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"Peace Literacy has the capacity to repair our broken parts and create a nonviolent world anchored in dignity, meaning, purpose, and compassion for all. Given the crucial role that Peace Literacy can play, I support the recognition of education in Peace Literacy as a universal human right," said late Archbishop Desmond Tutu. The importance of literacy in ushering in peace in today's fragmented, hostile and faction ridden world is of utmost importance. Humanity can no longer settle for peace as an abstract concept or sentimental wish. Literacy campaigns around the world also include programmes to increase the level of adult literacy. Increasing literacy rates among adults can serve several purposes. Equipping adults with basic literacy skills can enable them to be more proactive when it comes to their child's education. As this works to increase literacy, political conditions in oppressive countries may improve. Moreover an increase in literate adults means an increase in individuals campaigning for education as a fundamental human right. Rotary in India has undertaken making adult Indian literate. But let's look at the pros and cons of adult literacy program. Despite rapid expansion of the formal schooling system, India was unable to universalise free and compulsory elementary education within the 10-year-period originally envisaged. A consequence was adults in the population with no literacy and no means of learning.

Against this backdrop, Indian policy makers realised the need for an adult education programme. The National Adult Education Programme, the first country-wide programme in 1978, aimed to cover illiterate people aged 15–35 in adult education centres across the country. In the latter years, it was restructured to be the National Literacy Mission, which is now engaged in imparting functional literacy to these adults. There are more than 281 million illiterate people in India (see table). This large number underlines the failures of both the universal elementary education policy and the National Literacy Mission. Some 25 million are 7–14 years old and 89 million 15–35 years old – together they make up more than 40 percent of total illiterate population. If India is to improve its literacy rates, the policies of the National Literacy Mission will need to be revisited and analysed to understand the reason for its limited achievement. A detailed mapping of illiteracy rates at district level would help target resources effectively. So what exactly is the Adult Literacy of Rotary India Literacy Mission? To my best of knowledge it is an independent body created by a few individuals from Rotary and drawing its resources from Rotarians. As ordinary Rotarian I have no knowledge and i think more than 90% of Rotarians of RI D3291 have very little idea about what RILM does with the finds and resources mobilised. Adult Literacy and any literacy initiative is a far serious business aided by in depth research about the needs and possible solutions. I quote a report from Indian Express (IE), Bengaluru edition, "Recently, the Rotary India Literacy Mission (RILM) launched a programme in Bengaluru, initiating the Adult Literacy Programme at the state level. Around 8,000 private Karnataka schools were taken on board the mission in association with the Private Schools and Children Welfare Association (PSCWA). A Bengaluru-based educationist, D

EDITORIAL

Subhojit Roy

Shashi Kumar said that he was not aware of the initiative. Unless the stakeholders are made aware of the initiatives, the scheme will continue to suffer from faulty implementation. Speaking about the previous initiatives, "Each One-Teach One" and "Each One-Teach Many", he said that the initiatives were not able to gain momentum and reach the masses although they were good." One more was the TEACH campaign and the IE report goes on to write, "H Rajendra Pai from Rotary International District 3190 said that the Rotary's initiative for total literacy and quality education, the TEACH programme began in 2014 to improve adult literacy and quality education. But it did not succeed due to logistical issues."

The Indian Express report further states, " Experts are of the opinion that the central government's New India Literacy Programme (scheme for adult education) aimed at educating 5 crore adults by 2027 will only work if the students, educators and stakeholders involved are properly guided. They recalled that similar initiatives launched earlier have failed to drawbacks in implementation,"

This is a problem with many Rotary driven initiatives, they are often not noticed thanks to poor promotion in public domain; perhaps "Right Person for Right Job" is valid for this reason. Since Rotary or similar organizations raise money and resources from within and outside; Rotary can longer get away with photographs which are self delusional and self congratulatory, in the present day of strong social audit we will no longer be able to escape public scrutiny. So if we are truly interested in carrying forward the legacy of our mammoth success in Polio eradication but to achieve that feat again we need to actively work in the grassroots in close collaboration with other stakeholders.

Subhojit Roy

Presidential Message - September 2023



The International Day of Peace takes place 21 September. The United Nations General Assembly declared this a day devoted to strengthening the ideals of peace through observing 24 hours of non-violence and cease-fire.

It is not enough, as People of Action, to simply avoid making war. If we are to

Create Hope in the World, we must aggressively wage peace.

Where can we begin? There are countless armed conflicts around the world, and the global population of displaced people is higher than ever. The opportunities are nearly limitless, but the cycles of violence and hardship seem endless.

My advice is to start small but think big. I look to Rotary members in Pakistan and India for inspiration.

In March 2020, about 50 Rotary members from Pakistan met about 50 Rotary members from India at Kartarpur Sahib, a shrine in Pakistan. The sanctuary honors Guru Nanak, the founder of Sikhism, a religion practiced in both countries. Tensions between the two countries barred many religious pilgrims from India from visiting the shrine. That is, until Pakistan opened a visa-free pathway to them in 2019.

Earlier this year, Rotary members from opposite sides of the border again met at the shrine, this time with

about twice as many participants.

Any work toward building peace needs to be brave and bold. What these Rotary members have done is just that. The Pakistani government took an important step toward peace when it admitted Indian pilgrims to the Kartarpur Sahib shrine, but Pakistani Rotary members took the next step when they welcomed Rotary members from India as friends and family. That is Positive Peace at work.

These peace builders did not stop there. Club representatives at this year's meeting signed twin club certificates to recognize their long-term commitment to continue to learn from each other and to work together on more peacebuilding efforts, and they have held joint meetings via video chat.

The importance of communicating with and learning from another culture cannot be overstated, and Rotary is making it even easier to do so. One way of engaging in cross-cultural dialogue and building relationships across borders is through virtual international exchanges that build on our current programs and make them more accessible.

A virtual exchange uses online platforms to connect people from different parts of the world so they can share their traditions, priorities, values, and more. Virtual exchanges can serve as a window to another part of the world through activities such as teaching a digital cooking class, learning a new language, or even designing service projects with a global impact.

These online chats have the potential to inspire new connections and more respect between societies. Taking that knowledge and using it to better the lives of our fellow human beings is the next step.

Let's see where it takes us.

R. Gordon R. McInally
President 2023-24

Rotary Projects around the Globe- September 2023

Belize



Since 2014, members of the Rotary Club of Seminole Lake, Florida, have ventured on service trips to Belize with a focus on the welfare of children: constructing school

playgrounds and providing educational assistance, clothing, and medical screenings. "The kids had a recess period but little for them to do," says David Buzza, a past club president. Three years ago the club forged ties with the Rotary Club of Belmopan, Belize. In February, Rotary members helped construct a seventh playground in Belize and helped hand out 1,500 pieces of new clothing, along with toiletries and backpacks. The Florida Rotarians added to the Belmopan club's existing wheelchair distribution project with a May shipment of 30 wheelchairs.

- **3 of 5 Share of Belizean children under age 15 who live in poverty**

United States



The Indian River Lagoon along Florida's Atlantic coast is home to some 3,500 plant and animal species. In January, District 6970 and the Rotary clubs of New Smyrna Beach and Edgewater introduced a tide pool exhibit in the Marine Discovery Center in New Smyrna Beach. The display is home to horseshoe crabs, sea stars, sea urchins, hermit

crabs, marine snails, and other small oceanic creatures. "Having that opportunity to see the animals up close is a very engaging experience," says Chad Truxall, the center's executive director. "It's been fun for us to have this additional tool to share the story of the Indian River Lagoon." A district grant provided \$20,000, the New Smyrna Beach club devoted \$10,000, and the Edgewater club another \$5,000 toward the cost of the exhibit, representing just a portion of the financial and volunteer contributions Rotarians have made to the marine center over the past decade.

- **98 Endangered and threatened marine species found in U.S. ocean waters**

Canada



The pandemic's toll on older people struck especially close to home for the Rotary Club of Cornwall Sunrise in southeastern Ontario. "Until COVID, our club met at a seniors

residence, and the need for the residents to be able to get out was made clear to us," says club member Elizabeth "Bette" Miller, a past governor of District 7040. To ease the isolation of the town's older population, the Cornwall Sunrise club teamed up with the Rotary Club of Cornwall and their city government to introduce Seniors on Wheels tours on three-wheeled cycle rickshaws. Volunteers pedal seniors around on seasonal tours along the St. Lawrence River. "The trishaw is used primarily by local seniors who would otherwise be unable to enjoy the beautiful scenery," says Miller, whose club contributed an initial CA\$3,000 (US\$2,500) for the project. "The routes for the trishaws follow the bike paths with stops at points of interest, many of which are projects Rotary has partnered on with the city." Volunteers and their passengers covered a cumulative 300 miles last year.

- **16% Portion of Canada's seniors who say they experience social isolation**

India



In Visakhapatnam, along the Bay of Bengal, Rotary members launched an innovative plastics recycling and youth employment project. Participants from

the nonprofit India Youth for Society collect plastic bottles from drop-off locations and beaches and process the plastics into small chips that are sold to recyclers. The nonprofit's goal is to make the operation self-supporting. About eight young people were working on-site as the processing plant scaled up production in June, and as many as 25 people eventually could work at the facility. The roughly \$120,000 project is supported in part by a global grant sponsored by the Rotary clubs of Lake District Moinabad, India, and Naperville Sunrise, Illinois, with contributions from other Rotary clubs in the United States and India. Among its accolades is an award from the American Academy of Environmental Engineers & Scientists.

- **450 years Estimated time for a plastic bottle to degrade**

United Kingdom



Some people will walk through fire for a good cause – literally. More than 50 participants hotfooted across wood embers during a fire walk charity event in April sponsored by the Rotary Club of Newton Abbot. The sizzling jaunts, to taiko drumbeats, raised more than \$11,000 through sponsorship pledges for charities. The club brought in a professional fire walking company to stage the event. Organizers offered a "motivational psychology fear-busting seminar" before the challenge. The secret? Walk in a controlled, fast manner, says Past Club President Phil Millichap. He and 2022-23 Club President Jeremy Newcombe were among the Rotarians who put their feet to the fire. "Top tip: If you fall over, which one lady did, get up quickly," Millichap advises.

Rotary Calcutta Metro City in Action

Celebrating Teacher's Day with a Difference



Rotary Club of Calcutta Metro City over the years have many firsts to its name, and on Teacher's Day on 5th September'23 it added one first to its name. The club in association with the District Committee for the intellectually Differently abled led by PP Rtn Sunetra Dasgupta hosted an evening dedicated to the Special Educators, those teachers who selflessly dedicate themselves to the nurturing of Intellectually differently abled children. By their own admissions, the recipients said that they have never felt as special as mostly their contribution as

well as sacrifice mostly goes unnoticed. But their importance in this modern complex society is growing by leaps and bounds every day as the numbers of special children grow due to several reasons.

The 6 special educators included Urmi Roy Biswas, Sibsankar Bhukta, Swapan Biswas, Rituparna Sarkar, Soma Chatterjee, Kakoli Kar and 9 special educators from Big Leap Inclusive School (our partners to the program) were also recognized during the program.

Each of the special educators recounted their extremely difficult journey, the apathy and change in perception about differently abled children and the challenges they faced and continue to encounter while doing their most difficult jobs. Above all they were extremely grateful to Rotary for this recognition and encouragement.

PDG Mukul Sinha, District Literacy Chair, RID 3291, PDG Shyamashree Sen, EPNC Zone 6 and Zonal AG Tanu Roy, PP Rtn Sourish Chowdhury, Dist Chair Special Projects bestowed the awards and spoke. PP Vaijayanti Bose conducted the proceedings and PP Leena Ghosh Das, Co Chair of the Committee also actively supported the event. President Amrita Basu initiated the proceedings while PP Rtn Sunando Sen offered the vote of thanks.

The club was also represented by PP Rtns Subhojit Roy, Jharna Mitra, Bandana Das, Rajnish Kapoor.



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