Club. They all had a hands-on experience on understanding cyber crimes and cyber security. Laptops were provided to the students to work on and deal with cyber crimes.

At this workshop, our club was represented by Club Secretary Rtn Arindam Ghosh, PP Amrita Basu and President Sunando Sen.

Thalassaemia Treatment Support



On 8th August 2025 Rotary Club of Calcutta Metro City in association with Ramawatar Trust donated Rs 50,000 towards the procurement of reagents and blood test materials to The Thalassaemia Society of India at their New Alipore Treatment Centre.

The club annually facilitates donation of Rs 2,00,000 through CSR funds for procurement of reagents and blood testing materials essential for transfusion for Thalassaemia major patients.

Present on the occasion were PDG Shyamashree Sen, Club President Sunando Sen and District Public Image Chair Subhojit Roy. Mr Utpal Panda, Hony Secretary of TSI received the donation.

Mosquito Net Distribution



On 9th August 2025, our club, in association with Ek Mutho Sopno (an NGO) and Nayagram Police, distributed mosquito nets to 50 underprivileged tribal persons of Chakusai Village, Nayagram, Jhargram.

This was a Disease Prevention project of the club.

Important Landmark Dates in Rotary History

- 1905 – First Rotary Club Founded On February 23, 1905, the first Rotary Club was formed in Chicago, Illinois, USA, by attorney Paul P. Harris, with the idea of bringing professionals from diverse backgrounds together to provide service to their communities.
- 1910 – Rotary International Established The organization expanded beyond Chicago, and by 1910, the movement became international with the formation of the Rotary International Association.
- 1911 – First Club Outside USA The Rotary Club of Winnipeg, Canada, became the first club established outside the United States, marking Rotary's global expansion.
- 1922 – Adoption of the Rotary Wheel Emblem The iconic Rotary Wheel (Cogwheel) was officially adopted as Rotary's emblem, symbolizing civilization and movement.
- 1947 – Formation of The Rotary Foundation The Rotary Foundation was established to support the organization's humanitarian and educational programs globally, focusing on long-term impact.
- 1985 – PolioPlus Program Launched Rotary International launched its landmark PolioPlus initiative, aiming to eradicate polio worldwide by providing free vaccines and raising awareness.
- 2005 – Centennial Celebration Rotary celebrated its 100th Anniversary with global events and a Renewed commitment to peace and service, highlighting a century of meaningful community action.
- 2007 – Peace Fellowships Program Expanded Rotary expanded its commitment to global peace by funding scholarships and fellowships for peace and conflict resolution studies at prestigious universities worldwide.
- 2010s – Digital Transformation and Modernization Rotary began adopting digital platforms, enabling virtual conferences, global connections, and ease of collaboration across clubs.
- 2020 – Polio near Eradication Milestone With continued global efforts, polio cases dropped to less than 10 cases worldwide, nearing complete eradication.

Greetings

*Wedding Anniversary greetings to PP Rtn Bandana
& Rtn Shanker Das for 11th August!*

*Birthday greetings to Rtn Sunando Sen
for 28th August!*

**STRIKE OFF
THALASSEMIA**

Calcutta Metro City
Rotary
RI Dist 3291



**UNITE
FOR
GOOD**