Issue 6, Volume 12 February 2026





Message from ESRAG Chair, Michael Terrelonge

Welcome to this February 2026 edition of the ESRAG newsletter. As Chair of the Board of Directors, it is a pleasure to connect with you. It is heartening to see that the importance of environmental projects and Rotary Action Groups has been highlighted several times in the last month. Rotary International CEO John Hewko said that "the Rotary Action Group grant model introduced in 2013 is the most important initiative that Rotary has undertaken since the polio initiative that began in the 1980's.

RAGs are an important component of our organisation's future, and they will deliver increased benefits to beneficiaries. As they serve as great public image boosters locally, regionally, and internationally, that in turn will drive more members and potential donors to The Rotary Foundation." The UN Secretary General, Antonio Guterres, also highlighted the climate crisis at a recent meeting in London. He said, "A world in climate chaos cannot be a world at peace. Climate change is a threat multiplier – inflaming tensions over land, water, and food, forcing people from their homes, and tearing at the ecosystems we all depend on."

The High Seas Treaty officially entered into force on January 17th, marking a new era in the protection of our shared ocean. Covering nearly half the planet and two-thirds of the ocean, the High Seas are home to some of the most biodiverse yet vulnerable ecosystems on Earth. They are also under growing pressure from unsustainable activities, including the exploitation of natural resources. Ratified in September 2025, the High Seas Treaty is the first legally binding international agreement to safeguard marine life beyond national borders and represents an important step towards securing a healthy, thriving ocean for generations to come.

I would like to extend my sincere thanks to ESRAG member DGE Ravishankar Dakotu

for his generous $50 million donation to The Rotary Foundation for education and environment projects.

Congratulations to ESRAG member Neeraj Bhatnagar for securing a breakout session at Rotary International Convention in Taipei on “The Climate Crisis is Not Just Environmental.” The reports on projects in this newsletter clearly demonstrate the excellent work being carried out by Rotarians across the globe.

Michael Terrelonge

Chair ESRAG



Kenya, Norway, US and IEA to Hold 2nd Major Summit on Clean Cooking in Africa

Together with the governments of Kenya, Norway, and the United States, the International Energy Agency will this year convene the second major international summit dedicated to providing clean cooking access to the 1 billion people in Africa who currently lack it – accelerating the momentum generated by the landmark summit we held in 2024. Taking place in Nairobi, the 2026 Summit will be co-chaired by President William Ruto of Kenya, Prime Minister Jonas Gahr Støre of Norway, United States Secretary of Energy Chris Wright, and Executive Director Fatih Birol. It will bring together both the public and private sectors to drive progress on this crucial issue. The first IEA Summit on clean cooking in Africa took place in Paris in May 2024, mobilising $2.2 billion in financial pledges from governments and the private sector.

Nearly 60 countries participated, including leaders from several African governments; heads of international organisations, notably the African Development Bank Group; and CEOs of major energy companies.

In July 2025, the IEA published an update showing that more than $470 million of commitments from the Paris summit had already been disbursed and set out a new roadmap for a cost-effective pathway to achieving universal access to clean cooking across sub-Saharan Africa by 2040.

Kenya, Norway, the US, and IEA to hold 2nd major Summit on Clean Cooking in Africa News - IEA

UN Secretary General at UNA-UK UNGA at 80 Conference in Central Methodist Hall, London January 17th

By: Judith Diment MBE



UN Secretary General at UNA-UK UNGA At 80 Conference in Central Methodist Hall, London January 17th

Secretary General Antonio Guterres attended a UNA-UK UNGA at 80 conference and memorable service of thanksgiving celebrating the 80th anniversary of the inaugural meeting of the UN General Assembly in Central Methodist Hall, Westminster on January 10,1946. He said this meeting was the most important political meeting of the 20th century. The service and conference were attended by the Duchess of Edinburgh and President of UN General Assembly Annalena Baerbock, Lord George Robertson former SG of NATO and UK Attorney General Lord Hermer. In an act of dedication, the Secretary General said, “We the peoples of the United Nations are determined to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war and to reaffirm faith in the fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person , in the equal rights of men and women, and of nations large and small.” In his keynote address to the 2000 delegates, he highlighted the need for multilateralism and abiding by the rule of international law, and he emphasised the need to address the climate crisis which impacts all the Sustainable Development Goals.

“A world in climate chaos cannot be a world at peace. Climate change is a threat multiplier – inflaming tensions over land, water and food, forcing people from their homes, and tearing at the ecosystems we all depend on.

To address the climate crisis, we need national Climate action plans that cut emissions now and an accelerated just, orderly and equitable transition away from fossil fuels to renewables. We need to double energy efficiency by 2030, build grids and storage to connect clean power to all, cut methane and halt deforestation. Promises for adaptation and for loss and damage need to be kept, and affordable, predictable finance need to reach those who need it, when they need it. Climate justice is an investment in peace and security, because vulnerability anywhere becomes a risk everywhere – rippling through financial systems, supply chains and global stability.”

He noted that the High Seas Treaty has officially entered into force today January 17th, marking a new era in the protection of our shared ocean. Covering nearly half the planet and two thirds of the ocean, the High Seas are home to some of the most biodiverse yet vulnerable ecosystems on Earth. They are also under growing pressure from unsustainable activities, including the exploitation of natural resources. He said “Today, the Agreement on Marine Biological Diversity of Areas beyond National Jurisdiction comes into force.

This treaty establishes the first legal framework for the conservation and sustainable use of marine biodiversity in the

two-thirds of the ocean beyond national limits. The negotiations were a model of modern diplomacy: led by science, with the participation not just of governments, but of civil society, Indigenous Peoples and local communities. These quiet victories of international cooperation — the wars prevented, the famine averted, the vital treaties secured — do not always make the headlines.

Ratified in September 2025, the High Seas Treaty is the first legally binding international agreement to safeguard marine life beyond national borders and represents an important step towards securing a healthy, thriving ocean for generations to come.

He also stressed that in the challenging times we are living in the need for partnering with civil society is greater than ever, he said “More than ever, the world needs civil society movements that are fearless and persistent — that make it impossible for leaders to look away.”

Members of Rotary were instrumental in establishing the UN in 1946 and Rotary has had Observer status ever since.

Secretary-General’s remarks to the United Nations Association of the United Kingdom on the 80th Anniversary of the General Assembly [as delivered] | Secretary-General | United Nations

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ROTARY INTERNATIONAL NEWS

Rotary International Assembly January 2026



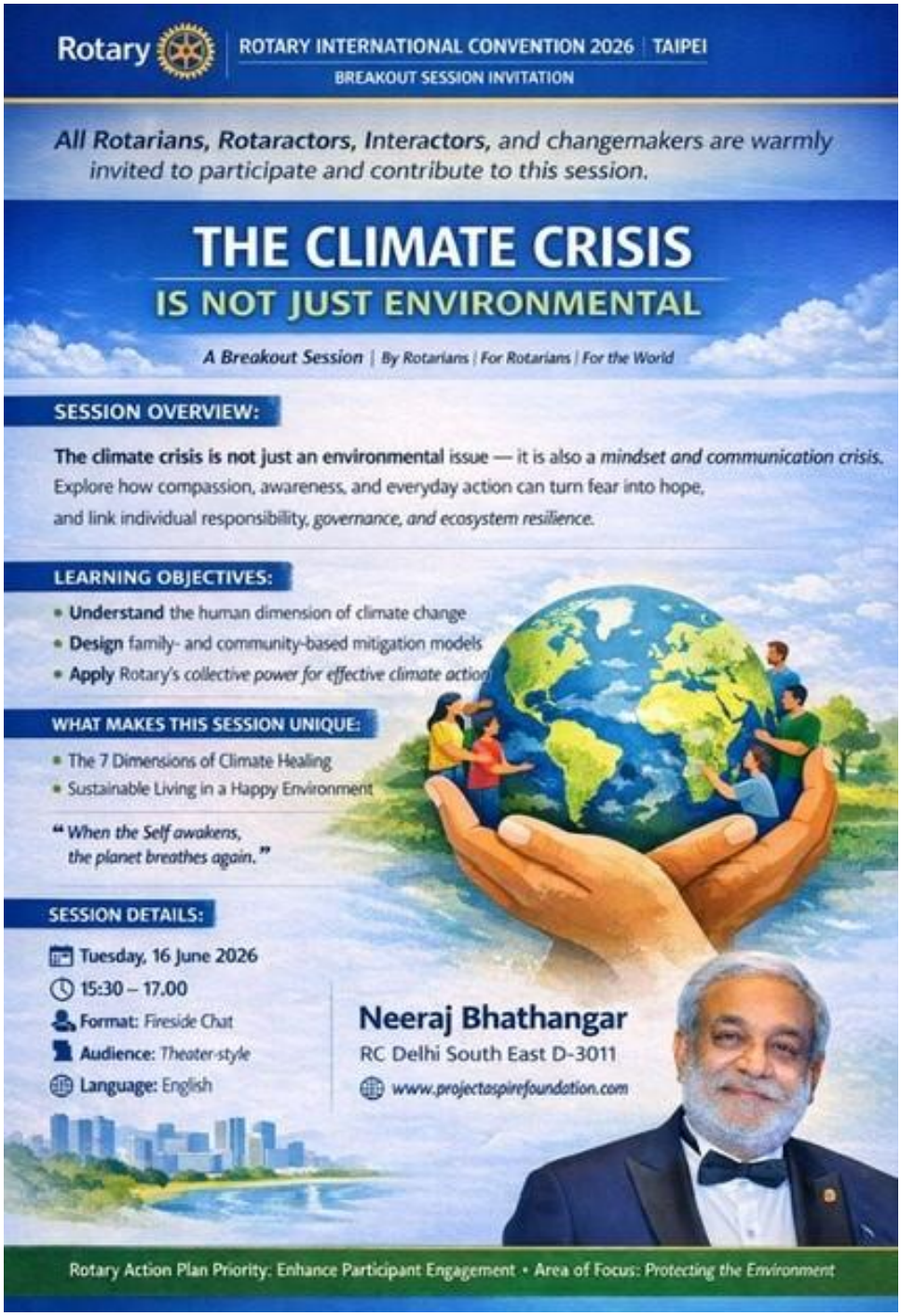
Rotary International President Elect Olayinka H. Babalola introduced the 2026-27 presidential message, Create Lasting Impact. “As members of Rotary, we share a vision of a better future,” he said. “To make this vision a reality, we must acknowledge and unleash the change within ourselves. We must focus not only on outcomes, but on impact.

RI President Elect Presented with ESRAG Pin





RICON Breakout Session



Indian developer donates US$50 million to The Rotary Foundation

By Etelka Lehoczky



Declaring that "giving is a duty," longtime Rotary member Ravishankar Dakoju pledged that he and his wife and fellow club member, Paola Dakoju, would donate approximately US$50 million (4.5 billion Indian rupees) to The Rotary Foundation. Dakoju announced the gift at Rotary's

International Assembly in Orlando, Florida, USA, on 13 January.

“Years ago, Paola and I shared a dream: that one day, when we had enough to live with dignity, we would return 85% of our wealth back to society,” said Dakoju, a member of the Rotary Club of Bangalore, Karnataka, India. “My friends, that day has arrived.”

Dakoju, who serves as The Rotary Foundation Arch Klumph Society ambassador for Asia, spoke about his belief that philanthropy is a personal responsibility and explained his and Paola’s determination to give away their surplus wealth.

“What we keep may serve only our family, nothing beyond that. What we give The Rotary Foundation will serve humanity,” he said.

Dakoju told assembly attendees how his life experiences led him to commit to philanthropy. He described how his father, who had donated all of the family’s land to poor farmers, died suddenly when Dakoju was age 10. Dakoju recalled how he, his mother, and his six siblings were left with less than US$2 in the bank. He said he failed in school and misbehaved, even leading a street gang, before he earned a college degree and eventually co-founded Hara Housing & Land Development Ltd. Now it’s one of the leading land developers in Bangalore.

Dakoju also found Rotary. He was impressed by Rotary’s values of fellowship and service, and as his business grew, they supported The Rotary Foundation. In 2018, they committed to donating approximately US$14.7 million (1.3 billion Indian rupees) to the Foundation. It was one of the largest contributions in the Foundation’s history.

“Whatever I have achieved so far came from the kindness of people, the grace of life, and the opportunities Rotary brought into my world,” Dakoju said at the assembly.

Dakoju has funded global grants and other programs in his district and worked on numerous service projects. In August, he pledged to match donations of up to US$50,000 (4,500,000 Indian rupees) for each district in India that created pooled endowed funds to support environmental and education-oriented initiatives. He also participated in a five-year project to plant 10 million saplings in Karnataka state.

At the assembly, Dakoju emphasized the connection between his commitment to Rotary and his philosophy of giving.

“Rotary gave me new life, new purpose, new friendship, new meaning, and a global family,” he said. “And life has taught me this beautiful truth: When you give more than you think you can, life returns to you more than you can ever imagine.”



Rejuvenation and Beautification of River Kalyani

By Naman Agarwal





Pollution of our air, water, and soil endangers human health and longevity. Some pollutants, like the particulates from burning wood and fossil fuels, are causing 12-15 million people each year to die prematurely. Other dangers come from the estimated 350,000 different types of man-made substances now on the global market, such as plastics, pesticides, industrial chemicals, and chemicals in consumer products, antibiotics, and other pharmaceuticals. These can take the form of any substance (solid, liquid, or gas) or energy (such as radioactivity, heat, sound, or light).

Naman Agarwal explains how Rotarians in India are addressing pollution of the River Kalyani:

A Testament to Community Effort Rudrapur, a unique and vibrant town in Uttarakhand, is home to the Kalyani River, a lifeline that flows from the Tanda Forest near Jim Corbett National Park. This river, a tributary of the sacred Ganga, enters Rudrapur in its purest form, much like the Gangajal of Haridwar. With a vision to preserve this purity and pass it on to the next town, Bilaspur, the Rotary Club of Rudrapur embarked on an ambitious journey of rejuvenation and beautification of the Kalyani River in 2020, spearheaded by Rtn Dr DK Bhatt. The Rotary Club, recognizing its responsibility, formed a dedicated committee including Rtn Dr BS Bisht, former Vice Chancellor of GB Pant University of Agriculture and Technology, Rtn Apjit Behl, Rtn Sumeet Behl, and several other members. With support from Rotary District 3110 and IPDG Rtn Neerav Nimesh, the project gained momentum. The team began by understanding the problem. The river, only 2 km long in Rudrapur, was divided into 20 blocks of 100 meters each, starting with Dhobi Ghat. Leveraging the town's strengths—its 3-lakh population, presence of Fortune 500 companies like Tata, Ashok Leyland, and Nestle, over 100 schools, high literacy rate, and one of the highest per capita incomes in the country—the project aimed to make a big impact. The first step was an awareness campaign in January 2021, a car rally covering 1500 km across Rotary District 3110, coinciding with a Covid awareness rally.

This sparked interest among residents, schools, industries, and government agencies like Nagar Nigam, Forest Department, and Jal Nigam. Collaborations with Saathi NGO, Drona College, and scientists like Dr RK Srivastava (GBPUAT), Dr Neeraj Pant (IIT Dhanbad), and Dr Vaibhav Bhamoria (IIM Kashipur) further strengthened the initiative. The Rotaract, Interact, and Inner Wheel clubs actively participated in the project, contributing to its success. Key activities included installing steel nets at Dhobi Ghat to catch plastic and solid

waste, leading to a 90% reduction in garbage. The once-littered Dhobi Ghat transformed into Kalyani Vatika, a vibrant garden where children play and celebrate. A Compressed Biogas (CBG) Plant was established, processing 50 tonnes of wet waste daily, generating biogas, power, and manure, saving 20000 tonnes of CO2 annually. The town upgraded to ODF Plus, and Paharganj, a former waste mountain, became a beautiful garden in 2024. Community engagement was pivotal. Nukkad Natak, painting and music competitions, screenings of Dashrath Maanjhi, and awareness rallies educated residents about segregation of waste and the importance of keeping the river clean. A pilot water filtration plant was set up as an environmental lab for students and citizens.

Interact Club RAN public school performed jingles on the project of river restoration. Future plans include floating gardens with phytoplankton, making the area a zero-garbage zone, inter-school competitions, sound systems at Kalyani Ghat for education, and increasing water flow with expert inputs. Corporations are being involved to adopt stretches of the river and replicate successes. The Kalyani River's story is a testament to what collective effort can achieve. Rotary Club Rudrapur has shown that with government, industry, and society working together, keeping a river clean isn't just possible—it's simple. The journey continues, aiming to restore the Kalyani to its pristine state.



ESRAG Seed / Start Up Awards

$500 USD Seed Awards to support project-ready environmental initiatives



Who Can Apply: Active ESRAG Rotarians & Rotaractors

Project Criteria:

- Environment-focused
- Fully designed and ready to launch
- Projects should apply nature-based solutions where feasible
- Implemented through ESRAG Regional Chapters

Closing Date: March 31st, 2026

For more information email: **projects@esrag.org**

A Simple Choice with a Global Impact

Are you ready for a meaningful challenge?

Big West ESRAG Chair, **Steve Bender**, is no stranger to global challenges. His life's work has been been solving environmental and community problems by fostering partnerships for lasting change. After experiencing first-hand the health benefits of eating more plant-rich foods, Steve is now inviting Rotarians everywhere to do the same - because what's good for our health is also good for our planet.

In fact, **Project Drawdown**, an official ESRAG partner, identifies **plant-rich diets as one of the most effective solutions for addressing climate change**. It's affordable, accessible, and delicious — making it a powerful, achievable action Rotarians can take to create real impact on biodiversity loss and pollution as well.

Steve is challenging fellow Rotarians and friends to join him in the free **ESRAG 15-Day Plant-Rich Challenge**, starting **February 15**. It's perfect for beginners and experts alike - YOU choose your goal. Participants receive a daily email for two weeks filled with practical, inspiring resources — including recipes, cooking demonstrations, shopping tips, and videos from nutritionists, physicians, chefs, and world-class athletes.

To date, **over 1,000 Rotarians worldwide** have participated.

This Valentine's Day, add the Earth to your list of loved ones. Sign up by February 14 for the 15-Day Plant-Rich Challenge here:

👉 https://forms.gle/PPDBmbnRDo6yF9cg6



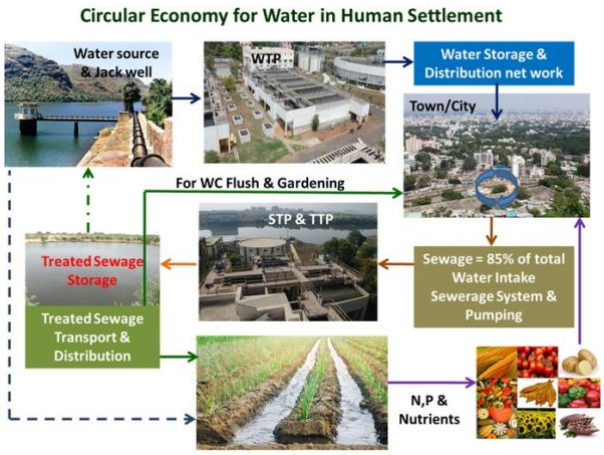
Plant-rich eating will also be a major theme at the upcoming EarthX Conference in Dallas, Texas (April 20–22), where Steve serves as Global Head of Strategic Partnerships & Revenue Growth, and as the Chair of the U.S. Green Chamber of Commerce.

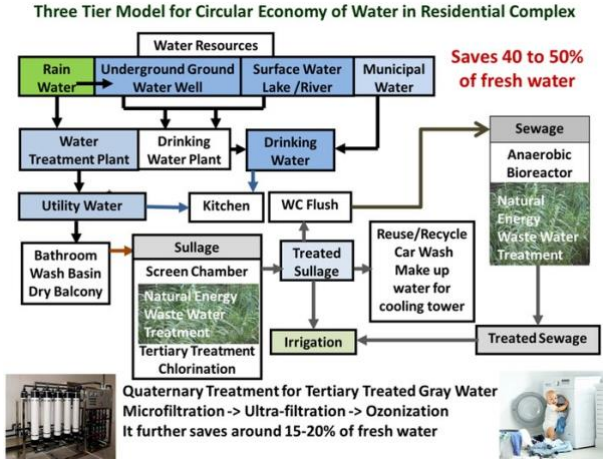
Call to Action! Join us. Take the challenge. Share it with your club, your family, and your community. Together, United for Good through Rotary, we can turn a simple daily choice into meaningful global impact — one meal at a time.

Email us at plantrich@esrag.org, join our community on Facebook, Instagram, and visit our website, esrag.org/plant-rich-diet/

From Linear Waste to Circular Value: Why Water Management Must Change Now

By PP PDRR Rajendrakumar V Saraf





Water is still managed as if it were disposable. The dominant model follows a linear logic: extract, treat, distribute, use, discharge. This approach no longer holds. Climate change, urban growth, pollution, and rising consumption are pushing freshwater systems beyond their limits. Cities struggle to supply potable water and to collect and treat sewage. In many regions, wastewater treatment infrastructure remains insufficient or absent altogether.

The result is a system that wastes resources, degrades ecosystems, and increases vulnerability. What is needed is not incremental optimisation, but a structural shift.

Rethinking Water as a Closed Loop

The Circular Economy of Water (CEW) reframes the entire water cycle. Instead of treating wastewater as a liability, it treats it as a resource. Water is reused, recovered, and regenerated across multiple loops, reducing pressure on freshwater sources while improving resilience. This shift starts with demand reduction. Lower consumption, fewer manmade chemicals in wastewater, and more efficient use at the household and industrial levels are

prerequisites. Circularity cannot be achieved through technology alone; it also requires changes in behaviour and planning.

Core Principles of a Circular Water System

Resilience and loss reduction

Large volumes of water are lost through leaks and inefficient infrastructure, often referred to as non-revenue water. A circular system aims to minimize these losses and ensure that every unit extracted is fully utilised.

Lower blue water footprint

Reducing the consumption of stored freshwater through audits, efficient appliances, aerators, and reuse lowers stress on water resources, even if it challenges traditional revenue models of water utilities.

Greywater treatment and reuse

Established and advanced treatment technologies enable wastewater to be reused safely for toilet flushing, gardening, car washing, cooling towers, and certain industrial processes. Localized systems with short loops, such as multi-tier treatment in residential complexes, significantly reduce freshwater demand.

Designing out waste and pollution

Wastewater contains recoverable value. Nutrients can be reused in agriculture, organic matter converted into biogas, and thermal energy harvested from sewage systems.

Regenerating natural systems

Nature-based solutions, such as restored wetlands, percolation ponds, and permeable surfaces, help filter water, recharge aquifers, and reduce environmental pollution.

Fit-for-Purpose Water Use

Not all water needs to be drinking quality. Separate distribution systems for recycled water can reduce freshwater demand by up to 30–40 percent. Treated wastewater can support agriculture, aquifer recharge, and industrial uses, while safely returning to the hydrological cycle.

What Needs to Change

The transition to a circular water economy requires mindset change, public acceptance of reuse, digital monitoring of flows and quality, and supportive policy frameworks. Technology exists. The challenge lies in coordination, governance, and implementation.

The Bottom Line

The circular economy of water is no longer optional. It mirrors natural cycles, maximizes the value of every drop, and strengthens climate resilience. Moving from linear extraction to circular regeneration is one of the most effective levers for sustainable urban water management today.

The CEW concept is implemented in Residential complexes in Pune, India where the 3-tier system is successfully working for the last 20 years.

Refurbishment of the Aid Post in Lese Oalai, Gulf Province, Papua New Guinea Solar for Healthcare: ESRAG Solar Prize Winner 2025

By Barb Sheehan



Lese Oalai is a remote village in the Gulf Province of PNG. John Oswald from The Rotary Club of Torquay, in Australia, has been leading a project for over four years to assist the residents of the village with education and health. Rotarian Lucy Loko, from the Rotary Club of Greater Geelong and Chair of the Peter Nathan Loko Foundation, is from the village and works with John every step of the way.

In the first stage of the project, completed in November 2024, 22 composting toilets were constructed at the school, and a library was constructed in a shipping container, with solar panels installed on the roof of the library. “Teacher In a Box” kits have been provided to the school. The composting toilets were built by locals, under the supervision of a builder from Torquay, Ned McLarnen. When Ned and Lucy were in the village constructing the toilets, malaria and dysentery were rife in the village, and two children died from malaria while they were there. The health facility in the village, classified as an Aid Post, was completely out of medications at that time.

Rotary has since collaborated with the local Catholic Church Health Services (CCHS), who have done a full assessment of the health services in the village. The CCHS prioritised the needs of the villagers and has worked closely with Rotary. Since then, Rotary has purchased an emergency supply of vital medications and medical equipment for the village from a pharmacy in Port Moresby.

UNICEF does provide vaccines for the villagers and have provided two solar panels at the Aid Post to run the vaccine fridge. There was no other power available, and the building was dilapidated. There is a need for power to run medical equipment and fridges, and especially to provide lighting during births and other medical procedures.

The Rotary Clubs of Torquay and Highton each successfully applied for Rotary District Foundation Grants to fund solar panels and a battery at the Aid Post. Our District Grants are matching grants, with each club contributing $3000, matched by a $3000 grant.

Planting Hope Where It Matters Most: Trees, Climate, and Community Resilience in Tanzania

By Rtn. Sakib Mahmud

From Local Action to Global Impact

What happens when a single tree is planted in the dry highlands of northern Tanzania? It becomes more than a seedling in the soil — it becomes a statement of global responsibility.

Across the Rotary world, members are responding to the accelerating climate crisis with practical, people-centred solutions. For ESRAG, tree planting is not symbolic. It is a proven climate solution that connects ecosystem restoration, community resilience, and environmental equity — central to ESRAG's mission to inspire and empower the Rotary Family to protect the environment for a sustainable

Reforestation here is not only about carbon sequestration. It is about protecting biodiversity, strengthening public institutions, and improving everyday life. When trees are planted at schools, health centres, and community facilities, they become long-term investments in education, health, and social stability.

A Partnership Rooted in Community

The Duluth Superior Eco Rotary Club's Tanzania Tree Plantation Project is a strong example of how Rotary partnerships translate environmental goals into tangible impact. Within the Duluth–Superior area, the project united several Rotary clubs — Superior Rotary, Duluth Skyline, Club 25, and Harbortown Rotary — demonstrating the power of coordinated local action.

Internationally, the project partnered with the Rotary Club of Arusha Clocktower and the Natopiwo Organization, a local NGO working in Tanzania's Arusha Region. Together, these partners planted trees at four key locations: 600 trees at Emairete Primary School, Irimorijo Primary School and the Monduli Juu Police Station. An additional 400 trees were planted at Ole Sokoine Secondary School, Emairete

future.This global context comes to life through a powerful collaboration in Tanzania.

Why Trees Matter – Especially in Tanzania

Tanzania is on the frontline of climate change. Increasing droughts, soil degradation, and deforestation threaten food security, water availability, and livelihoods, particularly in rural communities. In regions like Monduli Juu, trees are essential for stabilizing soil, restoring local water cycles, and supporting resilient food systems.

Health Centre, and the Monduli Juu Ward Head Office.

Environmental Impact with Economic Benefits

By sourcing seedlings from local groups such as the Hima Wamo Group and the Hifadhi Mazingira Women's Group, the project supports local livelihoods while restoring ecosystems. This approach reflects ESRAG's emphasis on solutions that are environmentally sound, socially inclusive, and economically sustainable.

Each tree planted represents more than environmental restoration. It represents partnership, shared stewardship, and Rotary's commitment to people and planet.

This project demonstrates what's possible when Rotary clubs unite across borders for environmental action. In partnership with the Rotary Club of Arusha Clocktower and the Natopiwo Organization, we planted 1,000 trees across schools, health centres, and public facilities in Monduli Juu— addressing Tanzania's urgent climate challenges while supporting local livelihoods. These trees represent investments in soil stability, water security, and community resilience. I'm proud that

Rotary clubs across the Duluth-Superior area came together to create this global impact for communities on the frontline of climate change.





Images: Representatives of Natopiwo Organization, a local NGO, and the Rotary Club of Arusha Clocktower of Tanzania. (f.l.t.r.): Musa Kamaika, Director of Natopiwo Organization, Magdalena Masanja, Ndimbumi Msongole and Liomo Elias. All are Rotarians of the Rotary Club of Arusha Clocktower

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Environment Tour Guatemala



The Alianza por el Motagua, a Rotarian-formed alliance in Guatemala composed of more than 80 organizations—including Rotary clubs—invites you to join the Environment Tour from March 20–28, 2026.

During this tour, you will have the opportunity to see firsthand the work being carried out by Rotarians and alliance members to restore and protect the Motagua River Basin.

These are impactful efforts that you can directly support—and actively participate in—through this immersive experience.

For more information, please contact:

Jeanne Archer

Alianza por el Motagua Board Member

✉ jeannesm4@gmail.com

Citizen Science: Rotarians Making a Measurable Difference for Nature

By Chris Davies Chair ESRAG GBI

Citizen science not only generates meaningful insights but also directly supports the objectives of ESRAG GBI (Rotary's Environmental Sustainability Rotarian Action Group – Global Biodiversity Initiative). The GBI encourages actions to conserve biodiversity, restore ecosystems, and enhance environmental resilience — all of which can be powerfully reinforced by Rotarians collecting and sharing high-quality environmental information. For more about ESRAG and its work on biodiversity and environmental sustainability, visit https://esrag.org/biodiversity/. (esrag.org)

What is citizen science?

Citizen science refers to structured research conducted, wholly or partially, by non-professional volunteers following established scientific protocols. Participants contribute to projects designed by universities, research institutions, or conservation organisations, ensuring that the data is credible, robust, and actionable.

Importantly, citizen science is not amateur tinkering; it produces high-quality evidence used to inform policy, guide conservation priorities, and track environmental change over time. For Rotarians, it provides a way to serve communities and ecosystems simultaneously, aligning service with measurable impact.

Why it matters for Rotarians and ESRAG GBI

At a time when budgets for environmental monitoring are constrained, citizen science multiplies capacity:

- Scale: thousands of observations across wide areas

- Local knowledge: insights gathered where volunteers live and work
- Long-term data: trends observed over years or decades
- Engagement: builds public awareness and investment in environmental protection. When undertaken with your local youth groups and communities creates interest and synergy **.** By setting up a District framework a contribution can be made to wider Rotary and ESRAG initiatives
- Contribute to the wider RI' Communities, Action for Freshwater [Rotary and UNEP Unite to Safeguard Global Freshwater Ecosystems | Rotary International]

These outcomes support key ESRAG GBI objectives such as monitoring species and habitats, identifying threats, and engaging communities in stewardship.

Flagship initiatives Rotarians can get involved with:

RSPB Big Garden Birdwatch

The Royal Society for the Protection of Birds' Big Garden Birdwatch is one of the UK's longest running citizen science projects, with hundreds of thousands of participants spending an hour observing birds in gardens and local spaces each year. The data helps track bird populations across the UK. Learn more or sign up at https://www.rspb.org.uk/birdwatch/. (RSPB)

Earthwatch Europe

Earthwatch Europe promotes citizen science as part of its environmental research programmes, offering projects across biodiversity, freshwater, and habitat health. Rotarians can find opportunities to support field data collection and community science partnerships at https://earthwatch.org.uk/science/citizenscience/. (Earthwatch Europe)

As part of the Earthwatch Great UK River Blitz the Ouse was tested for phosphates and Nitrates and the results entered into the national database. Simultaneously recordings were made for the Wildlife Trusts Big River Watch. Nitrate readings were high and added to the overall picture in Bedfordshire of all rivers being in need of improvement.



Big River Watch

Coordinated by The Rivers Trust, Big River Watch invites volunteers to use a free mobile app to record observations about river health — including wildlife sightings and signs of pollution — helping to build a picture of freshwater ecosystem condition across the UK and Ireland. For details and how to take part, see https://theriverstrust.org/take-action/the-bigriver-watch. (The Rivers Trust)

Nature's Calendar

Run by the Woodland Trust, Nature's Calendar enables volunteers to record the timing of seasonal changes (such as bryophyte buds, frogspawn, and migrating birds) to monitor effects of weather and climate change. To join in, visit

https://naturescalendar.woodlandtrust.org.uk/. (naturescalendar.woodlandtrust.org.uk) . Partnerships: opportunities to work with universities, NGOs, and councils . Visibility: demonstrates Rotary's commitment to biodiversity and environmental stewardship

Participating in citizen science also provides documented evidence of impact, supporting ESRAG GBI's mission and helping Rotary clubs

iNaturalist UK

An accessible global platform where anyone can upload wildlife observations — from common plants to rare species — and contribute to international biodiversity datasets. Rotarians can sign up and start recording at https://uk.inaturalist.org/. (iNaturalist United Kingdom)

Big Butterfly Count

Organised by Butterfly Conservation, the Big Butterfly Count is the UK's biggest insect monitoring survey, inviting participants to spend 15 minutes counting butterflies and day-flying moths in summer. Rotarians can find details at https://butterfly-conservation.org/news-andblog/take-part-in-these-citizen-scienceprojects-in-2025. (butterfly-conservation.org)

Marine Conservation Society citizen science

The Marine Conservation Society runs a range of citizen science activities — including wildlife and seaweed recording and beach surveys — to help understand marine biodiversity and inform ocean conservation; see https://www.mcsuk.org/whatyou-can-do/citizen-science/ for details. (Marine Conservation Society)

Benefits for Rotary clubs

Citizen science delivers multiple advantages for Rotarians:

. Tangible service: practical, observable action rather than abstract advocacy . Community engagement: projects can involve youth, schools, and local organisations . Education: members gain knowledge of local ecosystems and conservation challenges

show measurable contributions toward biodiversity goals.

How to get started

Rotary clubs do not need to be expert ecologists. A simple approach includes:

1. Selecting a citizen science project that aligns with local interests and ESRAG GBI priorities (e.g. birds, rivers, seasonality)

2. Nominating a club coordinator to organise participation

3. Starting with a single monitoring event or data collection period

4. Recording and sharing results with the wider community and partner organisations

5. Building engagement annually and linking activities to ESRAG GBI reporting and Rotary communication channels

Citizen science can also be integrated into Youth Service, Community Service, or Environmental Service projects, demonstrating intergenerational impact.

A modern expression of Rotary service

Citizen science embodies the best of Rotary and ESRAG GBI: evidence-based action, community engagement, and environmental stewardship. By observing, recording, and reporting on nature,

Rotarians help safeguard biodiversity while strengthening local communities and deepening fellowship.

It's a practical, measurable, and rewarding way to translate Rotary's global commitment to sustainability into local action, ensuring that each bird counted, river monitored, or species recorded contributes to the health of our planet — and to the legacy of Rotary service

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The Africa Grows Green Awards

By PP Reem Abd El Meguid



What if one Rotary club partnership could help a climate startup scale its solution across an entire region?

Across Africa, climate innovators are developing practical and scalable solutions to some of the world's most urgent environmental challenges, ranging from water scarcity and waste management to sustainable agriculture and green finance. The Africa Grows Green Awards were created to identify and elevate these solutions, offering Rotary clubs and ESRAG members a concrete entry point to translate environmental commitment into measurable, real-world impact.

A Pan-African Innovation Ecosystem

Founded in 2022 by the Association for the Sustainable Quality of Living, a non-profit organization based in Egypt, the Africa Grows Green Awards have since engaged climate innovators from more than 20 African countries, including Egypt, Kenya, Nigeria, Ghana, Morocco, Tunisia, Rwanda, Ethiopia, Senegal, Cameroon, South Africa, and Tanzania. Together, these innovators represent a new generation of entrepreneurs demonstrating that Africa is not defined solely by climate vulnerability, but increasingly by climate-driven solutions.

The innovations recognized through the Awards span areas that closely align with ESRAG's environmental priorities. They include gender-inclusive climate adaptation and mitigation technologies such as the transformation of plastic waste into climate-friendly footwear, smart platforms that leverage satellite technology to deliver actionable insights and sustainable yield recommendations for farmers, the manufacturing of solar backpacks that provide light and power to students in sub-Saharan African communities, and the recycling of used cooking oil into biodiesel. In addition, the Awards highlight green finance and ESG-focused tools, including the work of angel investors and venture capitalists who support SMEs and financial institutions in assessing climate risk and accessing sustainable finance. Research-based environmental solutions also play a central role, particularly those that translate academic research into market-ready applications.

Where Rotary Clubs Make the Difference

While many of these climate innovators possess strong ideas and proven technologies, they often face challenges related not to innovation itself, but to access, visibility, and scale. This is where

Rotary clubs can make a decisive difference. By engaging with climate startups, Rotary clubs are uniquely positioned to provide mentorship in areas such as business development, governance, and scaling strategies. They can connect innovators to broader networks that include policymakers, investors, academia, and industry partners, while also hosting pitch sessions or site visits to spotlight local and regional climate solutions. Beyond this, Rotary clubs can support pilot projects through grants, club partnerships, or district programs, and amplify success stories by helping innovators gain international exposure through Rotary and ESRAG platforms.

Initiatives such as the Africa Grows Green Awards, which have been presented at COP27, COP28, COP29, and at United Nations environmental forums, offer Rotary clubs access to a curated pipeline of vetted climate solutions that are ready for collaboration. In this way, the Awards function as more than a recognition platform; they act as a bridge between grassroots innovation and global action.

From Recognition to Replication

Ultimately, the Africa Grows Green Awards demonstrate how Rotary values—service, partnership, and leadership—can be directly applied to strengthening climate resilience and advancing sustainable development. As ESRAG continues to inspire environmental action across the Rotary family, collaboration with climate innovators stands out as one of the most tangible and effective ways for clubs to create lasting impact.

Rotary and ESRAG members interested in supporting climate innovation are encouraged to explore partnerships with Africa Grows Green Award innovators, host climate innovation sessions within their clubs, or contribute their expertise to solutions that are ready to scale. Through collective engagement, Rotary clubs can help transform climate ideas into climate action, across Africa and beyond.

Jimmy Alcivar Arteaga Student Travel Awards

Travel awards for international students to present posters at the NSA meeting in Portland, Oregon, USA, March 22-26, 2026

Please share with students the availability of 'Jimmy Alcivar Arteaga Student Travel Awards' from the FUCOBI Foundation of Ecuador (www.fucobi.org) for international students to present posters at the National Shellfisheries Association (NSA) 118th Annual Meeting to be held in Portland, Oregon, USA on March 22-26, 2026 (https://www.shellfish.org/annual-meeting). The awards cover memberships in the NSA ($60) and in the Environmental Sustainability Rotary Action Group, $30 (ESRAG, www.esrag.org), poster registration fee ($245), and poster printing ($90).

Topics of interest: One Health, Planetary Health, antimicrobial resistance, climate change and pesticides use, xenobiotics, shellfish epigenomes and microbiomes, mangrove conservation, shrimp diseases, contaminants in shrimp and mangrove sediment, metals (including cesium-137), health effects of endocrine disrupting chemicals (EDCs) in shrimp and other shellfish, micro- and nano-plastics, glyphosate and other pesticides (insecticide, fungicide, herbicides) in shellfish.

Application submission deadline to FUCOBI: January 30, 2026. Students interested in applying for a travel award should send the following information as soon as possible to fucobi@gmail.com:

curriculum vitae, abstract (250 words) and poster (40in x 40in).

Students should not submit abstracts into the NSA portal until they are approved by the Scientific Committee of the FUCOBI Foundation. They will select awardees based on ratings of the quality of the research.

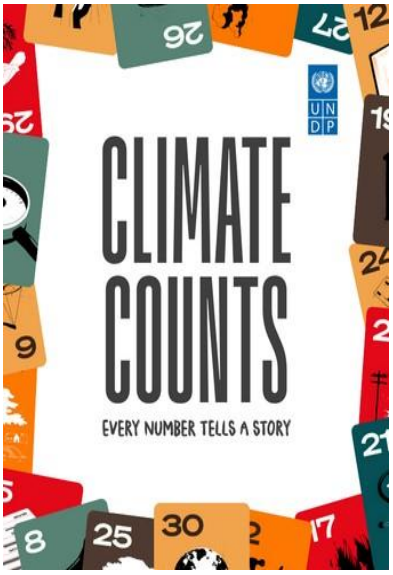
I look forward to receiving your abstracts.

Dr. Acacia Alcivar-Warren

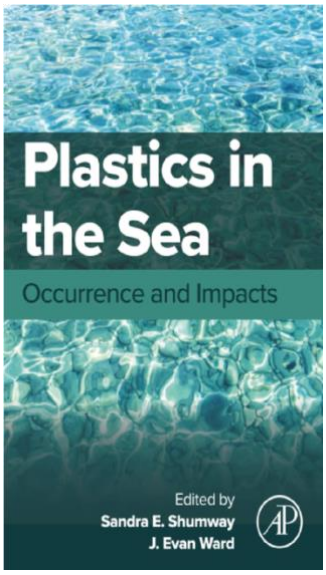
acacia.warren.rcs@gmail.com

RECOMMENDED READING

UNDP Climate Counts Pocketbook



Plastics in the Sea: Occurrence and Impacts



ESRAG NEWS

JOIN ESRAG!

Membership Information

The Environmental Sustainability Rotary Action Group (ESRAG) assists Rotary clubs, districts and multi-districts in:

- Planning and implementing impactful and environmentally sustainable service projects
- Educating and building awareness
- Building global and local networks
- Inspiring sustainable living/action
- Supporting Rotary International's environmental initiatives.

ESRAG inspires and empowers the Rotary family with extensive expertise, networks, education, and best practices to help implement sustainable and impactful environmental projects, informed by our six themes: Biodiversity, Climate Change, Food Systems, Pollution, Circular Economy, and Sustainable Living.

February Webinars and Events

ESRAG is planning four webinars in February, designed to inform, empower, and energise ESRAG members and Rotarians committed to protecting our planet.

Global Grant – A Case Study – Project Restore Hudson Valley on **February 4th** at 9:00 a.m. - 10:00 a.m. EST/2:00 p.m. - 3:00 p.m. UTC

Sustainable Shellfisheries on **February 11th** at 9:00 a.m. - 10:00 a.m. EST/2:00 p.m. - 3:00 p.m. UTC

Nature's Blueprint: Regenerating Communities, Businesses and Rotary on **February 18th** at 9:00 a.m. - 10:00 a.m. EST/2:00 p.m. - 3:00 p.m. UTC

How RI's Technical Cadre Program Strengthens Environmental Projects on **February 25th** at 9:00 a.m. - 10:00 a.m. EST/2:00 p.m. - 3:00 p.m. UTC

Your participation strengthens our collective impact.

All ESRAG members, Rotarians, and Rotaractors are warmly invited to join us.

Volunteers Wanted!

ESRAG is seeking dedicated and dependable volunteers to support the production of our newsletter and the organisation and delivery of our webinar programme. These roles are essential to maintaining the quality, professionalism, and reach of ESRAG's communications and events.

Newsletter volunteers will assist with content editing and coordination to ensure timely and well-structured publications. Webinar volunteers will be responsible for practical and operational tasks, including designing and circulating promotional flyers, creating and managing registration links, and providing live administrative support during webinars. This includes managing the virtual platform, admitting participants to the meeting, and ensuring sessions run smoothly and professionally.

These positions offer valuable hands-on experience in communications, digital engagement, and event management, while providing the opportunity to work closely with the ESRAG team and contribute meaningfully to its objectives. Volunteers are expected to be organised, professional, and responsive, with the ability to follow instructions and meet deadlines. Those interested in supporting ESRAG in these capacities are encouraged to contact the team via **newsletter@esrag.org** to express their interest.

Follow us & join the conversation.

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Email us at:

newsletter@esrag.org