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RI President 2025-26



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Chandana Das
President, Rotary Club of Shillong



*President Rtn. Chandana Das exchanging Club Flag with a visiting Rotarian
Prof. Douglas D. Macmillan from Calgary, Canada*

Rotary Peace Fellow employs AI for a better world

During her Rotary Peace Fellowship, Branka Panic worked as a short-term consultant at the World Bank, joining a team that was building a model to predict the probability of famine.

The benefits of such a tool were obvious: "If a certain area will be in need of food in six months, in 12 months, we can prepare humanitarian aid more efficiently," Panic says.

But unintended consequences of making that information available also became clear. "Our intention was to make humanitarian agencies ready," Panic says. "But what if, by providing this signal as an open source, we were actually informing the government or any warring party out there to intentionally attack this population because they see there is a vulnerability?"

The exercise illustrated both the power and the danger of using such technologies. It surfaced ethical questions to be mindful of and the sensitivities of parsing data and sharing it widely.

It also motivated Panic, 42, to found [AI for Peace](#), a think tank dedicated to issues like these, as well as how artificial intelligence has the potential to benefit peace, security, and sustainable development. She co-authored a book of the same name.

The organization's focus areas include humanitarian action (using AI to save lives by anticipating and targeting response efforts); human rights and democracy (using AI to identify human rights abuses and protect defenders of human rights); and human security (using AI to protect people, as well as researching potential security threats). Positive use of AI technology can strengthen societies and prevent conflict in the first place, Panic says.

AI is already being used in peace negotiations. Israeli and Palestinian peacebuilders have used AI to facilitate large-scale dialogues aimed at ending the conflict in Gaza, she says. In some conflict areas, AI is breaking down language and dialect barriers. "We are using AI to say, 'Wait a minute, we actually have quite an easy way to let people's voices be heard in this peace process.'"

AI for Peace works with peacebuilders to build their knowledge and familiarity with artificial intelligence to become an active voice in designing, developing, and implementing new applications, she says. "We also work with data scientists, who quite often never thought about peacebuilding before, and we want them to become a little bit of peacebuilders themselves," she adds.

With her Rotary Peace Fellowship, she was able to delve deeper into technology and AI to enrich her peacebuilding background. Rotary District 2483 in Serbia and Montenegro supported her fellowship, and the connection changed her life, she says.

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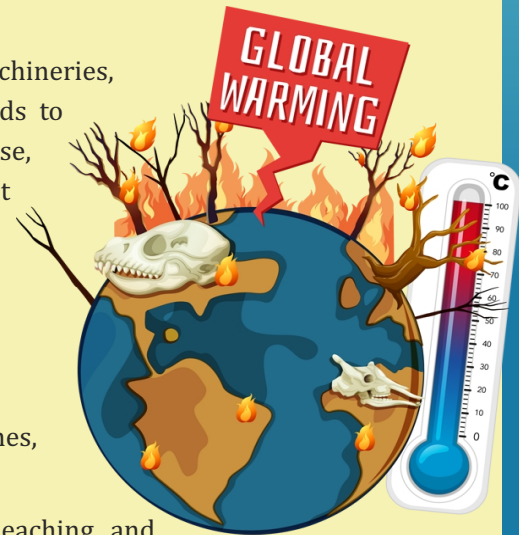
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Rotary Peace Fellow employs AI for a better world

Panic is now a Rotarian herself and is a charter member of the Rotary Club of Global Partners in Peace, an e-club for peace fellows and peace activists. The club hosts speakers who talk about their peacebuilding, humanitarian, and development work, and members live all around the world, from Mexico (where she lives, in San Miguel de Allende) to Chile, Nepal, and the Philippines. With her husband, Panic opened a “peace house,” which she describes as “a place where artists, thinkers, neighbors, diplomats, technologists, travelers, and unexpected guests can meet around one table.” Gatherings spark conversations among people of different backgrounds, an effort to turn “everyday encounters into small acts of peace,” she says. *(Source: Rotary News)*

Can we cut down on contributing to Green House Gases?

Global warming, driven by greenhouse gas emissions from fossil fuels, machineries, gadgets and deforestation, causes rising global temperatures. This leads to severe, widespread impacts: accelerated melting of glaciers and sea-level rise, more frequent extreme weather events like floods and droughts, and significant risks to ecosystems, wildlife, and human health.



Key Consequences of Global Warming:

- **Rising Sea Levels:** Melting glaciers and polar ice caps, along with warming oceans, raise sea levels, causing coastal erosion and flooding.
- **Extreme Weather:** An increase in the frequency and intensity of hurricanes, storms, heat waves, wildfires, and floods.
- **Ecological Disruption:** Loss of habitat for polar animals, coral reef bleaching, and disruption of ecosystems, affecting biodiversity.
- **Human Health Risks:** Heat-related illnesses, spread of diseases, and increased risks to vulnerable populations.
- **Agricultural and Food Security Issues:** Droughts and shifting climate patterns impact crop yields and food supplies.
- **Ocean Acidification:** Absorption of excess Carbon dioxide by the ocean alters its chemistry, harming marine life.
- These changes disrupt the Earth's natural balance, creating long-term risks for both human societies and natural environments.

Here are five key effects of global warming:

- **Rising Sea Levels and Melting Ice:** As global temperatures rise, glaciers and polar ice sheets melt, causing sea levels to increase. This creates severe coastal flooding and threatens the habitat of coastal communities.
- **More Frequent and Intense Extreme Weather:** The frequency of intense events—such as stronger hurricanes, severe droughts, floods, and heavier precipitation—has increased, disrupting livelihoods and damaging infrastructure.
- **Intensified Heat Waves:** Rising average temperatures lead to more frequent and intense heatwaves, which pose severe health risks, including heat stress and heatstroke.
- **Disruption to Ecosystems and Biodiversity Loss:** Ecosystems are changing faster than many species can adapt, leading to habitat loss, coral bleaching, and biodiversity loss.
- **Threats to Food Security and Health:** Changes in climate disrupt agricultural production, creating food and water scarcity, while also expanding the range of diseases transmitted by insects.