



THE FUTURE OF THE ROTARY FOUNDATION

Barry Rassin

Rotary Foundation Chair-elect

10 January 2023

I am excited to speak with you today about giving to our Rotary Foundation and why it is critical to achieving anything with significant impact.

District governors have many responsibilities in Rotary. And every year, The Rotary Foundation sets fundraising goals that you are measured against. I don't want to sugarcoat this: You are being asked to help us reach some of the biggest goals we have ever set so we can give hope to more people than ever.

And in a few minutes, I am going to make some big asks of you personally about taking responsibility for those numbers. But I think it's important first to get to the why. What do global grants help us accomplish, and why do we need to do more?

We all know that protecting the environment is a new area of focus, added just last year. Let me tell you, as many criticized the use of the phrase "climate change" just a few years ago, this environmental emphasis is a very big deal. But just creating an area of focus doesn't mean anything until there are projects to support it.

One such project is in Guatemala, one of the most vulnerable countries in the world to climate change. Guatemala is already suffering crop failures, increasing malnutrition, and economic devastation due to the effects of shifting weather patterns.

To successfully continue their livelihoods, farming families must adapt and diversify their agricultural practices. A global grant project aims to help farming families in Rabinal, Baja Verapaz, Guatemala, by strengthening their resilience and securing their future economic and nutritional needs. We're training farmers to use environmentally appropriate and sustainable agriculture techniques so they can continue to feed the nation in spite of the challenges.

This amazing project began with focus groups spanning multiple years, finding out precisely the climate issues being faced by the farmers and which solutions would have the greatest long-term impact. In total, 250 families decided to participate.

There are other impactful environmental projects underway. We're rebuilding coral reefs in some countries and, off the coast of Mexico, creating an artificial one by partnering with the Mexican Navy, who provided Rotary with an old military ship to sink and start a new reef, which has already begun to restore the marine ecosystem in an

“ocean desert.” This is a good reminder that partnerships help us to do more with greater impact than we can do by ourselves. One of our goals is to strengthen existing partnerships and develop new partnerships. Imagine how we can expand our reach through partnerships.

And as some of you may know, I believe that water and sanitation projects can have a transformational impact on communities.

A global grant for a WASH project in Kumasi, Ghana, is helping to address a severe lack of access to quality sanitation. Communities in this area struggle with a scarcity of water and with waterborne diseases. None have sewage treatment plants, and most use open sewers to move sewage from households to nearby rivers and streams. Our grant is providing for new wells, water systems, and microflush toilets and aims to improve the health and hygiene of more than 18,500 people. It’s also providing microcredit loans to local businesses to empower people to sustain a healthy environment.

These are just a few of the impactful projects underway right now thanks to our global grants. For every project I mentioned, there are numerous others like them — and countless more that we could be supporting right now if we had the resources to do so.

Of course, nothing has done more to increase Rotary’s reputation as a global leader in public health than our more than three-decade commitment to ending polio. Others on this stage have and will address polio this week — including a message from Bill Gates about the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation’s continued support of our efforts. And of course, polio eradication continues to be our number one priority as an organization.

We have every right to be proud of our three decades of continuous service, advocacy, and fundraising in support of this effort. No organization in the world comes close to what we’ve accomplished. But did you know that over 80% of Rotary members make no contributions to PolioPlus? And over 60% make no donation at all to The Rotary Foundation. For an organization of 1.4 million members, that means that roughly 1 million of us are not contributing each year.

Even convincing these members to contribute just US\$25 a year could make a tremendous difference. That’s US\$25 million we wouldn’t need to raise from our best donors — money that perhaps we could convince our generous supporters to contribute toward global grants or The Rotary Foundation Endowment, which continues to strive for US\$2.025 billion by 2025.

This is why one of our goals is a significant increase in the number of donations from our clubs and our members. However, I am asking you to set a goal to reach every single member of Rotary to make a contribution to The Rotary Foundation. Audacious, but I know that you are the leaders who can do this.

We need to demonstrate to every Rotary member, step by step, the importance of giving, and that starts with you. We all know that a great leader will lead by example and give to

The Rotary Foundation. And then you need to go back and speak to leaders in your district to hold them accountable as well. A club president can only hold members accountable when they contribute first.

We need your commitment because the Trustees have set an ambitious goal for total giving of US\$500 million. Never have we had such a high goal to achieve, but I am one that believes that our members always respond to a challenge when they appreciate the additional number of people we will be able to help because we have increased funds for grants. And remember that every member means every Rotarian and every Rotaractor. We are already seeing some amazing examples of Rotaractors eager to take the lead in these efforts.

A Nigerian Rotaractor named Clement Chinaza Owuamalam is an inspirational leader, writing and speaking as widely as he can to tell his fellow Rotaractors about the importance of giving to the Foundation. He came up with the idea of the Rotaract Digital Giving Certificate that recognizes Rotaract clubs that collectively contribute US\$100 or more to The Rotary Foundation during the Rotary year. Rotaractors are responding enthusiastically, and since 2019-20, when the digital certificate began as a pilot, have contributed almost US\$500,000.

Our Rotarians and Rotaractors are hungry for more grants to help more people who need us. We have been able to reach 100 million beneficiaries in the last five years, but we need to reach twice as many in the next five years. The more we engage our members in projects — and engage them in our grant fundraising efforts — the more they will be part of making our world a better place.

We have done an outstanding job with disaster response grants for both the pandemic and the humanitarian response in Ukraine, and we must prepare now with funds to continue with future disasters.

Our Rotary Peace Fellows have been an outstanding example of how our funds go directly toward our mission of world peace and understanding. We must continue to support and expand such a successful program.

And look at the impact our first two Programs of Scale are having. Significantly reducing malaria in Zambia and now significantly going to reduce maternal and infant mortality in Nigeria.

We are transformational with our funds. But we need to do even more.

So, are you ready to lead by example and make your own contributions to The Rotary Foundation?

Are you ready to inspire others all the way to the club level, including all Rotarians and Rotaractors, to support the great work we are doing?

I'm excited for the future of Rotary, because we are *Creating Hope in the World*, which

will bring hope to those who are in need and change lives for the better. With your help, we are going to inspire a new generation to do more, and transform more lives, than we ever thought possible.

Are you with me?