



# Spectrum

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RI District 3291

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Editors □ PP Siddartha Tantia & Priyanka Agarwal

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## CLUB EVENT I

### Health Camp for men women and kids of Bankura



**“Matri Raksha”, the 87<sup>th</sup> Fighting Anemia in women Camp** of RCSLMK held at Bankura town on Sunday, February 22, 2026. Team of Rotary members, skilled volunteers capable to provide technical supports, and five physicians and specialists were in action at the camp.



RCSLMK further took opportunity to get males and children examined their basic health parameters and treated by doctors present.



Bankura town is the administrative headquarters of the Bankura district in West Bengal. Located on the banks of the Dwarkeswar River, it serves as a central hub for the region's rich cultural heritage and agriculture-based economy.

The town is a gateway to the district's world-famous terracotta art, Dokra (metal casting), and Baluchari silk sarees.

The town is the home to Bankura University, Bankura Sammilani Medical College, the first Medical College of West Bengal outside Calcutta and several other higher education institutions.

We meet calendar months' 2<sup>nd</sup> & 4<sup>th</sup> Saturdays at GPT Group, JC 25, Salt Lake, Kolkata 700098 at 6.00 PM

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While the town itself has historical landmarks like the Ekteswar Shiva Temple, it primarily serves as a base for exploring nearby attractions like Bishnupur (temple town), Mukutmanipur (dam and reservoir), and Susunia Hill.



The team of five doctors armed with support staff, volunteers and necessary medicines, examined, treated and advised 165 persons, comprising of fifty males, thirty children and eighty-five women, who were covered under Martri Raksha, received free medicines and nutritional booklet.



### Birthdays of members in February & March

PE Dr. Bimaledu Sen on February 6, 2026  
Amrita Chatterjee on March 25, 2026



### Wedding Anniversaries of members in February & March 2026

President Dr. Saktirupa & Spouse Dr.  
Suranjan Chakraborty on February 5, 2026  
PP Kusum Chamaria & Spouse Krishna  
on February 24, 2026  
Spouse Rani & PP BL Ajitsaria  
on February 28, 2026  
Shruti & Nitesh Toshniwal on March 6, 2026

February is Peacebuilding and Conflict  
Prevention Month

March is February is Water and Sanitation  
Month

31 March — Preregistration discount ends for  
the Rotary International Convention

### Upcoming club program

Distribution of Jaipur foot to 20 Physically  
disabled persons on Mar 1, 2026 at Chakdah  
under project "Uthe Sabke Kadam": A Global  
Grant Project of Rotary Calcutta Chowringhee.

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## WATER AND SANITATION PROJECT I

# Service without borders: clean water for 550 students

By Dr. Mike Manga, Rotary Club of Lincoln,  
Nebraska, USA on 24 February 2026



**A solar powered water tank and borehole provides clean water for students at St. Ludger school in Zimbabwe.**

Through the combined efforts of two Rotary clubs — one in Nebraska, USA, and one in Zimbabwe — and the personal connections possible in Rotary, nearly 550 students and their teachers at a rural school in Marondera, Zimbabwe, now have access to a reliable supply of clean water, which also serves their families.

This is my story of Rotary connection. In mid-2025, a fellow Rotarian from Zimbabwe reached out to me for assistance with a community water project. As a native of Zimbabwe, I was already well acquainted with Veronica Chirombe, who I have known for years. She is an administrator at Peterhouse School, where my children attended before my family relocated to Lincoln. I have served on the school's Board of Governors and still hold that position even after my move to the US.

When Veronica contacted me, she explained the urgent water needs facing St. Ludger School, located in a rural village in northeastern Zimbabwe. Her Rotary club had already raised nearly \$3,000, but the total cost of the project was close to \$8,000.

Fortunately, as a member of my club's Global Engagements committee, I was able to submit a proposal requesting \$5,000 in additional funding. The proposal was approved, enabling the project to move forward. The shared history and trust made our Rotary collaboration both natural and meaningful.

St. Ludger School had no reliable source of clean drinking water. Students were particularly vulnerable to waterborne diseases such as typhoid and dysentery, leading to frequent illness and missed school days — seriously affecting their ability to learn and thrive.

Through the combined efforts and funding of our two Rotary clubs, a borehole was successfully drilled, two water tanks were installed — one at the wellhead and another on school grounds — and piping was extended to both the school and the nearby village where teachers and their families reside.

This project has done more than provide clean water. It has improved health outcomes, reduced disease, increased school attendance, strengthened educational access, and indirectly supported local economic activity. Above all, it stands as a powerful testament to the value of Rotary connections across continents and the shared commitment of Rotarians to act and make the world a better place.

## WATER AND SANITATION PROJECT II

# Honduras water project demonstrates power to build self-sufficiency

By Vicki Puliz, Rotary Foundation Trustee and member of the Rotary Club of Sparks, Nevada, USA on 26 February 2026



**Rotary members and villagers stand in front of a 10,000-gallon hill-top tank that captures and supplies water for 30 families. Vicki Puliz is back row, second from left.**

A few months ago, I traveled a difficult, muddy road to a remote community in the Copan region of western Honduras. When our vehicle began to slip towards a steep drop, we continued on-foot to a gathering under a shade structure at the top of the hill, where a few women conversed, and children played. Beyond, I could see foot paths leading to small dwellings scattered around.

In Honduras, 1.5 million people lack access to safe drinking water or sanitation facilities. The lack of clean water is especially prevalent in rural areas, where women and children often collect water from streams or open wells, sources also used for bathing, washing clothes, and where animals defecate. This leads to widespread illness and disease.

I was in the country to be part of community meetings to discuss completed water systems provided by a Rotary Foundation global grant. The US\$800,000 project was led by the Rotary Club of Santa Rosa de Copan in Honduras and the Rotary Club of Sacramento, California, USA, and joined by every club in Rotary District 5180, along with several other districts and a partnership with World Vision USA. The project benefited 7,000 people in 13 communities, 10 schools, and 5 healthcare units in western Honduras. But the project became more than numbers to me.

### **Changing lives**

With the help of an interpreter, the community members shared what life was like before water was brought to the village, how they took part in the project, and how their lives were improved with access to clean water.

We then trekked up another hill — to see a 10,000-gallon tank, marked with logos from Rotary and World Vision. Children raced past me in flimsy shoes while I struggled not to slide down the muddy incline. I found it striking how difficult it was to simply fetch water in this environment. Women and children spent hours each day collecting water, which meant that many children missed school, as they were needed to help their families accomplish the task of having water.

At the top of the hill, we admired the tank that captured the water from the pipes laid in the trench. The five miles of trench was dug by hand by the villagers from a protected spring high in the mountains. Sand cushioned the PVC pipe which delivered the water moved solely by gravity to the holding tank, and then to 30 homes — clean water for each family. For drinking, cooking, bathing, and even a toilet.

We met Nando, a quiet, wrinkled man who carried himself with purpose. He was the plumber. After training from World Vision, Nando maintained this lifesaving system that brought water to the village, and he was also the head of the water committee. The committee collected \$2 per month from each household to cover parts and repairs, a significant amount for subsistence farmers who face frequent droughts and limited job opportunities.

Nando and the other community members expressed deep pride in their contribution to the project — the monthly fee and the physical work which included hard labor to dig the trenches and lay the pipe. The commitment to take care of this water system as their own was clear. This was not charity; this was support with dignity and respect for people who wanted to be empowered to improve their own lives and those of their children.

Over the next two days, we visited four more villages.

After meeting in the next village, we walked to the small school, past abandoned outhouses, and examined the new toilets along with a separate hand-washing station. The new block included a toilet for boys, one for girls, and one with a shower for those with disabilities and other needs.

Carlos, a 9-year-old student, showed me his classroom, where the children taught me a song about washing our hands. These children now have clean water to drink. They no longer suffer from diarrhea which had been common before the water system was installed. Their school has usable toilets and girls can stay in school even after they start menstruation.

These children have a brighter future because of The Rotary Foundation. The efforts of Rotary members and the contributions of generous donors provide a starting point and a path to self-sufficiency within these communities. By listening and responding to their needs, we help create a better life for them.

### **How can you help?**

If you're a member of a Rotary club, learn the ways you can participate in our Foundation and encourage other members to do so. Invite them to contribute their time, talent, and treasure to projects that change lives for the better, to meet people like Carlos or Nando, and enjoy the fulfillment that comes from making a difference. If you aren't yet a member, find a club near you, and join us.

Together, we can create a future that builds hope, connection, and impact, while we transform lives and empower others toward self-sufficiency.

*Adapted from a speech Vicki Puliz delivered to incoming Rotary leaders at the International Assembly in Orlando, Florida, USA in January.*

## **PEACEBUILDING & CONFLICT PREVENTION**

### **Community-led risk mapping: Building peace in conflict zones**

*Not every peacebuilder need be a diplomat, negotiator, or scholar. **Jaefer Jemal Muhammed**, a 2026 Rotary Peace Fellow finalist at the University of Bradford, is a project manager and architect.*

*His DangerScout model enables healthcare workers to save lives and reach those in need in conflict zones in Ethiopia. Read about Muhammed and his DangerScout model.*

*By Jaefer Jemal Muhammed, a 2026 Rotary Peace Fellowship finalist, University of Bradford master's degree program on 12 February 2026*



### **Station for the minibuses driven by the Danger Scouts.**

In 2023, Fano militants intercepted the minibus I was traveling in near Merawi, Ethiopia, ransacking our belongings looking for weapons. I didn't bear any weapon. I wasn't a soldier. I was a project manager tasked with building a gas station that will fuel ambulances and clinics, restoring essential services for more than 50,000 civilians amidst an ongoing conflict. In that moment of terror, staring down an AK-47, I realized peace isn't created in conference halls alone. Sometimes it is forged on a road between two hostile towns when infrastructure is built to restore trust and dignity.

### **Peacebuilding as infrastructure**

Traditional peacebuilding models, while crucial, can sometimes overlook the systems that hold fragile communities together. In places like Amhara, where formal institutions have stalled or collapsed due to active conflict; roads, fuel, electricity, and healthcare are more than amenities – they are instruments of trust. When people can drive ambulances safely, access power during lifesaving treatment, or send their loved ones to clinics without the fear of crossfire, the foundations of peace are laid quietly.

This philosophy has guided my work for the past eight years as a project manager and lead architect operating in conflict-affected regions of Ethiopia. It is also the basis for the DangerScout Model, a community-driven danger mapping framework I developed while managing infrastructure projects in war zones.

### **The DangerScout Model**

Before sending workers in and commencing the gas station project, I spent three days in Merawi to understand movement patterns, military presence, and civilian behavior. A striking pattern emerged: violence flared as the rebels struck the military when it moved between towns. Safe zones shifted quickly and to safely operate within the town, informal intelligence among locals was crucial. That's when the idea emerged: tap into the real-time knowledge of minibus drivers.

I partnered with three local drivers who navigated cross-town routes transporting passengers. Through an informal network of drivers, they tracked clashes, checkpoints, and armed convoys looking for safe passages. In exchange for modest stipends, these "Danger Scouts" began couriering construction documents, reporting safer roads for material transportation, and mapping danger zones in real time, all while doing their usual work.

### **Lessons learned**

With the internet down, this analog network became our firm-to-site communication system and after four months, the fuel station was completed without a single safety incident. Today, as the conflict still continues in our region, the gas station fuels over 10 ambulances, minibuses, and multiple clinics. More importantly, the model is replicated in over 12 infrastructure projects across West Gojjam, where we have learned a few key lessons:

The model, while efficient, needs to be paired with other emergency protocols, since the driver's networks mostly fail to predict covert attacks carried out by a small number of commandos.

In almost all sites, getting the rebel's buy-in was a must since the towns were controlled by the militants. It is vital to carry the private construction firm's licenses and to show proof of no affiliation with any governmental agencies or personnel.

It is also important to pre-store 80-100% of construction materials in safer times so that construction can continue uninterrupted during conflict flares outside of the construction zones.

### **Quiet blueprint of peace**

Not every peacebuilder needs to be a diplomat, negotiator, or scholar. Some of us are just architects, drivers, and nurses trying to restore dignity and trust. The DangerScout model is peacebuilding in action, a subtle weaving of local knowledge, economic inclusion, and shared risk. In conflict zones, every liter of fuel and mile of road becomes a quiet peace process, enabling healthcare workers to save lives and reach those in need.

I invite you to share your own experiences of tapping into unexpected community networks and post your thoughts below. If this story resonated with you, please consider sharing it with your Rotary club or social media so we can continue highlighting how community-led infrastructure can lay the foundations of peace.



**Jaefar Muhammed**

**About the author:** Jaefar Jemal Muhammed is a project manager and architect based in Ethiopia with over eight years of experience managing infrastructure projects, including those in conflict-affected regions.

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*He is the co-founder of the Bahir Dar Chess Club and an active supporter of the Amhara Women Federation's advocacy programs. He is currently researching decentralized solar microgrids for rural clinics and advising on energy policy frameworks to support healthcare resilience in war-affected communities. He is a 2026 finalist for the Rotary Peace Fellowship at the University of Bradford.*

## THE STORY OF THE MONTH

# The game changer

**Meet your 2026-27 Rotary president, Olayinka Hakeem Babalola**

Olayinka "Yinka" Hakeem Babalola is sitting on the wrong side of his desk, staring at the tiny squares on the laptop perched in front of him. He's just finished speaking on a call with 300 Rotaractors from the African continent and other parts of the world, Rotary's president-elect explains as he turns down the volume. "They held a celebration for me because I'm a past Rotaractor," he says. By seeing Babalola, himself once in their shoes, embarking on the highest position in Rotary, who knows how many of the 300 he will inspire. It's early October, less than two months since the Rotary International Board of Directors selected Babalola to lead Rotary, in a special session in late August after the resignation of RI President-elect SangKoo Yun, who died shortly after, following months of cancer treatment.

It's only the second trip to Rotary headquarters for Babalola, of the Rotary Club of Trans Amadi in Nigeria, since his selection. His office is nearly empty, void so far of all the gifts Rotary leaders tend to accumulate during their travels as an incoming president.



*Image credit: Monika Lozinska*

While he's new to the position, he has a long history with Rotary, starting as a Rotaractor in 1984 and then as a Rotarian in 1994. "One thing is for certain, preparing me for this role are my many years of

engaging with Rotary" — over four decades, he says. "Not many people who get to this position have that privilege."

In that time, he's served not only as RI vice president and a member of the RI Board of Directors but also as an active leader and participant in RI committees such as the End Polio Now Countdown to History Campaign Committee and the Nigeria PolioPlus Committee. Babalola was a trustee of ShelterBox. His Rotary honors include the Regional Service Award for a Polio-Free World, the Service Above Self Award, and a Rotary Foundation Citation for Meritorious Service. He and his wife, Preba, a member of the Rotary Club of Port Harcourt Passport, are Arch Klumph Society members.

That's all on top of his professional life. He worked for 25 years in the oil and gas industry, holding senior positions with Shell. He is the founder of two companies: Riviera Technical Services Ltd., an oil and gas infrastructure delivery company, and Lead and Change Consulting, an executive coaching and organizational performance advisory group.

Rotary magazine senior staff writer Diana Schoberg sat down with Babalola to find out more about the president-elect.

***He was inspired to join Rotary because of something he saw on TV.***

On summer break between his last year of high school and his first year of college, Babalola was hanging out at home watching TV when a well-dressed man on the screen caught his eye. The man was wearing all white, and "his English was something else," Babalola recalls. Curious, he listened more closely. The man was talking about Rotary. "It was the first time I heard anything about Rotary," Babalola says. "Like with most TV interviews, it probably lasted one or two minutes, but he made an impression on me."

Fast forward to Babalola's second year at the university, when the school's public image director, a member of the Rotary Club of Bauchi, approached him with a proposal: Would Babalola like to help organize a Rotaract club at the school? "I still tell people I have no idea why he approached me," Babalola says. He recalled the well-spoken man in white and asked if the director was somehow connected. It turns out the director knew the man on TV, who was the past district governor. Babalola was sold on the connection and went on to become the Rotaract club's charter president.

***He met his wife at a Rotaract meeting.***

After finishing up his university education, Babalola moved to Port Harcourt and joined the community-based Rotaract Club of Trans Amadi. At one event, he recalls noticing a beautiful woman, the president of a university-based club. He pointed her out to a friend and said, "That's the one." He was right.

But Yinka and Preba aren't the only members of their family who have been involved in Rotary. Their oldest daughter was the charter president of the Interact club at her secondary school. She moved to North America for college and today belongs to the Rotary Club of Winnipeg in Manitoba. Another daughter was the president of her university's Rotaract club.



**President-elect Olayinka Hakeem Babalola stands outside Rotary's headquarters building with Rotary Foundation Trustee Martha Peak Helman and RI Vice President Alain Van de Poel.**

Image credit: Monika Lozinska

**His nickname is "the game changer."**

Babalola served as district governor in 2011-12 while employed by Shell, a multinational energy company. This was unlike his predecessors, who were either retired or running their own businesses while they held that role. He knew things had to change for him to be successful.

At his first meeting with the assistant governors and committee chairs, he asked them to include what would be the "game changer" in their proposals: how they used to do things, and how their approach would change going forward. "If they have no answer," he says, "the proposal is thrown away. They need to present it again.

"It occurred to people that this guy actually wants something different," he continues. "I'm called the game changer, but the ideas that changed the game were not mine."

**He raised \$80,000 with a text message.**

Part of Babalola's effort to make changes as district governor involved his use of technology. On 1 November, the start of Rotary Foundation Month, he woke up around 3 a.m. and sent a request to a district group on a BlackBerry messaging app asking everyone on the platform to give something to the Foundation that day, no matter how small. Then he went back to sleep. When he woke up a few hours later, he made his own donation and posted the evidence. Within a few hours, the group had raised \$80,000. "Usually, you would gather people together, you'd talk to them, and

ask for it," he says. "But with technology, you could ask virtually."

That year, every club throughout the district gave something to the Foundation. The nearly \$1 million raised was, he says, the highest amount ever from a district on the African continent for The Rotary Foundation.

**He wishes he had more time to go scuba diving.**

Babalola is certified to dive to 30 meters and has done some diving in the Mediterranean, the Red Sea, and the Atlantic. He's looking forward to someday diving in Hurghada, a resort city on Egypt's Red Sea coast that's known for its marine life, iconic wrecks, and high visibility in the water. "The reefs are wonderful," he says.

He also enjoys other outdoor pursuits including swimming, gardening, and bird-watching. One of the most interesting birds he's seen is the Ibadan malimbe, a rare songbird with bright red feathers around its head and face that is found only near his hometown.

**The 2026-27 presidential message is Create Lasting Impact.**

If you need it, here's a refresher on Rotary's vision statement: "Together, we see a world where people unite and take action to create lasting change — across the globe, in our communities, and in ourselves." This Rotary year, Babalola explains, RI has been focusing on that first word, "together," through the message Unite for Good. In 2026-27, members will tackle the next part of the vision statement: creating change that lasts.

Lasting change across the globe is an easy idea for most Rotary members to understand, he says. "They can give you examples: our polio eradication work, our peace centers, global grants," he says. "When you talk about lasting change in communities, they know because they do things in their own communities. But each time I've been in a gathering of Rotarians and asked them about lasting change in themselves, usually the room goes quiet."

He thinks a key to growing Rotary is realizing the effect it has on you.

While members can and should measure the impact of a project, Babalola wants to see that idea flipped, too. "How has doing all of that impacted you?"

He can clearly see how Rotary has changed his own life. "I had a privileged upbringing — a good education in a place where many did not have that opportunity," he says. "Rotary grounded me. It pulled me out of my privileged world and put me in touch with the realities of my community."

Many Rotary members have their own stories about how their membership has changed their lives for the better, how it humbled them or brought them closer to their fellow human beings. Babalola encourages them

to share those stories. "If we are going to grow this organization, we must let people understand how membership can make a lasting impact on their own lives," he says. "That's one of the things I'm hoping that I can help communicate."



Image credit: Monika Lozinska  
**Rotary made him a diplomat.**

As a Rotary director in 2018-20, Babalola represented more than 80 Rotary countries and geographical areas — over a third of the Rotary world — including countries in Africa (where at least 1,000 languages are spoken), the Middle East, and parts of Europe. The zones he represented included politically sensitive areas such as Israel, Lebanon, Ukraine, and Afghanistan. "There are certain skills you end up building," he says.

For example, at a Rotary institute he convened in Egypt, he received a phone call from a senior government official about a map of Africa used at the event. The map, which he'd found on the internet, showed Western Sahara as a separate country, which Morocco does not recognize. Egypt supports the position of Morocco. "That kind of situation brings a certain awareness straight to you," he says.

**He's the second president from Africa.**

"It means a lot for the people of that continent," he says. And, he adds, everyone seems ready to do the work to support him. "I'm used to delivering results. We need to deliver results," he says. That's what he's been preaching at the Rotary institutes he's attended. "I've told them, stop talking about things. Just do it. If it works somewhere, copy it shamelessly. Don't be afraid to fail — be afraid not to try."

*This story is from the February 2026 issue of Rotary magazine.*



The project aims to restore the 2 villages coastal areas biodiversity by replanting native 1 lakh mangroves and engaging the community through Skill training workshops on their vital role in climate change mitigation & livelihood generation.



Lead Host Club : Rotary Club of Salt Lake Metropolitan Kolkata, INDIA (D-3291)  
 Partner Club RC Central Calcutta (D-3291) | RC Hooghly (D3291)  
 Project Contact (HC) Dr. Aruna Tantia  
 International Host Club RC Washington DC (D-7620)  
 Project Contact (IC) Dr. Sam Hancock – Washington DC  
 International Club Partner RC Aarau (D-1980)



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| ✓ HC Partner (RC Central Calcutta) | Cash | \$5,000  |
| ✓ RC Hooghly                       | Cash | \$1,500  |
| ✓ E Club of District 7210          | Cash | \$1,000  |



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