

Service Above Self Series



Empowering Women and Girls through Education

Edited by Quentin Wodon

August 2021

In partnership with

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This report is a product of the Rotary Fellowship for Global Development. It is co-sponsored by the Basic Education and Literacy Rotary Action Group, the Rotary Action Group for Maternal and Child Health, and the Rotary Action Group on Refugees, Forced Displacement, and Migration.

Most case study chapters in this report were prepared by the authors for the report, with many thanks to them. Three chapters are reproduced from The Rotary magazine. One chapter is adapted from the annual report of Rotary India Literacy Mission. The article on the investment case for educating girls is reproduced from a World Bank report.

The production of the report was inspired by the emphasis placed on empowering girls by Shekhar Mehta, President of Rotary International for 2021-22. Advice from members of Shekhar's Task Force on empowering girls, and in particular Elizabeth Usovicz, is gratefully acknowledged.

Carolyn Johnson from the Basic Education and Literacy Rotary Action Group and John Townsend from the Rotary Action Group for Maternal and Child Health also provided valuable advice, as did Mary Jo Jean-Francois, Area of Focus Manager for Basic Education and Literacy at Rotary International.

Suggested citation:

Wodon, Q. Editor. 2021. *Empowering Women and Girls through Education - Service above Self Series*. Washington, DC: Rotary Fellowship for Global Development.

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In addition to their classroom studies, students at the PACE Learning Center, an all-girls school near Kolkata, India, participate in afterschool sports and arts programs. The PACE Learning Center is one of the case studies featured in this report.

FOREWORD

Message from Shekhar Mehta, President of Rotary International
for 2021-22, at the start of his Presidency in July 2021.

My Dear Changemakers,

I wish each of you and your families a great Rotary New Year! Together, let us make it the best year of our lives, by making it a year to grow more and do more. Let this be a year of changemakers, and let us begin with our membership.

That is precisely why the Each One, Bring One initiative is so important. During this year, I urge you to dream of new ways in which Rotary can expand its reach into your community and therefore the world. If each member introduces one person to Rotary, our membership can increase to 1.3 million by July 2022. So, let's just do it!

Imagine the change we, as Rotary members, can make when there are so many more of us! More people to care for others, more people to Serve to Change Lives. Think of the impact we can have through grow more, do more. More members will enable us to embark on bigger and bolder service projects. And each of us can also continue to serve in our own personal ways, responding to needs in our communities.

The beauty of Rotary is that service means different things to different people around the world. One element, however, that we can incorporate into all of our service initiatives is empowering girls. Unfortunately, even in this day

and age, girls and young women face disproportionate challenges all over the world. We have the power to lead the charge for gender equality. Empowering girls and young women to have greater access to education, better healthcare, more employment, and equality in all walks of life should be embedded in every Rotary project we launch. Girls are future leaders, so we must ensure that we help them shape their future.

These are challenging times, and I compliment each of your efforts in grappling with Covid-19. No challenge is too big for Rotarians. The bigger the challenge, the more passionate the Rotarian. Look at what we can do when we take on a colossal challenge such as eradicating polio. Look at the millions of lives we improve by strengthening access to water, sanitation, and hygiene. Look at what we do every year to promote peace in places where it seems unimaginable. Our basic education and literacy programmes have nation-building impact.

This year, let us challenge ourselves to do more such projects and programmes that have national reach and impact. This year, let us Serve to Change Lives.

*Shekhar Mehta
President 2021-22
Rotary International*

ABSTRACT

Service through volunteering and projects is at the heart of what Rotary is all about. The motto “Service above Self” captures the ideal that Rotarians strive towards. This report is about the role that Rotarians can play in empowering women and girls through education. Educating girls should be a priority not only for country governments, but also for civil society organizations such as Rotary. Education is one of seven areas of focus of the Rotary Foundation of Rotary International, yet the share of funding allocated to education remains relatively small today. For the Rotary year 2021-22, Rotary International President Shekhar Mehta has emphasized empowering girls as a priority, including through education. The goal of this report is to both inform and inspire Rotarians globally, so that through local or international projects, they can contribute to empowering women and girls through education. The report makes the case for empowering girls (and women) through education, provides guidance on good practices for projects, and showcases examples of more than a dozen Rotary-supported projects mostly related to education, but including also training and entrepreneurship for women.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Quentin Wodon

Introduction

Service work through volunteering and projects is at the heart of what Rotary is all about. Membership surveys suggest that the main reason why members join and remain in Rotary is the opportunity to serve. Fellowship and networking are also very important, but service is first¹. The motto “Service above Self” captures the ideal that Rotarians strive towards.

At the core of Rotary is the local club. Rotarians come in many shapes and forms, beliefs, and passions. There is amazing diversity in the types of service work they engage in. This is a strength as members choose to contribute to the causes they are most passionate about.

Most of the service work that Rotarians engage in is done locally without funding from the Rotary Foundation (TRF) of Rotary International. But for larger projects that do benefit from TRF funding, the focus is on seven areas: (1) promoting peace; (2) fighting disease; (3) providing clean water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH); (4) saving mothers and children; (5) supporting education; (6) growing local economies; and (7) protecting the environment (this area was added recently).

As argued in Chapter 2 of this report, educating girls should be a priority for country governments and civil society organizations, including Rotary. The fact that education is one of the seven areas of focus of TRF is a major opportunity to invest in girls’ education. However, currently, this is an area where Rotarians tend to be comparatively less active, at

least in terms of global grants that benefit from co-funding from TRF (for information about Rotary International and its Foundation as well as club foundations, see Box 1).

Figure 1 and Table 1 provide data from the latest available annual report of TRF on funding for global grants as well as the number of grants implemented by area. Education ranks relatively low on the list (7.5% of the number of grants and 7.4% of funding). Those shares have not changed fundamentally over the last few years. If one were to include other types of funding provided by TRF, especially for polio eradication (\$151.8 million including PolioPlus partner grants), the share of funding allocated to education would be even lower². Similarly, of 20 noteworthy global grants identified by TRF for its centennial, only one was for education³.

Table 1: TRF Global Grants by Area of Focus
Data for the Rotary year 2019-20

Area of focus	Global grants	Funding (\$ million)
Fighting disease	729	59.4
Providing WASH	189	15.3
Growing local economies	170	11.9
Saving mothers and children	101	8.9
Supporting education	101	7.8
Promoting peace	57	2.7
Supporting the environment	-	-
Total	1,347	106.0

Source: TRF annual report 2019-20.

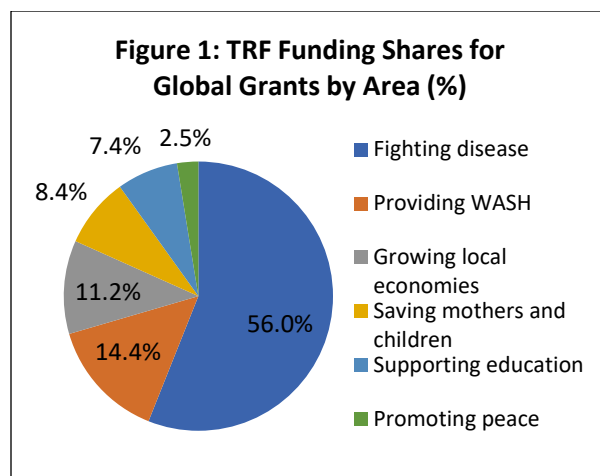
Note: Because the area of focus related to the environment is new, no data are available yet.

¹ Wodon, D. et al. 2014. *Membership in Service Clubs: Rotary’s Experience*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

² Education projects may play a larger role in grants received by Districts from TRF, but funding for District grants is lower. In 2019-20, \$33.6 million were allocated to 490 Rotary districts (which typically

allocate those funds to clubs). In 2019-20, TRF also allocated \$8.4 million to 339 disaster response grants, in part to respond to the pandemic.

³ The grant was for the Guatemala Literacy project for which a case study is included in this report.



Source: TRF annual report 2019-20.

For the Rotary year 2021-22, Rotary International President Shekhar Mehta is emphasizing empowering girls as a priority. While empowering girls is a broad theme and is not restricted to education, education is clearly central to that theme, especially in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic (see Box 2).

The objective of this report is twofold: (1) to make the case for empowering girls (and women) through education and provide guidance on good practices; and (2) to showcase examples of Rotary-supported projects that have done so. This overview follows the structure of the report, considering first the investment case for girls' education and good practices, and next case studies of projects.

Box 1: Charitable Giving by Rotarians: The Importance of Club Foundations⁴

Rotary International is a nonprofit service organization with 1.2 million members worldwide in more than 35,000 clubs. The organization was founded by Paul Harris in Chicago in 1905. While clubs exist today in most countries of the world, North America and the Caribbean remains the region with the largest number of Rotarians. This is also where Rotary International and TRF have their headquarters. TRF is a well-regarded charitable organization with a top rating from Charity Navigator.

While the work of TRF is relatively well known, the work of close to 4,000 local Rotary foundations at the level of clubs and districts in the United States is less well known, even at times in their own local communities. But this work is no less important. The estimates of charitable giving by the Rotary Foundation in Table 1 pertain to global grants, but substantial charitable giving is also done by Rotarians outside of global grants, individually or through their club (and district) foundations.

Together, local Rotary foundations in the United States may have an assets base close to that of TRF. According to information from the Internal Revenue Service, the assets of TRF were in 2016 slightly above one billion dollar. But at that time, based on an analysis of IRS data, local Rotary foundations filing forms 990 with the IRS had close to \$775 million in assets. This did not include assets owned by 1,854 local Rotary foundations that did not file a form 990 because they had gross annual income/receipts of less than \$50,000. Overall, charitable donations by local Rotary foundations in the United States may therefore exceed those of TRF given that for club foundations without large endowments, most annual receipts from donations and fundraisers tend to be distributed within the same year or the next year.

The hope is that this report will be useful not only for Rotarians preparing global grants, but also for many others working on local or international projects with their club without funding from TRF.

⁴ See Wodon, Q. 2017. *Rotary Foundations and Grants 1: An Introduction for Applicants and Rotarians*. Washington, DC: Rotarian Economist Short Books. For a directory of local Rotary foundations in the United

States, see Wodon, Q. 2017. *Rotary Foundations and Grants 2: Directory by State for the United States*. Washington, DC: Rotarian Economist Short Books.

Box 2: Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Children, Including on Girls' Education

In November 2020, UNICEF released a report⁵ with estimates of a range of impacts of the crisis on children. At the time of the report, these estimates including the following:

- In part due to fear of infection, in one-third of countries, coverage for health services such as routine vaccinations, outpatient care for childhood infectious diseases, and maternal health services dropped by at least 10percent.
- There is a 40 per cent decline in the coverage of nutrition services for women and children.
- Some 265 million children are missing out on school meals globally and 65 countries reported a decrease in home visits by social workers.
- More than 250 million children under 5 could miss the life-protecting benefits of vitamin A supplementation programs.
- Some 572 million students are affected by school closures (33 percent of all students).
- An estimated 2 million additional child deaths and 200,000 additional stillbirths could occur over a 12-month period with severe interruptions to services and rising malnutrition.
- An additional 6 to 7 million children under the age of 5 will suffer from wasting or acute malnutrition, translating into more than 10,000 additional child deaths per month.

In March 2021, UNESCO estimated that 11 million girls may not return to school after the COVID-19 pandemic⁶. Adolescent girls are most at risk in low and lower-income countries. UNESCO also notes that among 29 countries surveyed, education budgets have been cut in two-thirds of low- and lower-middle-income since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Part I: Investment Case, Framework for Action, and Scaling Up

Investing in girls' education is more important than ever due to the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. Part I of this report consists of three chapters. The first chapter makes the case for why investing girls' education matters. The second provides a simple framework for thinking on how to invest in girls' education. The third discusses the issue of scaling up.

Chapter 2 provides an investment case for girls' education based on work by the author at the World Bank. Despite progress over the last two decades, girls still have on average lower levels of educational attainment than boys in many low income countries, especially at the secondary and tertiary levels. Furthermore, for boys and girls alike, learning levels tend to be very low⁷. Poor educational outcomes for girls have a wide range of negative impacts throughout the girls' lives⁸. Chapter 2 documents some of these impacts. It makes it clear that investing in girls' education should be a priority not only for countries, but also for individuals, communities, and civil society organizations including Rotary clubs.

How should we invest in girls' education? Constraints to girls' education relate not only to what happens or does not happen in classrooms, but also to conditions faced by households and communities, and to broader regional or national factors. Multiple interventions are likely to be needed to improve schooling and learning. In order to consider options, Chapter 3 provides a simple framework on the conditions necessary for girls (and boys) to go to school and learn: (1) schools must have the capacity to welcome students and also be

⁵ UNICEF. 2020. *Averting a Lost COVID Generation: A Six-point Plan to Respond, Recover and Reimagine a Post-pandemic World for Every Child*. New York: UNICEF.

⁶ UNESCO. 2021. *#HerEducationOurFuture: Keeping girls in the picture during and after the COVID-19 crisis - The latest facts on gender equality in education*. Paris: UNESCO.

⁷ World Bank. 2018. *World Development Report 2018: Learning to Realize Education's Promise*. Washington, DC: The World Bank.

⁸ Wodon, Q., et al. 2018. *Missed Opportunities: The High Cost of Not Educating Girls*. The Cost of Not Educating Girls Notes Series, Washington, DC: The World Bank.

accessible; (2) going to school must be safe; (3) schools must be affordable considering the out-of-pocket, opportunity, and potential social costs of sending children to school; (4) children must be able to learn while in school – this refers not only to traditional academic subjects but to socio-emotional and life skills; and (5) pregnant and married girls should be allowed to remain in school, and second chance programs should be available for those not able to return to school. The framework can hopefully be useful when considering projects in a community. General guidance, for example on how to conduct a community needs assessment, is also provided.

Chapter 4 considers how to scale up interventions. A few years ago, I wrote a small report arguing that Rotary needed to implement more projects that relied on partnerships, were innovative, and were evaluated properly⁹.

- Partnerships help to implement larger projects and benefit from the expertise of organizations that are among the best in their field. Partnerships may also generate visibility and media coverage for Rotary (polio is a good example)¹⁰.
- Innovation is also important to achieve impact by discovering better ways to serve communities. Without innovation, the contribution of TRF, while substantial, is still only a drop in the large development assistance bucket¹¹. If Rotary were to experiment and innovate more, successful pilot projects could be scaled up by other organizations with deeper pockets.
- Finally, without monitoring and evaluation, innovation may not help because impact on the ground must be demonstrated at the pilot stage for an intervention to be scaled

up. Innovation and evaluation are like twins: they work best as a pair. Monitoring and evaluation are also needed for Rotary to learn from both successes and mistakes.

None of those ideas were novel and many others both within and outside Rotary made the same arguments. The good news is that TRF moved in that direction with the launch of its Program of Scale (see Box 3) and the approval of a first \$2 million grant in 2021.

Box 3: Rotary's Program of Scale

To accomplish Rotary's mission, learn, and create positive change, TRF created Programs of Scale to support Rotary member-led, evidence-based programs that have demonstrated success. Programs of Scale supports longer-term, high-impact programs [... that are]¹²: (1) Evidence-based interventions that must have already demonstrated success in affecting change; (2) Locally-relevant to the needs, priorities, and institutional structures of the setting and intended beneficiaries; (3) Ready to grow by having the right stakeholders and systems engaged to bring the intended benefits to new settings, such as a different community or group of people; (4) Implemented according to a strong program logic and have integrated monitoring, evaluation, and collaborative learning systems; and (5) Guided by Rotary members in partnership with others, leveraging the unique strengths of Rotary.

Because the ideas behind the Program of Scale have relevance for smaller grants as well, Chapter 4 reproduces the story that ran in Rotary magazine in May 2021 about the

⁹ Wodon, Q. 2015. *Increasing the Impact of Rotary: Partnerships, Innovation, and Evaluation*. Mimeo. The report was reproduced (without pictures) as Wodon, Q. 2017. *Increasing the Impact of Rotary: Partnerships, Innovation, and Evaluation*. Washington, DC: Rotarian Economist Short Books.

¹⁰ Partnerships require efforts for collaborations to work. But if partnerships deliver scale, expertise, or visibility, the gains outweigh the costs.

¹¹ TRF does have a respectable size, but in comparison to development funding, it is small. TRF annual giving typically represents less than 0.5 percent of what the World Bank provides annually for development.

¹² See <https://my.rotary.org/en/take-action/apply-grants/programs-scale-grants>.

program, its rationale, and the winning proposal for fighting malaria in Zambia.

Part II: Examples of Rotary-supported Projects

While the first part of this report provides an investment case for girls' education, a simple framework for identifying bidding constraints, and lessons from Rotary's program of scale, the second part of the report is devoted to case studies of Rotary-supported projects for empowering women and girls (and often boys as well) through education. At least one of the three essential ingredients mentioned in the previous section (partnerships, innovation, and evaluation) is present in all these Rotary-supported projects. Sometimes, all three elements are present. But the "magic"

ingredient for successful projects is often the personal dedication of those involved (as an example of a recent partnership between Rotary clubs and districts and an international organization, see the agreement with the Organization of American States in Box 4).

In order to both inform and inspire Rotarians to engage in projects promoting girls' education, and more generally women's empowerment, more than a dozen case studies are provided in this report. Some of the case studies document the achievements of fairly large projects. Others are about smaller initiatives. But all the projects have been in one way or another impactful for the communities served. Together, the various case studies hopefully show what can be achieved through dedication and teamwork.

Box 4: Partnership between the Organization of American States and Rotary Clubs and Districts

On June 4, 2022 a cooperation agreement was signed between the Organization of American States (OAS), Rotary District 4250 (covering Guatemala, Honduras, and Belize), Rotary District 7610 (Northern Virginia in the United States), and the Metro Bethesda Rotary club. Central America and Mexico have been affected by the displacement of close to one million people due to increasing levels of violence and insecurity, including forced recruitment into gangs, organized crime, and extortion, as well as persistent economic and structural problems the region leading to high poverty rates, low levels of economic development, exclusion, inequality, and lack of opportunities, especially for youth. Recurring natural disasters have further damaged livelihoods and increased vulnerability among the populations.

In 2017, the governments of Belize, Costa Rica, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, and Panama agreed through the San Pedro Sula Declaration to set up a Comprehensive Regional Protection and Solutions Framework (MIRPS) to find solutions to the forced displacement and refugee crisis. In 2019, El Salvador also joined MIRPS. MIRPS encourages involvement and support of the private sector. The purpose of the Agreement signed between OAS, Rotary Districts, and the Metro Bethesda Rotary club is to establish a framework for initiatives contributing to the insertion of returned Guatemalan unaccompanied migrant youth as well as other activities related to the implementation of MIRPS. The OAS has expertise on forced displacement, migration, and social inclusion. Rotary Districts and clubs have offered assistance to vulnerable groups, including job opportunities for returning migrant youth. The partnership will be implemented through a set of initiatives/projects/ and activities subject to the availability of funds and may include: the design and formulation of joint project proposals; information gathering visits to help in proposal preparation; the design and implementation of joint projects in selected areas for returnees, refugees and asylum seekers; the preparation of joint publications; the calling of joint meetings on a regional or global basis to raise awareness of the issues; the organization of fund raising activities based on the priorities of the agreement; and participation in various events.

Source: Information provided by Richard Carson.

Chapter 5 tells the story of Razia's Ray of Hope Foundation, which provides young women and girls in Afghanistan with safe, nurturing, and inspiring educational environments so that they have access to brighter futures. In the current context of the country where the rights of women and girls are at risk, the Chapter, which was written before the fall of the government in August 2021, indeed provides a message of hope.

Chapter 6 is about the Best Future School founded by Venas Chirimwami Julius with the support of the community members in the Navikale Refugee Settlement in Uganda. Julius was a member of the Nakivale Rotaract Club. In 2019, he helped built the school from scratch. Rick Olson, a Rotarian from Prior Lake Rotary Club, Minnesota, visited the school in 2020 and has been helping out ever since through a non-profit he created in the United States.

Chapter 7 is about the Piyali Learning Center which provides education for more than 200 girls in India. Each student receives a state-approved academic education, books and supplies, uniforms, breakfast and lunch, hygiene kits, medical care, and life skills training. PACE Universal is a 501c(3) charitable in the United States that supports the Center. Deepa Willingham established PACE and the learning center to provide a better future for girls. This story originally appeared in the October 2020 issue of Rotary magazine.

Chapter 8 is about Train for Change, a Honduran Teacher Empowerment project that began in 2017 through a partnership between the Rotary e-Club of San Diego Global and the El Progreso Rotary Club. With a Vocational Training Team Grant, the project focused on building skills, strategies, and leadership in teachers, most of whom are women. The project is continuing to expand through a recently approved grant in Santa Barbara, Honduras.

Chapter 9 is about the Guatemala Literacy Project, one of the largest grassroots, multi-club, multi-district projects in Rotary. More than 600 clubs and 80 districts have been working together since 1997 to improve education for underserved students. In that

time, nearly 225,500 students have been served through four sustainable programs that are tested and proven to work. In 2017, then-Rotary International President Ian Riseley called the GLP "the gold standard of Rotary projects" for its sustainability and impact.

Chapter 10 is reproduced from the Rotary magazine. In a seemingly affluent Chicago suburb, poverty stops many adult students from affording classes to advance their skillsets. Local Rotary clubs are helping pay for school. This story is about empowerment and adult education, with programs that have especially benefitted women.

Chapter 11 is about Remember Niger Coalition, a non-profit dedicated to expanding quality educational opportunities in Niger. Through a holistic approach and by working side-by-side with Nigerien partners, Remember Niger Coalition is aiming to ensure that more children receive a high-quality education.

Chapter 12 is about EDU-Girls, an innovative program in South Asia. Edu-GIRLS focuses on the education of impoverished girls. The non-profit customizes its program delivery to overcome constraints faced by such girls due to economic hardships, gender biases, pressure to get married young, and demands on their time at home.

Chapter 13 is about a joint project between Rotary and the Global Partnership for Education (GPE). In Turkana County, Northern Kenya, where cases of early marriage, girls dropping out of school due in part to social norms, and lack of access to quality education are an unsettling norm, girls are 1.3 times more likely not to go back to school against their male counterparts. The GPE-Elimika Project consists of a three-year comprehensive pilot to improve the quality of the education being provided.

Chapter 14 is about *Manos a la Obra*, an economic and community development project in poor areas of Guatemala that enables women (and some men) to benefit from vocational training so that they can learn a trade.

Chapter 15 is about the Rotary India Literacy Mission (RILM), and in particular a comprehensive program called T-E-A-C-H (T-

Teacher Support; E-E-Learning; A-Adult Literacy; C-Child Development; H-Happy School). TEACH is implemented in partnership with the Government, corporate entities, national/state specific NGOs and international organizations. The chapter provides excerpts from RILM's 2019-20 annual report.

Chapter 16 is also about India, a country where professional careers in medicine, engineering, and similar fields can lift rural children from generations of poverty, but require knowledge of English. This is what led a group of Rotarians to create a project to empower school children through English language training in rural Karnataka in India.

Finally, chapter 17 is another case study of women's (and men's) empowerment through work. In Oaxaca, Mexico, a group of (mostly)

women started to make chocolate, mole, and mushrooms to sell in the local market. Their initiative represents an opportunity to develop a genuinely sustainable social enterprise for wealth creation and sharing. The project benefits from support from Rotary Peace Fellows.

Conclusion

Rotarians see themselves as people of action. The goal of this report is not only to inform, but also to inspire Rotarians globally in taking steps to ensure that all girls benefit from an education of quality. Through local or international projects, Rotarians can contribute to empowering women and girls. Hopefully this report helps illustrating how this can be done.

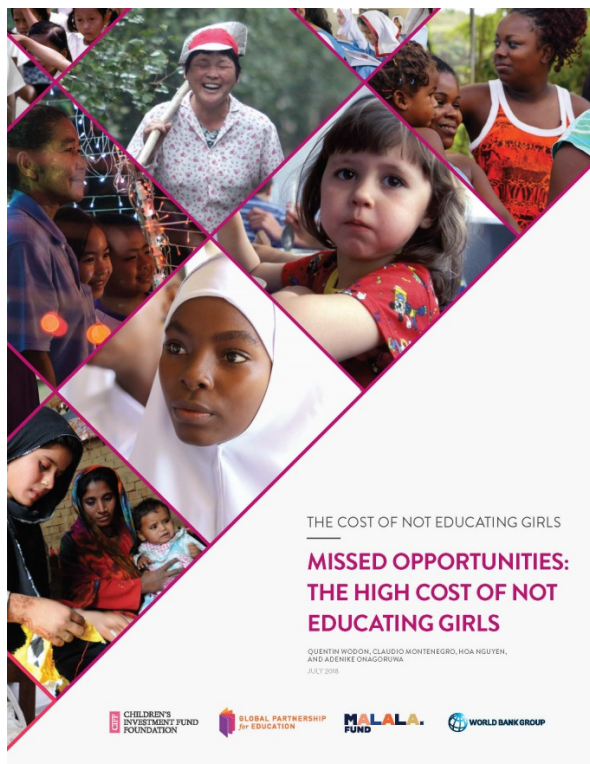
PART I: INVESTMENT CASE, FRAMEWORK FOR ACTION, AND SCALING UP

CHAPTER 2

EDUCATING GIRLS: AN INVESTMENT CASE

Quentin Wodon, Claudio Montenegro, Hoa Nguyen, and Adenike Onagoruwa

In 2018, the study *Missed Opportunities: The High Cost of Not Educating Girls* was published by the World Bank¹³. The findings of the study remain relevant today. The study's executive summary is reproduced below with minor edits. Click on the link above to download the study.



Visual: Cover page for the study.

Key Results

Globally, nine in ten girls complete their primary education, but only three in four complete their lower secondary education. In low income countries, despite progress over the last two decades, less than two thirds of girls complete their primary education today, and

only one in three completes lower secondary school. In addition, as documented by the World Development Report 2018, girls just like boys suffer the consequences of a global learning crisis by which too many children in the developing world do not acquire the foundational skills that a functional education system ought to ensure. Girls tend to outperform boys in reading, but they score lower in mathematics and science tests in many countries. While there is no systematic data on socio-emotional skills across countries, education systems that fail to deliver these basic skills are also likely to underperform in nurturing important socio-emotional skills.

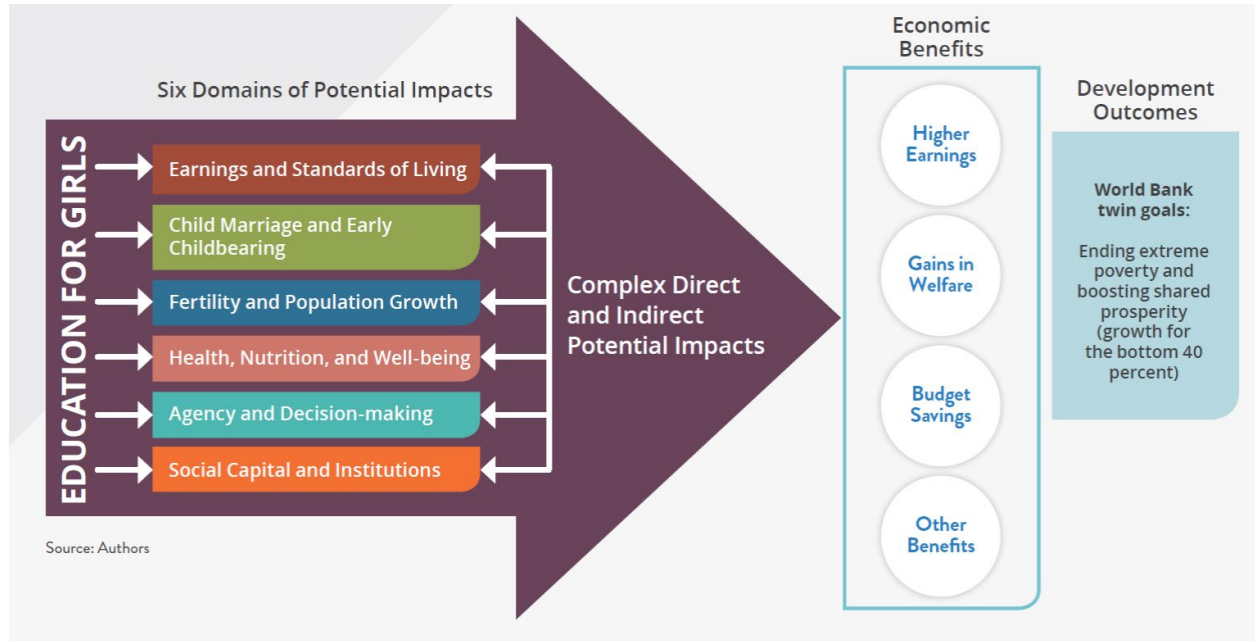
More needs to be done to improve educational opportunities for girls, as well as learning while in school. To make the case for such investments, given data constraints, the focus of this study is on the potential impacts and cost of low educational attainment for girls as opposed to lack of learning.

Specifically, the study documents associations of low educational attainment for girls with six domains of interest: (1) earnings and standards of living; (2) child marriage and early childbearing; (3) fertility and population growth; (4) health, nutrition, and well-being; (5) agency and decision-making; and (6) social capital and institutions. Within those domains, more than 50 different outcomes are considered. For most outcomes, estimates of correlations are obtained using household survey data for more than 100 countries, both developed and developing. For some outcomes that may be more relevant for developing countries, results are based on analysis for a core set of 18 developing countries.

¹³ Wodon, Q., et al. 2018. *Missed Opportunities: The High Cost of Not Educating Girls*. The Cost of Not

Educating Girls Notes Series, Washington, DC: The World Bank.

Figure 1: Framework for the Investment Case



Source: Authors.

Box 1: Contribution and Limits of the Study

This note summarizes findings from a research program at the World Bank to document the potential negative impacts of low educational attainment for girls, and some of the related economic costs. The fact that investing in girls is essential for development is not news. The contribution of this study is to illustrate the potential negative effects of not investing in girls in a slightly more comprehensive way, with more recent survey data, and for a larger set of countries than done so far. By pulling together evidence on the associations between educational attainment for girls and multiple socio-economic domains in many countries, the analysis can help foster greater mobilization towards girls' education.

As with any empirical work of this nature, estimates of potential impacts and costs are subject to two important caveats. First, estimates from available observational data do not permit establishing causal relationships. Thus, when referring to potential 'impacts', the analysis should be taken as only suggestive of what might be achieved with higher educational attainment for girls and women and related policy changes. What is measured are associations between educational attainment and other development outcomes. For several of the outcomes considered, whether these associations reflect causal relationships can be corroborated by evidence from existing empirical studies that are able to establish causality more credibly. But for other outcomes, fewer such studies are available. Second, simulations of the benefits of increasing girls' education obtained from the estimates of potential impacts do not account for broader effects in the economy arising from an expansion in the number of better educated girls or women. The economics literature suggests that these effects can be sizable, particularly lowering the overall returns to schooling in the labor market. Thus, estimates only provide orders of magnitude of potential impacts and costs, not precise values of ultimate potential impacts taking into account general equilibrium effects.

The goal is that these associations can illustrate the wide-ranging potential impacts and cost of not educating girls, and in this way foster greater policy mobilization towards ensuring that all girls complete secondary school and acquire the foundational skills needed to thrive in the labor market and live more fulfilling lives. While the study pulls together in one place results on potential impacts and costs in many domains, as noted in Box 1, the analysis only provides orders of magnitude of potential impacts and costs, nor precise nor definitive values. In order to materialize the potential economic benefits from expanding girls' education, countries need to make the necessary investments in the inputs required to improve both access and learning, and adopt the policy reforms that can propel the economy to grow and generate jobs for a more educated workforce.

Key Findings across Domains

- **Education matters for all children, but especially for girls in some areas:** Many of the potential impacts of education on development outcomes apply to both boys and girls. When a child does not finish secondary school, or does not learn what is needed to function productively as an adult, potential costs are high for boys and girls alike in terms of lost earnings. But not educating girls is especially costly in part because of the relationships between educational attainment, child marriage, and early childbearing, and the risks that they entail for young mothers and their children. In addition, occupational segregation by gender between paid and unpaid (housework and care) work, and between types of employment and sectors, also leads to especially high potential costs for girls. Although this is not discussed in this study, it is also worth mentioning that girls and women in contexts of fragility and violence are especially vulnerable to the consequences of low educational attainment.

- **While primary schooling is necessary, it is not sufficient:** For many indicators, having a primary education does not make a large difference versus having no education at all. The gains associated with educational attainment tend to be substantial only with a secondary education. This is likely in part a reflection of the failure of schools to deliver learning of basic skills in the early grades, thus hindering the progression of girls to higher educational attainment. But the implication is that while primary schooling lays the foundation for future learning, it is essential to enable girls to pursue their education through the secondary level and to ensure that learning occurs in order to reap the benefits from more education.

Key Findings by Domain

- **Earnings and standards of living:** Women with primary education (partial or completed) earn only 14 to 19 percent more than those with no education at all. By contrast, women with secondary education may expect to make almost twice as much, and women with tertiary education almost three times as much as those with no education. Secondary and tertiary education are also associated with higher labor force participation, and especially full-time work. Finally, women with secondary and tertiary education report higher standards of living compared to those with primary education or lower. For example, women with a secondary education are less likely to state that they do not have enough money to buy food versus women with primary education or less.
- **Child marriage and early childbearing:** Each additional year of secondary education is associated with lower risks of marrying as a child and having a child before age 18 by six percentage points on average. If universal secondary education

were achieved, child marriage could be virtually eliminated, and the prevalence of early childbearing could be reduced by up to three fourths since early childbearing goes hand in hand with child marriage. This also means that when assessing benefits from educating girls at the secondary level, we should include benefits from reducing child marriage and early childbearing. By contrast, primary education is not associated with lower risks of child marriage and early childbearing in most countries.

- **Fertility and population growth:** Universal secondary education could reduce total fertility by a third in 18 developing countries considered for the analysis. About two thirds of this potential impact could come from education itself, and one third from ending child marriage. Universal secondary education could also lead to an increase in modern contraceptive use of a fourth from the base. If girls were better educated, and if child marriage were to be drastically reduced thanks to universal secondary education, population growth could be reduced substantially, especially in countries that have not yet achieved the demographic transition. This could generate a large demographic dividend. Again, the potential impact of primary education in all these areas is much smaller.
- **Health, nutrition, and well-being:** Universal secondary education could increase women's knowledge of HIV/AIDS and their ability to make decisions about their own healthcare by one fifth nationally. Women's psychological well-being could also improve and the risk of intimate partner violence could decrease. In countries where potential impacts are statistically significant, universal secondary education for mothers could reduce stunting rates for their children by more than a third. Reductions in under-five

mortality of about one fifth versus baseline rates could also be achieved in those countries. With the important exception of under-five mortality, the gains from universal primary education in the area of child health appear once again to be limited.

- **Agency and decision-making:** Achieving universal secondary education could increase by one tenth women's reported ability to make decisions within the household, from baseline values. Women with secondary education report lower satisfaction rates with basic services than women with no education, which may reflect a more realistic assessment of their quality. Finally, having a secondary education is associated with higher birth registration in some countries, although results are not robust across countries. As with the other indicators, while some benefits could result from universal primary education, they would be smaller.
- **Social capital and institutions:** Achieving universal secondary education could enable more women to display altruistic behaviors such as volunteering, donating to charity, and helping strangers, with a change of up to one tenth from baseline values. A secondary education is also associated with a higher likelihood for women of reporting being able to rely on friends when in need and it could affect how women perceive their countries' institutions, although in this specific area more work would be needed to confirm the robustness of those relationships. For this set of indicators, the potential gains from primary versus no education at all cannot be measured given data limitations.

Potential Economic Costs Associated with Selected Domains

- **Lost human capital wealth due to lower earnings for women:** Lower earnings for

women in adulthood due to low educational attainment lead to losses in human capital wealth defined as the present value of the future earnings of the labor force. The loss in human capital wealth incurred today because many adult women did not benefit in their youth from universal secondary education (defined as 12 years of schooling) is estimated to range between US\$ 15 trillion to US\$ 30 trillion globally. The higher estimate is based on current benefits from higher educational attainment. The lower estimate considers a scenario in which the educational expansion could reduce by as much as one half the benefits from higher educational attainment. This could happen if the economy fails to grow at a rate that can generate sufficient jobs to absorb the more educated women entering the labor market, and/or if the educational expansion were to negatively affect education quality due to the lack of adequate investments in inputs required to ensure learning. It should be noted that increases in labor force participation of women out of the labor force are not included in these estimates – only earnings gains for women already working are considered in the analysis. In proportion of baseline human capital wealth values, the losses from low educational attainment are larger in countries with low educational attainment for girls.

- **Lost human capital wealth due to lower earnings for stunted children:** Stunting in early childhood leads to losses in earnings in adult life. Stunting rates could be reduced with universal secondary education for mothers, which could generate gains in human capital wealth. The magnitude of those gains is likely to be smaller than the direct effect on women's earnings, but it is still likely to be substantial.

- **Welfare effects from population growth:** Low educational attainment for girls is associated with higher rates of fertility and population growth. This in turn reduces levels of human capital wealth per person, especially in low income countries that have high population growth. The gains in human capital per capita that could result from lower population growth with universal secondary education could be initially smaller than those estimated for women's earnings, at more than US\$ 3 trillion in the first year after achieving universal secondary education. These gains could however cumulate over time, rivalling within a decade the losses from women's lower earnings due to low levels of educational attainment.

Summary of Key Findings

The Summary Table below provides the main estimated potential impacts by domain, together with an indication of country coverage for the estimations by distinguishing estimates based on global data from those based on a core set of 18 developing countries (DCs). Potential impacts are summarized by showing gains from a secondary education in comparison to no education at all. In most cases, potential impacts are estimated for the completion of secondary school, but in some cases the potential impacts are for both partial and completed secondary school combined. In virtually all cases, estimates of the potential impacts of low educational attainment for girls – or equivalently of gains associated with higher educational attainment as captured by secondary education, are large. As documented in more detailed in the study, most gains are associated with secondary as opposed to primary education. It should again be emphasized that what is measured is associations, not necessarily causal impacts. In addition, for some indicators, especially in the case of agency and decision-making, and social capital and institutions, the data often pertain to reported behaviors and perceptions, thereby making interpretation more tentative.

Finally, the Table also summarizes the two potential impacts for which a monetary cost is provided. The potential costs run in the tens of trillions of dollars. The estimates are only orders

of magnitude since they depend on models and assumptions, but they demonstrate that the potential cost of not educating girls is very high for the girls and societies overall.

Summary Table: Selected Potential Benefits from Ensuring a Secondary Education for Girls

Domain	Coverage	Estimated Potential impacts
Earnings and standards of living	Global	Doubling of expected earnings in adulthood
	Global	Increase in labor force participation by one tenth
	Global	Gain in perceptions of standards of living of up to one tenth
Child marriage and early childbearing	DCs	Virtual elimination of child marriage
	DCs	Reduction in early childbearing by up to three fourths
Fertility and population growth	DCs	Reduction in total fertility by one third
	DCs	Increase in contraceptive use by one fourth
	Global	Reduction in global population growth by 0.3 point
Health, nutrition and well-being	DCs	Increase in women's knowledge of HIV/AIDS by one fifth
	DCs	Increase in women's decision-making ability for health by one fifth
	Global	Increase in women's psychological well-being
	DCs	Reduction in under-five mortality rate by up a fifth
	DCs	Reduction in under-five stunting rate by more than a third
Agency and decision-making	DCs	Women more likely to exercise decision-making in the household
	Global	Women possibly more likely to better assess quality of basic services
	DCs	Increase in likelihood of birth registration by one fifth
Social capital and institutions	Global	Women more likely to report altruistic behaviors
	Global	Women more likely to report ability to rely on friends when in need
	Global	Women possibly more likely to better assess institutions and leaders
Potential economic costs	Global	Loss in human capital wealth from US\$ 15 trillion to US\$ 30 trillion
	Global	Benefit from reduced population growth of more than US\$ 3 trillion in first year after universal secondary completion, cumulative over time

Source: Authors.

Note: DCs = Developing countries.

To conclude, low educational attainment for girls can have pervasive potential impacts ranging from lower earnings and standards of living to lower psychological well-being and agency for girls and women. Possibly in part because educational investments at the secondary level provide an option value to continue investing to acquire further skills later in life, the benefits from education are much larger at the secondary than at the primary level.

Countries need to ensure that all girls can go to school and acquire foundational cognitive and socio-emotional skills while in school. While the public and private cost of providing universal quality primary and secondary education for all girls could be far from negligible, the potential returns to this investment could be much larger. Increasing investments in girls' education makes economic sense. It is also the right thing to do.

CHAPTER 3

EDUCATING GIRLS: FRAMEWORK AND GOOD PRACTICES FOR PROJECTS

Quentin Wodon

Multiple factors may lead to low educational attainment and lack of learning for girls. Constraints relate not only to what happens or does not happen in classrooms, but also to conditions faced by households and communities, and to broader regional or national factors. In order to help Rotarians think about the type of projects they could undertake, this chapter provides a simple framework on the constraints to girls' education as well as guidance for global grants provided by Rotary International.

Background: The Investment Case¹⁴

For those who have not been able to read Chapter 2, a quick summary of that chapter may be useful as background for this chapter. Despite progress over the last two decades, girls still have on average lower levels of educational attainment than boys in many countries, especially at the secondary and tertiary levels. As documented by the World Development Report 2018¹⁵, when it comes to learning, while girls tend to outperform boys in reading, they score lower in math and science tests in many countries. Together with occupational segregation and social norms that discourage women to take full advantage of labor market opportunities, this leads to large gaps in earnings between men and women¹⁶.

In addition, low educational attainment for girls has potential negative impacts on a wide range of other development outcomes not only for the girls themselves, but also for their

children, families, communities, and societies (see Box 1 for estimates of selected impacts).

Low educational attainment affects girls' life trajectories in many ways. Girls dropping out of school early are more likely to marry or have children early, before they may be physically and emotionally ready to become wives and mothers. This may affect their own health. It may also affect that of their children. For example, children of mothers younger than 18 face higher risks of dying by age five and being malnourished. They may also do poorly in school. Other risks for girls and women associated with a lack of education include intimate partner violence and a lack of decision-making ability in the household.

Through lower expected earnings in adulthood and higher fertility over their lifetime, a lack of education for girls leads to higher rates of poverty. This is due to both losses in incomes and higher basic needs from larger household sizes. Data on subjective perceptions also suggest that higher educational attainment is associated with perceptions of higher well-being among women. Low educational attainment for girls may also weaken solidarity in communities and reduce women's participation in society. Lack of education is associated with a lower proclivity to altruistic behaviors, and it curtails women's voice and agency in the household, at work and in institutions. Fundamentally, a lack of education disempowers women and girls in ways that deprive them of their basic rights.

At the level of countries, a lack of education for girls can lead to substantial losses in national wealth. Human capital wealth is the

¹⁴ This introduction is adapted from Wodon, Q. et al. 2018. *Missed Opportunities: The High Cost of Not Investing in Girls*. Washington, DC: The World Bank.

¹⁵ World Bank. 2018. *World Development Report 2018: Learning to Realize Education's Promise*. Washington, DC: The World Bank.

¹⁶ Wodon, Q., et al. 2020. *How Large Is the Gender Dividend? Measuring Selected Impacts and Costs of Gender Inequality*. Washington, DC: The World Bank.

largest component of the changing wealth of nations, ahead of natural capital (such as oil, minerals, and land) and produced capital (such as factories or infrastructure). By reducing earnings, low educational attainment for girls leads to losses in human capital wealth and thereby in the assets base that enables countries to generate future income.

Low educational attainment for girls is also associated with higher population growth given its potential impact on fertility rates. This may prevent some countries from ushering the

transition that could generate the demographic dividend. Finally, low educational attainment for girls may lead to less inclusive policy-making and a lower emphasis on public investments in the social sectors. Overall, the message is clear: educating girls is not only the right thing to do. It also makes economic and strategic sense for countries to fulfill their development potential.

Countries should make it a priority to invest in girls' education. Rotarians should do the same. This chapter provides a simple framework to help Rotarians think about how to do this.

Box 1: Key Facts on the Importance of Educating Girls¹⁷

- Globally, nine in ten girls complete their primary education, but only three in four complete their lower secondary education. In low income countries, less than two thirds of girls complete their primary education, and only one in three completes lower secondary school.
- Girls who complete secondary school are better equipped to become healthier, more prosperous adults, with smaller families and children who are less at risk of illness and death and more likely to succeed. Further, girls with a secondary education are more likely to participate in the labor force as adults and be decision makers at home and in their communities.
- Earnings and standards of living: If every girl worldwide received 12 years of quality education, lifetime earnings for women could increase by \$15 trillion to \$30 trillion globally. Women with primary education only earn 14 percent to 19 percent more than women with no education at all, but those with secondary education earn almost twice as much.
- Child marriage and early childbearing: Universal secondary education for girls could virtually end child marriage (entering in a union before the age of 18), and holds the potential to reduce by 75 percent the risk of early childbearing for women (having a first child before the age of 18).
- Fertility and population growth: Universal secondary education for girls could contribute to reduced total fertility rates by one third in high fertility countries, and to increased contraceptive use by one fourth in those countries. It may also contribute to a reduction in global population growth by 0.3 percentage point. The reduction in population growth could generate \$3 trillion in benefits per year, cumulative over time.
- Health, nutrition, and well-being: In developing countries, universal secondary education for girls could increase women's knowledge of HIV/AIDS and empower them to make decisions about their own healthcare. It could also improve their sense of psychological well-being, reduce the risk of intimate partner violence, and reduce under-five mortality and malnutrition among their children.
- Agency and decision-making: Universal secondary education for girls could contribute to increasing by one tenth women's decision-making within their household, and by one fifth the likelihood of birth registration for their children.
- Social capital and institutions: Universal secondary education for girls could enable them to engage as adults in more altruistic behaviors and increase their ability to rely on friends when in need.

¹⁷ See Wodon et al. (2018), op. cit.

Constraints to Girls' Education: A Framework

How should we invest in girls' education? This chapter provides a simple framework for thinking about ways to improve girls' education as well as guidance from the literature on what may work – and may not.

Multiple factors may lead to low educational attainment and lack of learning for girls. Constraints relate not only to what happens or does not happen in classrooms, but also to conditions faced by households and communities, and to broader regional or national factors. Technically, low enrollment rates may be the result of some children never going to school, or children dropping out of school. When considering gender, it is important to note that some constraints affect boys and girls alike, while other constraints affect one gender more than the other.

- *Constraints to schooling and learning common for boys and girls:* Many constraints faced by girls to go to school and learn while in school are not fundamentally different from the constraints faced by boys. Poor learning in school, lack of secondary schools nearby, and out-of-pocket as well as opportunity costs of schooling lead not only girls but also boys to drop out of school. As another example, when a child has a disability, this may affect the likelihood of enrollment whether the child is a boy or a girl. Therefore many interventions to improve educational outcomes for girls may apply as well to boys.
- *Additional constraints specific to girls:* While many constraints are common to boys and girls, girls however face particularly difficult odds to remain and learn in school in some countries due to entrenched patterns of gender inequality. These patterns lead to gaps in educational attainment that emerge in

adolescence and that are related to social norms and gender-based violence. In some cases, simply going to school may not be safe for adolescent girls due to sexual harassment. In many low income countries, girls face social pressures to marry early and are at risk of an early pregnancy, which leads to girls dropping out of school prematurely. In these countries, it is extremely difficult for girls to remain in school when pregnant or married. Furthermore, girls often have more responsibilities at home than boys for cooking or taking care of siblings, which again may contribute to fewer opportunities for them. These issues need to be tackled with specific interventions if girls are to be given the same opportunities as boys¹⁸.

Given multiple constraints at different levels of schooling, multiple interventions are likely to be needed to improve enrollment and completion rates for girls as well as learning. Should the priority be to reduce the distance to schools by building new schools in remote areas or reducing travel time through modes of transportation? Should scholarships or transfers – whether conditional or unconditional, be provided for boys, girls, or both? When considering gender issues, should more female teachers or principals be hired to improve learning and serve as role models for girls? Or should the priority be, say, to ensure that separate toilet blocks are available for girls? Should more focus be placed on understanding and changing cultural practices and social norms in communities? Or should pedagogical interventions targeting girls be implemented?

The right choice between these and other potential interventions depends on a country's or even a specific community's context. But in order to consider options, Figure 1 provides a simple conceptual framework that identifies five sequential steps required for

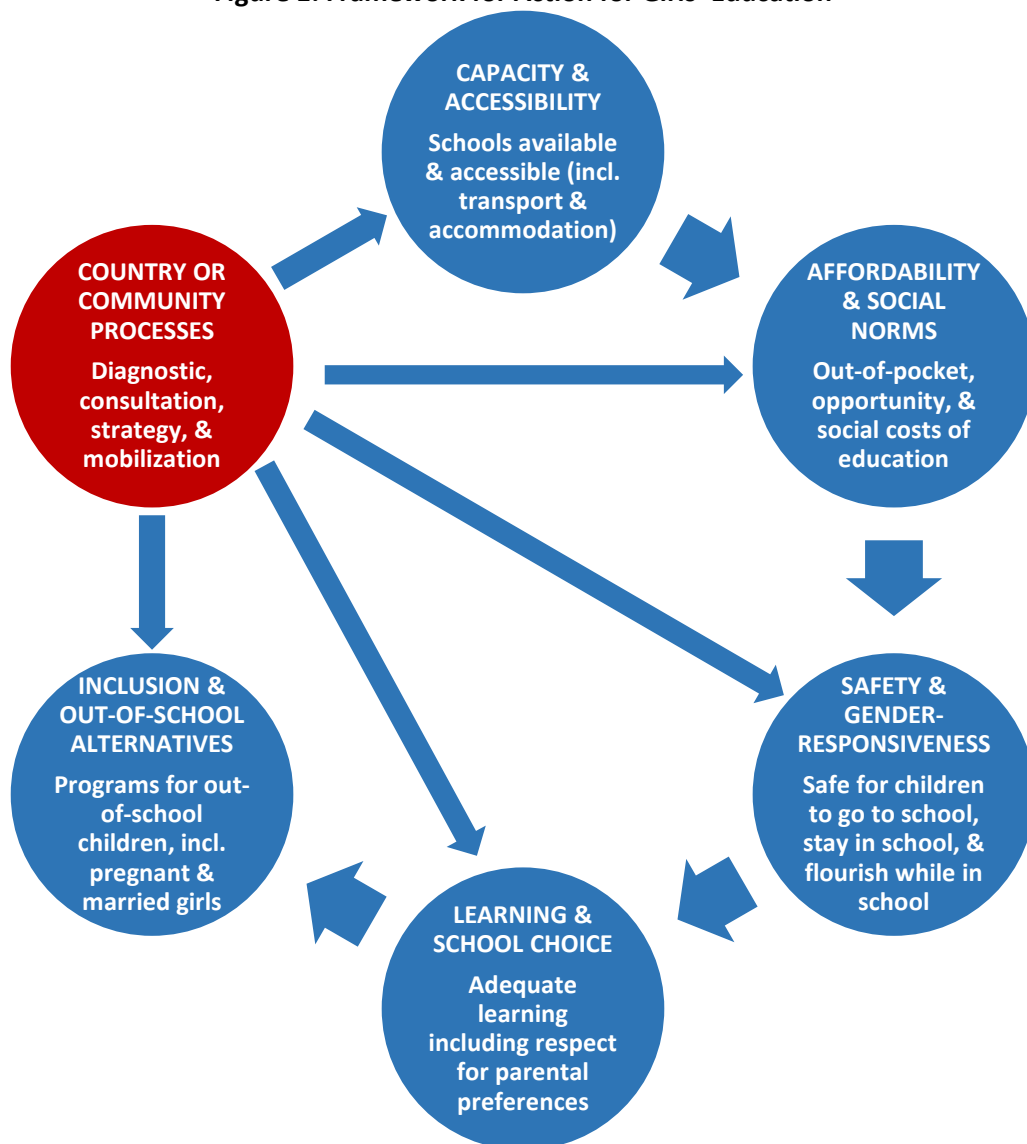
¹⁸ Often, in low income settings, disadvantages associated with these and other compounding factors

are more consequential for girls given parental priorities given to boys.

children to go to school and learn: (1) schools must have the capacity to welcome students and also be accessible; (2) going to school must be safe; (3) schools must be affordable considering the out-of-pocket, opportunity, and potential social costs of sending children to school; (4) children must be able to learn while in school – this refers not only to traditional academic subjects but to socio-emotional and life skills (in addition parental preferences for what children should learn in school must also be taken into account); and finally (5) pregnant and married

girls should be allowed to remain in school, and second chance programs should be available for children whose circumstances do not allow them to be in school or led them to drop out of school. In addition, Figure 1 also highlights the fact that adequate country or sub-national processes are required to inform interventions related to these five steps (e.g., preparing diagnostics, organizing consultations, adopting a strategy, and ensuring mobilization at the level of a country or community).

Figure 1: Framework for Action for Girls' Education



Source: Author.

It is important to note that while Rotarians may implement projects related to all five sets of constraints identified in Figure 1, not all projects are eligible for co-funding from the Rotary Foundation of Rotary International (TRF). In July 2021, TRF made available policy

statements for each of its areas of focus that list eligible and ineligible activities for funding (see Box 2 for the policy statement on the Basic Education and Literacy area of focus). Global grant requests must comply with the relevant policy statement for their area.

Box 2: Rotary Policy Statement for the Basic Education and Literacy Area of Focus

Rotary supports activities and training to improve education for all children, and literacy for children and adults. The Rotary Foundation of Rotary International enables Rotarians to ensure that all people have sustainable access to basic education and literacy by: (1) Supporting programs that strengthen a community's ability to provide basic education and literacy to all; (2) Increasing adult literacy; (3) Working to reduce gender disparity in education; and (4) Funding graduate scholarships for career-minded professionals related to basic education and literacy.

Parameters for Eligibility: TRF considers the following activities to be within the scope of the basic education and literacy area of focus: (1) Improving academic outcomes at the early childhood, primary, and secondary levels, in collaboration with local school officials; (2) Educating adults in reading, writing, and numeracy skills; (3) Providing professional development opportunities for teachers with a qualified trainer in curriculum implementation, effective instructional methods, or student assessments; (4) Strengthening basic educational outcomes by providing improved learning materials and facilities supported by enhanced curricula and new professional development for teachers; (5) Improving academic support for before- and after-school programs by training tutors and teachers, conducting student assessments, and providing equipment if needed; (6) Supporting educators' ability to help students with physical or developmental disabilities achieve greater academic outcomes by providing professional development opportunities for teachers and staff, as well as basic educational materials and enhanced facilities if needed.

TRF considers the following activities to be outside the scope of the basic education and literacy area of focus and not eligible for global grant funding: (1) Projects that consist exclusively of infrastructure, vehicles, or equipment purchases, and training on their use; (2) Projects that provide salaries, tuition, or school supplies without the means for the community or non-Rotary entity to maintain these in the future; (3) Projects that purchase only extracurricular or play materials or playgrounds; (4) Projects that focus on school feeding or providing infrastructure and equipment for school feeding programs; (5) Projects the community is not able to sustain after grant funding ends; (6) Projects that benefit only one cohort of students, such as tutoring or after-school programs that will function only during the life of the grant.

Elements of Successful Humanitarian Projects and Vocational Training Teams: Basic education and literacy global grants are: (1) Sustainable — Communities can address their basic education and literacy needs after the Rotary club or district completes its work; (2) Measurable — Sponsors need to set targets and identify measurements to track project outcomes. Standard measures are listed in the Global Grant Monitoring and Evaluation Plan Supplement; (3) Community driven — Projects meet the needs identified by the host community.

Elements of Successful Scholarships: Global grants support graduate-level scholarships for professionals interested in pursuing careers in basic education and literacy. TRF considers the following when evaluating global grant scholarship applications: (1) The applicant's previous work experience in the field of basic education and literacy; (2) The academic program's alignment with basic education and literacy. Examples include education, literacy, curriculum development, special education, and school administration; and (3) The applicant's future career plans as they relate to basic education and literacy.

Assessing Needs and Ensuring Sustainability¹⁹

In order to assess where to intervene to promote girls' education along the simple framework outline in Figure 1, a community needs assessment is required. Several documents from TRF provide guidance on how to conduct such a community assessment. General guidance is provided in a document entitled "Basic Education and Literacy Guidelines for Global Grant Funding."

As noted in that document, a community assessment is useful to: (1) Gather perspectives from a broad cross-section of the community, including women, young people, and professionals; (2) Allow community members to identify the needs they perceive as most critical; (3) Ask community participants how they can contribute to the proposed project; and (4) Work with community members to identify long-term goals and expected project outcomes. The community assessment results need to be incorporated into the grant.

The results should describe among others: (i) How the community's resources will be used to implement project activities; (ii) How the project will meet the needs identified by the community; (iii) The long-term goals or project outcomes and how they will be met (for example, through training and public awareness campaigns); and (iv) How the community will sustain the project after the grant has ended.

The guidance document also notes that when conducting a basic education and literacy community assessment, it is important to: (i) Invite teachers, students, school staff, directors/principals, parents, and community members to be part of the discussion; (ii) Help school staff and community members identify and articulate their educational needs and goals; (iii) Understand the goals of local schools and

explain to the community how Rotarians can help facilitate the achievement of those goals; (iv) Find out if other schools or education programs in the community or nearby communities are addressing similar educational needs; (v) Donate more than materials or equipment by looking for ways to build educators' skills and knowledge or build a new program to improve educational outcomes; and finally (v) Involve the Ministry of Education or local education officials whenever possible.

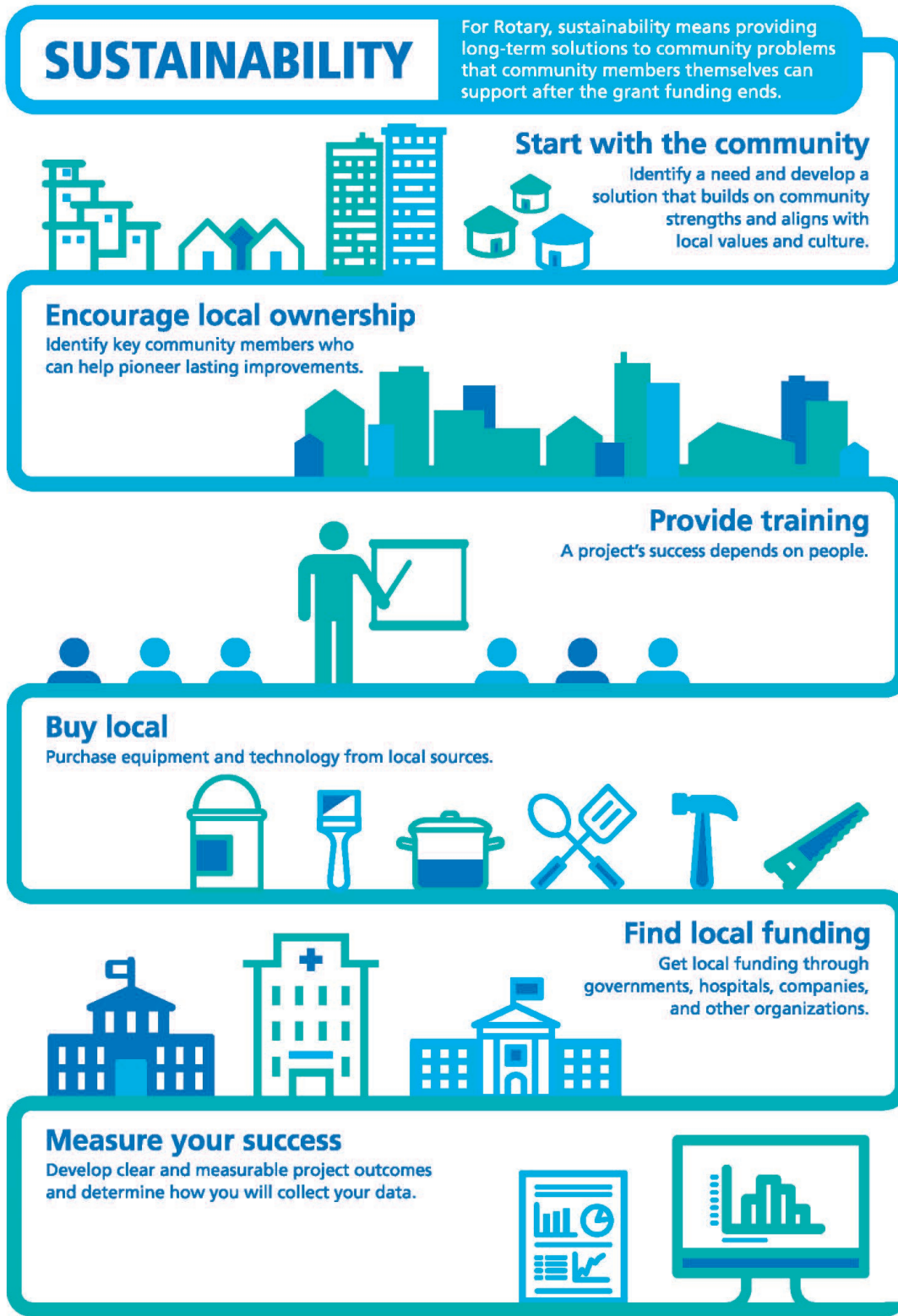
More detailed suggestions on how to conduct community assessments are provided in another document from TRF entitled "Community Assessment Tools: A Resource for Rotary Projects." That document explains how different techniques for conducting community assessments work. These techniques include community meetings, asset inventories, surveys, interviews, focus groups, and community mappings. As the document rightly emphasizes, *"assessments are the foundation of every humanitarian project... They provide a framework for identifying solutions ... [and] also build valuable relationships... Developing trust ... can take time... Conducting an assessment is critical to creating that trust, and to fostering community ownership and sustainability."*

Of particular importance when implementing a project is the issue of sustainability, defined by TRF as "providing long-term solutions to community needs that the beneficiaries can maintain after grant funding ends". As shown in Figure 2, six steps can be suggested to ensure sustainability. The first step is to start by identifying the needs of the community, as already discussed. The other five steps relate to encouraging local ownership, providing training, buying local, finding local funding, and finally measuring success.

¹⁹ This section is adapted from two documents: (1) Rotary Foundation of Rotary International. 2018. *Basic Education and Literacy Guidelines for Global Grant Funding*. Evanston, IL: Rotary Foundation of Rotary International; and (2) Rotary Foundation of

Rotary International. Undated. *Community Assessment Tools: A Resource for Rotary Projects*. Evanston, IL: Rotary Foundation of Rotary International. Both documents are available on the website of Rotary International.

Figure 2: Six Steps Towards Ensuring Sustainability



Source: Rotary Foundation of Rotary International.

The Importance of Improving Learning²⁰

While an emphasis is often placed on social norms when discussing constraints to girls' education, the issue of lack of learning while in school should not be underestimated as a reason for girls to drop out of school. This issue has been exacerbated by the COVID-19 crisis, as can be illustrated with estimations of the potential impact of the crisis on learning poverty.

A child is considered to be learning poor if s/he cannot read and understand an age-appropriate text by age 10. Estimates of learning poverty are based on two main data sources: (1) the performance of students who are in school on international student assessments; and (2) the share of students who are out of schools and therefore assumed to be learning-poor. The pandemic is likely to have affected both components of the measure.

When the World Bank adopted the learning poverty measure in partnership with UN agencies, the target was to reduce learning poverty in half by 2030. That target is now unlikely to be achieved. The magnitude of the

impact of the crisis on learning poverty will not be known for some time, but simulations suggest it may be large. Three such simulations were implemented in a recent paper²¹. In all three scenarios, schools are assumed to be closed for 70 percent of the school year. The differences between the three scenarios related to the ability of education systems to implement mitigation measures to reduce learning losses.

The estimates are provided in Table 1. Globally, under the pessimistic scenario, learning poverty may increase from 48.0 percent to 57.6 percent, an increase of 9.6 percentage points. Under the intermediate scenario, the increase is at 6.4 points (3.2 points under the optimistic scenario). The large increase in learning poverty in some of these simulations relates in part to lack of access to distance learning media, especially for children who live in poverty and/or in rural areas. Without options to learn at home during school closures, disadvantaged children have fallen behind further. The COVID-19 crisis has magnified existing educational inequalities between countries, and also within countries.

Table 1: Potential Effect of the COVID-19 Crisis on Learning Poverty

Regions and Income Groups	Baseline	Post COVID-19		
		Optimistic	Intermediate	Pessimistic
Regions				
East Asia & Pacific	19.8	21.9	24.6	27.6
Europe & Central Asia	8.8	9.5	10.7	12.1
Latin America & Caribbean	50.8	53.9	58.0	62.3
Middle East & North Africa	58.7	60.6	63.1	65.8
North America	7.6	7.5	8.3	9.2
South Asia	58.2	64.6	70.0	74.7
Sub-Saharan Africa	86.7	88.3	89.8	91.3
Income levels				
Low Income Countries	89.5	90.9	91.6	92.4
Lower-Middle Income Countries	55.8	60.6	65.1	69.4
Upper-Middle Income Countries	30.3	32.0	34.0	36.1
High Income Countries	9.1	9.9	11.5	13.5
World	48.0	51.2	54.4	57.6

Source: Azevedo (2020).

²⁰ This section follows Wodon. Q. 2021. *Global Catholic Education Report 2021: Learning Poverty, Education Pluralism, and the Right to Education*. Washington, DC: Global Catholic Education, OIEC, IFCU, OMASEC, and UMNEC-WUCT.

²¹ Azevedo, J. P. 2020. *Learning Poverty: Measures and Simulations*. Policy Research Working Paper No. 9446. Washington, DC: The World Bank.

Beyond the immediate response to the crisis, there is a clear need to “build back better”, including to ensure that conditions are right for girls’ education. A range of programs and policies are needed to improve educational outcomes. In December 2020, the World Bank published a blueprint to outline how this could be done²². The vision is ‘learning with joy, purpose, and rigor for everyone, everywhere. Priorities are identified for five inter-related pillars (Figure 3):

1. Learners are prepared and motivated to learn—with a stronger emphasis on whole-child development and support to learning continuity beyond the school.
2. Teachers are effective and valued—and ready to take on an increasingly complex role of facilitators of learning at and beyond the school with use of education technology.
3. Learning resources, including curricula, are diverse and high-quality—to support good pedagogical practices and personalized learning.
4. Schools are safe and inclusive spaces—with a whole-and-beyond-the-school approach to prevent and address violence and leave no child behind.
5. Education systems are well-managed—with school leaders who spur more effective pedagogy and a competent educational bureaucracy adept at using technology, data, and evidence.

For each pillar, specific policy actions are recommended based on an in-depth review of the literature. For example, to keep learners engaged, four key actions are suggested: (i) increase the provision of early childhood development services; (ii) remove demand-side barriers; (iii) put conditions in place for learning to occur with joy, rigor, and purpose; and (iv) bolster the role of the family and communities.

Similar actions are outlined for the other four pillars in the framework. Or to support

teachers, education systems should focus on the following four actions: (i) Establish the teaching profession as a meritocratic, socially valued career; (ii) Expand engagement in pre-service training; (iii) Invest in at-scale in-service professional development; and (iv) Give teachers tools and techniques for effective teaching²³. Similarly, policy actions are suggested for the other three pillars.

In addition to policy actions in each of the five pillars, five core principles to guide reform efforts are also suggested: (1) Pursue systemic reform supported by political commitment to learning for all children; (2) Focus on equity and inclusion through a progressive path toward universalism; (3) Focus on results and use evidence to keep improving; (4) Ensure financial commitment commensurate with what is needed to provide basic services to all; and finally (5) Invest wisely in technology..

While the World Bank blueprint is meant to inform policy makers at the sub-national, national, or international level, it also has relevance for smaller scale projects implemented by civil society organizations such as Rotary clubs and districts. In particular, another useful (and shorter) report recently published by the World Bank provides recommendations for cost-effective approaches to improve learning, which apply to smaller as well as larger projects. These recommendations were made by the Global Education Evidence Advisory Panel convened by the World Bank and the UK Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office and hosted by the Building Evidence in Education Global Group. The mandate of the panel is to provide succinct, usable, and policy-focused recommendations to support decision-making on education investments in low- and middle-income countries.

²² World Bank. 2020k. *Realizing the Future of Learning: From Learning Poverty to Learning for Everyone, Everywhere*. Washington, DC: The World Bank.

²³ On how to improve teaching, see also Evans and Popova (2016) and Beteille and Evans (2018).

Figure 3: World Bank Framework for Realizing the Future of Learning

(a) Five inter-related pillars



(b) Five Core Principles to Guide Reform Efforts



Source: World Bank (2020).

In its first report, in order to provide guidance on what to do, and what not to do, the panel classified interventions that have been tried to improve learning in low and middle income countries into four classes²⁴. These classes with examples of interventions that fall into each of them are as follows:

- Great buys: the most cost-effective interventions, like providing families with information on education returns and quality;
- Good buys: other highly cost-effective interventions, such as: structured pedagogy combined with teacher training and learning materials; programs to teach children at the right skill level; and pre-primary education;
- Promising low-evidence interventions: programs that appear to improve learning cost-effectively, but where more rigorous evidence is needed, like providing early stimulation to young children and involving communities in school management;
- Bad buys: interventions that (as typically implemented) have been shown to be either not effective or not cost-effective;

these include investing in computer hardware or other inputs without making complementary changes (like teacher training or better school management) to use those inputs effectively.

Conclusion

As mentioned in the introduction, multiple factors may lead to low educational attainment and lack of learning for girls. In order to help Rotarians think about the type of projects they could undertake, this chapter has provided a simple framework on the constraints to girls' education as well as guidance for global grants provided by Rotary International. Selected recommendations from recent World Bank reports which tend to emphasize low and middle income countries (but may also have relevance for high income countries) have been shared.

The guidance provided in this chapter is necessarily limited. But Rotarians interested in programs to improve educational outcomes for girls' (and boys) are encouraged to consult the evidence available from international experience on what constitutes good practices.

²⁴ World Bank. 2020. *Cost-effective Approaches to Improve Global Learning: What does recent evidence tell us are "Smart Buys"*

for improving learning in low- and middle-income countries? Washington, DC: The World Bank.

CHAPTER 4

SCALING UP: LESSONS FROM ROTARY'S PROGRAM OF SCALE

Diana Schoberg and Vanessa Glavinskas
Illustrations by Gwen Keraval

By building on a proven concept, Rotary's Program of Scale (\$2 million) grants help achieve larger impacts on the ground. Because the ideas behind the Program of Scale have relevance for smaller grants as well, this Chapter reproduces a story that ran in Rotary magazine in May 2021 about the program, its rationale, and the winning proposal for fighting malaria in Zambia. For information on the Program of Scale, go to <https://my.rotary.org/en/take-action/apply-grants/programs-scale-grants>.

As part of the polio eradication campaign, Rotary and its partners have trained millions of health care workers and volunteers and vaccinated nearly 3 billion children. Polio cases have dropped 99.9 percent since Rotary took up the cause in 1985, and the number of countries with endemic wild polio has dropped to two: Afghanistan and Pakistan.

"What you've done with polio is remarkable," says Larry Cooley, a well-known international development consultant. "But it shouldn't be a study of one."

Rotary is stepping up to that challenge through Programs of Scale, a new Foundation program awarding grants to Rotary clubs or districts with evidence-based interventions that are ready to scale. The first such grant, announced in February, will provide \$2 million to Partners for a Malaria-Free Zambia, a member-led program focused on fighting malaria. Co-funders World Vision U.S. and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation are also involved in malaria mitigation efforts and will each contribute \$2 million to the program. This \$6 million program will train and equip 2,500 community health workers in Zambia to

support the government's work to eradicate malaria in that country.

The concept of Programs of Scale dates back to 2013, when global grants, introduced through The Rotary Foundation's updated grant model, expanded the scope and size of Rotary projects with the aim of increasing their impact. After a 2016 evaluation of the grant model, the Foundation Trustees requested that a new grant type be developed that would fund "scalable" grant projects in the areas of focus — meaning projects that were planned in a way that allowed them to be expanded, built upon, and further developed.

The Programs of Scale grants are the result: a way to fund large-scale, high-impact projects that can attract partners while tapping into Rotary members' capacity and enthusiasm. "While global grants and district grants have been very successful, we want to give opportunities for projects with even more impact," says Foundation Trustee Sangkoo Yun, who was on the Programs of Scale selection committee. "We want to better quantify that impact and share what we learn with all Rotarians engaged in international service."

So What, in this Context, Does "Scale" Mean?

"It's a simple question with a complicated answer," says Cooley, who is an expert on the topic. One way to think about it, he says, is that you are looking for a solution that matches the scale of the problem. If you define the problem in local terms, then the scale of the solution is local. If you define it as international, as with polio, then the scale of the solution is international.

“Problems have denominators,” he says. “If somebody said, we helped distribute blankets to 10,000 villagers, I’d say, congratulations, but how many villagers needed blankets? If the answer is that it was 10,000 out of 15,000, I’d say, holy mackerel, that’s great. If it’s 10,000 out of 10 million, I’d say that’s still great, but that’s not the right strategy.”

Clubs can think about scale when-ever they’re developing a project, not only when they are aiming to apply for a Programs of Scale grant. Cooley suggests that rather than focusing on projects, Rotarians focus on problems. “Take on a problem and [don’t] let go until it’s solved, or materially improved, whether at the community or national level,” he says.

When thinking about scaling up, Tusubira notes, you can take a successful project and add new aspects to it to deepen the impact. Or you can expand the project to reach more people, as is the case in Zambia, where Rotarians are building on successful global grants and other programs that funded training for community health workers in other parts of the country. The challenge, he says, is figuring out which are the unique environmental factors that are responsible for the success of a project in order to be sure you are scaling up the right things.

The Foundation received more than 70 proposals from around the world for the first Programs of Scale grant in March 2020. After a rigorous review process, including proposal evaluations, three finalists were recommended.

“I was bowled over by the quality and strength of the applications, and by the expertise and experience of Rotarians on the ground and the connections they have,” says selection committee member Judith Diment. “What I really liked about [the malaria project in Zambia] was the partnerships and the collaboration they had established,” adds Diment, who is also the dean of the Rotary Representative Network and a longtime polio

advocacy adviser. “It had many parallels with the polio program.”



Rotary’s success in the polio eradication program provides valuable lessons for clubs — not only those interested in applying for a Programs of Scale grant, but those planning any project.

One lesson, as Diment notes, is about the power of partnerships. The Global Polio Eradication Initiative is one of the most ambitious public-private health partnerships in history. “Collaborating with partners gives you a much bigger opportunity for large-scale change,” she says.

A second lesson is the need for large-scale programs to grow out of Rotarians’ interests. Before polio was adopted by Rotary on a global scale, individual clubs were already tackling the disease through Rotary-funded projects, including a 1979 project to administer oral polio vaccine in the Philippines. Programs of Scale, Tusubira notes, will give Rotary members the chance to come up with ideas they can demonstrate will have a sustainable impact and bring partners to the table.

Another lesson is about deploying Rotary’s power of networks. Rotarians around the world have used their connections — local, national, and international — to draw attention to and garner support for polio eradication.

Cooley, the development consultant, says he's fascinated by Rotary's potential to scale up projects. "These are the most prominently placed people in a community, all of whom are trying to do something good," he says. "Look at Rotary as an asset. There are lots of problems Rotary could make a big difference on."

The new Programs of Scale grants will give Rotarians a way to do it.

Rotary Members Expand on a Proven Concept in Zambia

Bill Feldt recalls the first conversation he had about solving Zambia's malaria problem at scale. It was in 2012, after he worked on his first matching grant for malaria with Mwangala Muyendekwa, a physician and a member of the Rotary Club of Kalulushi, Zambia. It was a \$57,000 project distributing 6,500 bed nets in Zambia's Copperbelt province. "By the time they were distributing those nets, Mwangala emailed me and said, 'This is good, but not sufficient. We've got to go to scale,'" recalls Feldt, a member of the Rotary Club of Federal Way in Washington state.

Now Muyendekwa's vision is coming to fruition in a big way as the work, which has continued since then, expands. With this first \$2 million Programs of Scale grant, Partners for a Malaria-Free Zambia (as the initiative is now known) is seeking to help reduce the incidence of malaria over time by 90 percent in 10 heavily affected districts in the Central and Muchinga provinces.

They'll do this by training 2,500 community health workers, as well as other health facility staff and officials who will work with them. The community health workers, equipped with the necessary medicine and supplies, will respond to malaria cases, work to prevent transmission, and provide other needed health care interventions — which will in turn reduce the burden on clinics.

Malaria, a preventable disease caused by parasites spread through the bites of

infected mosquitoes, continues to be one of Zambia's leading causes of illness and death, contributing significantly to infant and maternal mortality.

The grant proposal included pledges from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and World Vision U.S. to match Rotary's \$2 million grant, for a total of \$6 million for the initiative. "Rotary's credibility is so amazing," Feldt says. "We've got a lot to offer. Let's demonstrate that."

Box 1: Why was Partners for a Malaria-Free Zambia awarded the first \$2 million grant?

A number of factors contributed to the success of this proposal. Among them are that the program:

- Is expanding on an innovation that is backed by clear evidence and has worked in the past.
- Has a high likelihood of working on a larger scale.
- Is logically organized and grounded in experience.
- Has partners that have the experience, trust, and strong respect needed to successfully scale up the program with Rotary.
- Has co-funders — the Gates Foundation and World Vision U.S. — with the ability and desire to support the program with Rotary.
- Is set up for sustainability and aligned with government efforts.
- Has clear indicators of program success and systems set up to measure them.
- Has strong demand; malaria is a leading cause of death in Zambia.
- Allows Rotary members to interact with the program by volunteering, raising money, mobilizing communities, and conducting national-level advocacy work.
- Has the potential to expand further to combat malaria across Africa.



We asked Feldt for his insights about the application process and about the project.

What makes this project a program of scale?

It's expanding on a proven concept, which I think is really important and was compelling to Rotary in awarding this grant. We'll be impacting about 1.3 million Zambians who will have health care in their communities for the first time. That means testing for, treating, and preventing malaria, and that also means treating diarrhea and pneumonia as well as providing information about COVID-19. We think that's a program of scale. We're very excited about that.

How does this grow out of previous work Rotarians have done?

We've written three global grants in the past two years. When the third grant project is complete, we will have trained more than 1,500 community health workers in the Copperbelt province. That gave us credibility with The Rotary Foundation. We think we're pretty good at it. What we're really doing is supporting the government in Zambia, which has a superb six-day training curriculum. There are about 12,000 community health workers trained under the auspices of the Ministry of Health. With the global grants and Programs

of Scale grant, we are adding about 33 percent more.

How did you adapt what you learned in previous projects?

We're going into areas where there are no community health workers. Once the new workers are trained, doctors and nurses need to learn how to interact with them. We're paying for some of those strengthening activities in the global grants and now even more with the Programs of Scale grant because we've learned that's such a vital component of sustainability.

Another thing we've learned is that the best community health workers are people who are established in their communities. They aren't getting paid. It's really about prestige. A study concluded that people do this because it's a good thing to do, and it makes them a leader.

Why is this the right program to tackle malaria in Zambia?

Not just Zambia. Sub-Saharan Africa too. One key success factor is that there is a supportive, committed government in Zambia. If the government isn't committed, it's going to go nowhere. One of our project partners, an organization called PATH — which is based in Seattle and receives funding from the Gates Foundation — supported the Zambian Ministry of Health and the National Malaria Elimination Centre in the launch of the government's community health worker initiative. This is a concept that UNICEF and the World Health Organization have been defining and encouraging. Between 2012 and 2015, the Ministry of Health and the National Malaria Elimination Centre, with support from PATH, did its first real project in the Southern province of Zambia, and they drove malaria rates down to near zero using community health workers. That's really the proof of concept. The model seems to work, the government is committed, and obviously the

Gates Foundation thinks it's a good model because it's been supporting the PATH program in Zambia for nearly a decade.

What advice do you have for Rotarians looking for partners?

Make organizations aware of what you're doing. Connecting is the whole game. I think that's what Rotary wants to do through Programs of Scale. In Africa, and all over the world, local Rotarians can open doors through their connections. My view is that we have a leg up on a lot of people looking for money because of what Rotary has done with polio. It is central to our credibility.

Box 2: Ready to scale up?

If your club is interested in applying for the next Programs of Scale grant, start by asking the following questions: (1) Is your club or district project successful — and is that assessment based on strong evidence?; (2) Does it solve a problem for the target population?; (3) Is there a clear and logical implementation plan that can be scaled up?; (4) Does the implementing partner have the ability and leadership to deliver a larger program over several years?; and (5) Are all stakeholders committed?

If we visit the project in 2026, what should we see?

I would hope we would see a dramatic reduction in malaria incidence. We'd want to see a self-sustaining health system that is fully utilizing community health workers, where they are diagnosing 60 to 70 per-cent of whatever small number of cases of malaria there are. They will probably be working on pneumonia and diarrheal diseases more than they had been. Hopefully, they'll be doing telemedicine. We'll see that turnover for community health workers is low and that

there's retraining. They'll have been retrained twice by that time, and they'll be a core part of the health system. They will represent the last kilometer of a health system that's very successful.



The Top Projects

The inaugural Programs of Scale grant in 2020 received more than 70 proposals representing programs across Rotary's areas of focus to be implemented around the world. After a rigorous review process, those were narrowed down to a select group, and the clubs involved were invited to submit full applications. A team of Cadre members and staff experts conducted virtual site visits and evaluated the proposals based on readiness to scale up the project, readiness to learn and share results, and how well the clubs involved would work with local communities and partner organizations. What stood out about the top five applicants? We annotated their proposals with feedback from the selection committee.

Box 3: The Top Projects

Programs of Scale Grant Awardee: Partners for a Malaria-Free Zambia, Zambia. Partners for a Malaria-Free Zambia has experienced partners and incredible funding. It won the grant because of local Rotarian involvement and local government participation. Area of focus: Disease prevention and treatment. Proposal: Work with health facility staff and officials to train 2,500 community health workers to respond to malaria cases, help prevent transmission, and provide other health care, reducing the burden on local health clinics. Expected outcome: Reduce malaria incidents over five years by 90 percent in 10 target districts in Zambia and bring health care closer to home for 1.3 million Zambians.

Finalist: Every Child Learning Well, India. Pratham Education Foundation is an excellent partner with data-driven methods proven to quickly improve literacy and numeracy. Area of focus: Basic education and literacy. Proposal: Bring Pratham's internationally recognized Teaching at the Right Level literacy and numeracy program to 1,500 primary schools. Expected outcome: Improve the reading and writing levels of at least 80 percent (200,000) of participating students, ages six to 12.

Finalist: Save to Grow 2.0, Tanzania. With 43 staff members working in many parts of Tanzania, over half of whom are developing agricultural markets or supporting savings groups, the Aga Khan Foundation is a strong partner. Area of focus: Community economic development. Proposal: Create and strengthen 1,600 shared-interest savings groups, teaching members to use digital platforms to save money, exchange loans, and receive payments. Participants would learn smart farming practices and how to expand their agriculturally based businesses. Expected outcome: Improve the economic well-being of 24,000 smallholder farmers and 240 entrepreneurs — particularly women and young people.

Honorable mention: Sustainable Improvement of Reproductive, Maternal, and Child Health, Nigeria. Building on Nigeria's success in polio eradication, Rotary members are connected to leaders at the highest levels of the country's health infrastructure. Rotary is trusted to deliver important, sometimes difficult, messages about maternal health. Area of focus: Maternal and child health. Proposal: Educate community members about their benefits and train health care workers to track data on maternal and neonatal deaths so interventions can be tailored to specific needs. Expected outcome: Strengthen systems at the national, state, and local levels and increase access to improved maternal and child health services, enhancing support for those interested in family planning.

Honorable mention: Infrastructure Improvements to Water Systems, Helping Communities and Schools, Honduras. This program stood out because it works to strengthen the public sector — a key element of any sustainable program. Area of focus: Water, sanitation, and hygiene. Proposal: Provide an improved and sustainable water supply to more than 100,000 people, along with water systems, bathroom facilities, and septic systems that meet UNICEF standards for 30 schools serving 6,000 students and 400 teachers. Expected outcome: To provide 100,000 Hondurans with clean water and 30 schools with improved water and sanitation facilities.

PART II: EXAMPLES OF PROJECTS SUPPORTED BY ROTARIANS

CHAPTER 5

RAZIA'S RAY OF HOPE FOUNDATION

Razia Jan

Note: paper written before the Taliban takeover

Razia's Ray of Hope Foundation provides young women and girls in Afghanistan with safe, nurturing, and inspiring educational environments so that they have access to brighter futures. Information on Razia's Ray of Hope Foundation is available at <https://raziasrayofhope.org/>.

Origins of the Project

In 2021, girls' education is recognized for what it is: a powerful antidote to the crisis of intergenerational poverty in developing countries. As an Afghan woman who has lived in the United States for 50 years, the critical importance of girls' education is my personal story — and my life's work.

I was born and raised in Kandahar, a province of southern Afghanistan. I lived with my extended family in a compound dotted with pomegranate trees. At that time, Kabul was a cosmopolitan city. Women could go to school, work, wear Western-style clothing, ride bicycles, socialize in mixed company, and do many other things that were taken for granted in other parts of the world at that time. Schooling was mandatory and free for both boys and girls. My father, a community leader who loved poetry—and who would later be jailed as a political prisoner—wanted me to have the best education possible. Despite our Muslim faith, he sent me to a private Catholic school. My years in elementary school and high school were full of learning and friendship. It was the most carefree time of my life, as childhood should be.

In 1970, after earning a BS in public health at Punjab Women's University in Quetta, Pakistan, I left for the United States. My brother was attending college at MIT in

Boston, and I planned to attend graduate school and return home after graduation. But the ensuing years of war, instability, and the Taliban takeover changed those plans. Instead, I settled in New England and became the proprietor of a tailoring and dry-cleaning shop in Duxbury, MA. I married and had a child, my son Lars, but the marriage was difficult and came to an end. I had no local support network at all. It was the kindness of community members that kept me on my feet and gave me hope. I was the recipient of extraordinary human kindness and empathy, which changed me.

I raised Lars in Duxbury, took post-graduate courses in education at Radcliffe and Lesley College, and became active in the community that had shown me such support. I wanted to help others as I had been helped. Drawn to service above self, I became a proud member of the Duxbury Rotary Club, which would be my Rotarian home for two decades, including a term as club president.

Like all of us, I was devastated by the attacks of September 11; overwhelmed by grief for the victims, their families, and their loved ones. And I was deeply distressed that Islam, the religion I had peacefully practiced all my life, was being manipulated for evil purposes. I turned my anguish into activity. Rallying the community, my shop became a busy hub of volunteers. We organized the creation and delivery of more than 400 homemade blankets to rescue workers at Ground Zero. Then I expanded our scope to sending care packages to US troops in Afghanistan—parcels that included beautiful thank-you notes written by local students. I got involved with Operation Shoe Fly, a joint effort of the US Air Force and the US Marine Corps, through which I coordinated the

delivery of over 30,000 pairs of shoes to Afghan children in need.

Return to Afghanistan

I had not returned to Afghanistan since my departure in 1970. After the fall of the Taliban in 2001, I decided to return. I knew things were bad, but I wanted to see for myself what had happened to my homeland. I was scared and apprehensive. When I wavered, I thought of the first responders in New York City, the heroes who ran toward unknown danger to protect the innocent. Their bravery and sacrifice gave me courage. And I needed it.

Arriving in Afghanistan with a dozen suitcases full of blankets, clothes, and toys for local orphanages, I was shocked by what I found: a country I couldn't recognize. The Taliban—still operationally functional—were using extreme violence to keep girls from learning. I saw how badly girls were treated, and how different their childhoods were from the one that I had enjoyed. Everything had changed. I was distraught. Afghanistan had one of the lowest literacy rates in the world. Afghan women and girls were suffering terrible social, political, economic, and cultural obstacles that limited their educational opportunities and propagated the cycle of childbearing and impoverishment. Without education, Afghanistan would never overcome its horrific obstacles. I had to do something. I thought to myself: There are no schools for girls here. Why not build one?

And so I would, with the power and passion of the Duxbury Rotary Club. We resolved to build a free private school for girls in Afghanistan. With the strength and determination of my fellow Rotarians, we

would address the issue of girls' education with hands-on, frontline action.

After an extensive search, I found the right location. I chose a site in the rural, impoverished district of Deh'Subz, located 30 miles outside Kabul City. The people of this district were not terrorists; they were the good guys. They were mujahideen who had fought the Russians and the Taliban. The property had once been a historic boys' school, the gift of beloved king Amir Amanullah Khan in the 1930s. Formerly a center of the community, the building had been nearly destroyed and the property was strewn with rubbish. Determined to rebuild the structure and provide schooling to girls who would otherwise have no means of education, the Duxbury Rotary Club began fundraising in earnest.

Our project received a major financial boost from best-selling author Khaled Hosseini, who visited Duxbury twice to rally our community and raise funds at two highly successful events organized by the Duxbury Rotary Club. Ultimately, \$125,000 was secured to build the school.

In July 2007, after patiently overcoming resistance from the village elders of Deh'Subz who had wanted a school for boys, not for girls, I oversaw the groundbreaking ceremony for what, I realized, had become my life's mission. Less than two years after conceiving the endeavor, construction began, and Razia's Ray of Hope Foundation was born, an organization that would never have come to life without the passionate and enduring support of my fellow Rotarians.



Photo: The Zabuli Education Center and some of its young students.



The Zabuli Education Center

In March 2008, the Zabuli Education Center opened with 109 students in kindergarten through fourth grade, providing high-quality, free education on par with Western schools. Today the Zabuli Education Center is in its thirteenth year of operation, providing tuition-free K-12 education to more than 720 disadvantaged girls. We embrace and promote education as the key to positive, peaceful change for current and future generations, empowering girls and young women to work toward bright futures in their own villages and beyond. Our school is a celebrated symbol of progress and the advancement of women—and is the pride of the conservative community we serve.

Every year on the first day of school, we teach our kindergartners how to write

their name and their father's name. Each student takes their piece of paper home. Many of these fathers use their thumbprint for a signature, so when they see that their daughters can write their name, it helps change fathers' attitudes about girls' education. Fathers have come to me in tears of joy over seeing that their daughters can write their fathers' names. Village elders, who once refused to look me in the eye, now praise our work and refer to me as the "Mother of Deh'Subz."

I am immensely proud that the Zabuli Education Center is described by the Afghan government as the number one private school in the region. At every step of the way, Rotary Clubs and individual Rotarians across the country and around the world were—and still are—our most committed and passionate supporters.

Box 1: Zabuli Education Center Areas of Focus and Programmatic Activities

Areas of Focus

- Providing girls in Deh'Subz, Afghanistan, continual, quality K-12 education, certified by the Afghan Ministry of Education.
- Creating a safe environment for Afghan girls to learn and build a lasting network of support from peers and teachers.
- Building a dynamic staff of qualified and certified local teachers and administrators who serve as positive role models and mentors for students.
- Engaging with local Afghan communities to embrace the education of girls and support their pathways to achieving life goals and career ambitions.

Programmatic Activities

- *Ministry of Education—Certified K-12 Curriculum:* teachers and administrators provide students with a certified 12-subject curriculum that includes math, English, Dari language, history, science, and computer literacy. In addition to an onsite computer lab, students have access to a well-equipped science lab for class lessons.
- *Student Resources:* Each school year, students are materially supported with free school supplies, backpacks, coats, and boots (for winter), and much-needed nutritious meals during the school day.
- *Computer Literacy:* The Center has a fully operable and internet-connected computer lab accessible to all students. As many students do not have access to computers outside of school, our curriculum ensures the inclusion of computer training as part of lesson plans. By providing Afghan girls connectivity and computer literacy knowledge, Razia's Ray of Hope strengthens students' professional skills development as they venture through school and into the workforce.

To meet the demands of growing enrollment, in 2013 we added a third floor to our school building. In December 2015, we reached another extremely exciting milestone: the graduation ceremony for our first class of 12th graders. While I was filled with pride, I also had a problem. My eager and ambitious graduates wanted to know what came next. Instinctively, I announced that we would build them a college. Like everything else, I would figure it out by doing.

The Razia Jan Institute

In 2017, we opened the Razia Jan Institute (RJI), the first women's post-secondary vocational school in the region, sited adjacent to the Zabuli Education Center.

RJI is a tuition-free, two-year midwifery and medical sciences training program and educational facility. The program emphasizes the importance of maternal and infant health while supporting health-sector employment for Afghan women—and includes classes in English, personal finance, and computer literacy. RJI offers post-secondary education opportunities to graduates of the Zabuli Education Center and other community members, providing a path to employment while establishing community health workers in a severely medically underserved and resource-limited community. In addition, successful professional women are vital role models of female empowerment within the progressive movement for gender equality.

Box 2: Razia Jan Institute Areas of Focus and Programmatic Activities

Areas of Focus

- Providing a two-year midwifery program to strengthen community health and create health-sector employment for Afghan women, certified by the Ministry of Public Health.
- Offering young women in Deh'Subz skills-based training in English language, computer literacy, and personal finance for increased workforce development options and self-sufficiency.
- Creating a safe and supportive network for Afghan women to continue to seek education and stimulate economic development and financial security.
- Encouraging the community to support the educational and skills-based development of women in Deh'Subz for the well-being of families and the larger community.

Programmatic Activities

- *Midwifery Program:* RJI partnered with the Afghan Ministry of Public Health to provide Zabuli Education Center graduates and young women in the district of Deh'Subz, Afghanistan, a certified two-year midwifery program. RJI ensures that midwifery students receive high-quality training and education to strengthen the network of health care workers in the community.
- *Clinical Practicum for Midwifery Training:* As part of RJI's two-year midwifery program, all students undergo an intensive clinical practicum in partnership with a local hospital or clinic in Deh'Subz. Graduation requirements for students include the healthy and safe delivery of 60 babies, in addition to other vital midwifery training, knowledge, and skills.
- *Student Resources:* At the outset of clinical studies, RJI midwifery students are outfitted with free medical lab uniforms, safety equipment, proper shoes, and program-related academic supplies.
- *Skills-Based Development:* In addition to midwifery training, RJI students receive training in the English language, computer literacy, and personal finance to ensure that women in the community are fully equipped and prepared to broaden their employment opportunities in widespread professional sectors. Financial knowledge also has the potential to support the overall welfare of families and the greater economic activity and subsistence of communities—while increasing empowerment and gender equality.

Midwifery is a respected profession in Afghanistan. Midwives provide an array of simple health services in addition to providing prenatal care, delivering babies, and caring for neonates and postpartum mothers. Community members are beginning to pay for basic care services—and even a small payment can have a significant impact. In time, RJI students will take their places as esteemed medical providers—and leaders—in the community.

The RJI facility is outfitted with midwifery equipment and medical supplies, a fully functional computer lab, and highly qualified staff and medical assistants. Students must also undergo a midwifery

practicum at a local hospital or clinic, supporting the births of 60 babies prior to graduation. In March 2019, the first RJI cohort of 20 certified midwives graduated. An amazing accomplishment. The same month, our second cohort of students began their studies. This second group of midwifery candidates are on track to graduate in March 2021.

In addition to our core programs, RJI works in close partnership with students, local leaders, and other educational and professional organizations to train students in trades, services, and careers that benefit our students' local communities.



Photos: Training at the Razia Jan Institute.

COVID-19: A Global Pandemic

When the World Health Organization declared COVID-19 a global pandemic on March 11, both of our schools were on winter break, preparing to start the new school year later that month. We soon learned that we would not be starting the school year as planned. As did schools around the world, we arranged for outdoor book collection so that students could collect books so that they could begin self-study programs at home. Unfortunately, our students' households

aren't equipped to accommodate distance learning. We were also unable to replicate the daily meals, warmth, and sanctuary that our students depend on.

We resolved to continue paying the full salaries of our teachers and staff—and I am proud that we were able to meet that commitment all the way through our schools' reopening just a few weeks ago. We do not yet know how the nearly six months of lost schooling, resources, and respite have impacted their physiological health but we do know that almost all of our girls returned on

the first day of school, an incredible tribute to the community's strong support and belief in the vital importance of educating girls for a peaceful and prosperous future Afghanistan.

Hygiene and Health

A significant, yet often unconsidered, obstacle is access to appropriate hygiene facilities for adolescent girls. Thirty percent of Afghan government schools lack safe drinking water, and 60% do not have toilets or running water. Girls who have begun menstruation are particularly affected by insufficient or absent toilet facilities. Without private, gender-

segregated toilets with running water, they face difficulties managing menstrual hygiene at school and are likely to stay home during menstruation, leading to gaps in attendance that undermine academic achievement and increase the risk of dropping out.

We ensure that our schools' facilities include appropriate, private, clean bathrooms and running water for all students and staff. This summer, we invested in renovating the existing bathrooms at the Zabuli Education Center. We understand that access to safe, private, clean hygiene facilities is a basic right for all girls and women.



Photos: Children observing COVID-19 protocols at the Razia Jan Institute.

Accessibility: Valuing Every Girl's Education

It is important that however possible, we remain creative and flexible in providing access to education to students with special needs. To this point I introduce you to Mahnaz, who is the youngest of six children in her family. At birth, Mahnaz weighed just 2 pounds. Her mother fed her with an eye dropper. As Mahnaz grew, her limbs appeared entangled. She could not use her hands or legs. Before her first birthday, Mahnaz was diagnosed with polio. Over time, she learned to use her hands but remained unable to sit or stand.

Afghanistan is not a welcoming place to those with physical abnormalities. It is commonplace for village children who are

different to be shuttered away.

But Mahnaz was born to a progressive family, and enrolled Mahnaz's three older sisters at the Zabuli Education Center. When she reached the age of five, Mahnaz was still unable to stand or walk, but she wanted to know when she would start going to school like all of her older siblings.

Mahanz's parents didn't know what to do. But they knew their daughter was determined. In 2016, Mahnaz's father carried her into the Zabuli Education Center. He begged me to admit her. I was impressed and resolved to accommodate Mahnaz's physical needs. I enrolled her and we built her a special desk that supports her comfortably while sitting in class. And she thrived. Then, Karin Gaffney of Rotary Club District 7910

collaborated with the Rotary Club of Ellsworth, Maine. They spearheaded the donation of a wheelchair to keep Mahnaz mobile. (You should see her zooming around—what joy.) By second grade, Mahnaz was not only thriving; she had earned the #1 position in her class. A year later, she underwent surgery to enable her to wear leg braces and perhaps one day walk. She still has speech deficits, but with the skilled patience of her teachers, Mahnaz is now able to communicate verbally. Her physical challenges are offset by her determination. And she dreams of becoming a doctor.



Photo: Mahnaz.

Rotary's Role

In addition to being instrumental to the initial building reconstruction for the Zabuli Education Center, the addition of a third floor, and the construction of the Razia Jan Institute, Rotary Clubs have worked hard to help us when we need it. We have received donations, student sponsorships, and grants that helped fund: program costs; medical equipment and supplies; a bus and

replacement vans for transporting students and staff; science kits; and library books, among other necessary items. We are grateful for the concerted fundraising from global grants and the district clubs who coordinated the funding of our science kits (Suburban Club of Omaha) and our midwifery program (Nashoba Valley Rotary Club).

Rotary Clubs also increase awareness of the issue of literacy and girls' education by sharing our story through club and district meetings, newsletters, and magazines, helping us reach the big hearts of Rotarians. I have had the pleasure of speaking at more than three dozen Rotary Clubs across the country and in several other countries, as well as at District Conferences and Rotary International Conventions. I hope to explore new ways of connecting with Rotarians through online programming in the era of COVID-19, such as I did with the 2020 Literacy Rotarian Action Group (LITRAG) virtual session that highlighted models of girls' education around the world. They were kind enough to include Razia's Ray of Hope as one of the four models to emulate.

Box 3: Afghanistan by the Numbers

The reality

- 3.7 million school-aged children do not attend school in Afghanistan. More than 60% of them are girls;
- Only half of schools are housed in buildings, 30% lack potable water and 60% don't have toilets (a major barrier to education for girls).

Benefits from education:

- For each year of school past grade 5, marriage is delayed by an additional year.
- For each year of secondary school, childbirth is delayed by 10 months.
- For each year of secondary school, a woman's income increases by 20%.
- Children of literate mothers are twice as likely to go to school.



Photos: Selected activities in the school that benefitted from Rotary support.

Results

We know that each additional year of secondary education makes it less likely that a girl will marry and become a mother before the age of 18. It also increases her future salary by 20%. With universal secondary education, child marriage could be essentially eliminated—and severe malnutrition along with it. The child mortality rate would be cut in half. And we know that working women reinvest 90% of their income in their families, as opposed to 30-40% invested by men.

Today, we have provided education to more than 1,000 girls in Afghanistan from kindergarten through post-secondary training.

We create opportunities for women to be paid for their work. Our graduates become teachers and midwives, contributing to the economic development of their communities, their families, and themselves.

In our school community, girls who once were silent about forced engagements and early marriages are now speaking up and finding ways to negotiate more time in school. Three of our students got married, which is usually the end of their education. But their husbands, all young men, brought their wives to us and said, “We are married, but can she still continue her education?” Such a thing was unheard of a decade ago. I cannot overstate its significance.

Part of our success has been our commitment to high-quality education. Our reputation is the foundation for many positive developments. In 2008, men in the village were vocal about not wanting a school for girls and threatened me repeatedly. Less than ten years later, these same men began saying that our school is the best thing that has happened to our daughters. They have pride in what we are doing, and they keep a protective eye on our campus. Today we have the backing of the whole community.

As I tell my students, no matter how little you know, no one can take it from you. Our girls will carry their education forever. To illustrate our impact, I share the stories of two of our graduates.

Meet Some of our Girls: Rahila and Nadia

Rahila enrolled at the Zabuli Education Center as a fifth grader—at the age of 18. At that time, she was our oldest student. That didn't bother her, however. Rahila had been attending a public school as an eighth grader with 120 classmates and wasn't learning anything. She was deeply frustrated. On her own, Rahila decided to change schools. Three of her younger sisters also enrolled at the Zabuli Education Center. From the outset, Rahila was a model student: attentive, serious, helpful, and eager to learn. She dreamed of becoming a police officer with special training in human rights.

As the malik, or mayor, of Deh'Subz, Rahila's father held considerable influence. His decision to send his own daughters to the Zabuli Education Center was a clear endorsement. But in ninth grade, Rahila fought with her family for six months when her father tried to beat and threaten her into marrying the 70-year-old father of a woman he wanted to marry himself. She resisted, despite a broken nose and broken ribs, finding comfort at our school that allowed her to hold

out until her father finally gave up.

Despite the odds, Rahila graduated from the Zabuli Education Center in 2016 and in 2017 she enrolled at the Razia Jan Institute as part of the first cohort of midwifery candidates, graduating in 2019. She was offered a job at a local health clinic, one of two, that have been opened by the Afghanistan Ministry of Health, in part because of the availability of trained midwives from our program.

I remember when a subset of RJI students were allowed by their families to spend an overnight shift in the maternity ward at the nearest hospital. When the students returned to Deh'Subz the next morning, they were overflowing with joy. They had attended a whopping 11 deliveries—commonly attributed to the full moon—all with first-time mothers. I was moved to tears by their joy and excitement—and their hope.

Nadia was one of our very first students. She enrolled at the Zabuli Education Center in 2008 as a 2nd grader. One of her greatest wishes was to help the people of her village. After graduating from the Zabuli Education Center in 2016, as part of our 2nd graduating class, Nadia enrolled in the inaugural class at the Razia Jan Institute. She graduated in 2019, and is certified as a midwife and can provide medical care in her village.

She is also one of the former students to become a teacher at ZEC, and is thankful to be working alongside her former teachers and teaching the girls continuing the education cycle. She says ZEC and RJI changed her life and provided her the tools to help her family, relatives, and people in her village.

As these girls realize their dreams, so do I. And so much of it made possible by Rotary.



Rahila

Photos: Rahila and Nadia.



Nadia

CHAPTER 6

CREATING BEST FUTURES IN NAKIVALE REFUGEE SETTLEMENT IN UGANDA

Rick Olson

The Best Future School was founded by Venas Chirimwami Julius, aka Julius, with the support of the community members in the Navikale Refugee Settlement in Uganda. Julius was a member of the Nakivale Rotaract Club. In 2019, Julius and the community manufactured the bricks and built the school from scratch. Rick Olson, a Rotarian from Prior Lake Rotary Club, Minnesota, visited the school in 2020 and has been helping out ever since through a non-profit he created in the United States. More information is available at <http://bestfuture.center/>.

Origins of the Project

In 2017, the Rotary Club of Roseville Minnesota helped found the Nakivale Rotaract Club in the Nakivale Refugee Settlement in Uganda. This was noteworthy because it was the first Rotaract club formed in any refugee settlement in the world and received world-wide recognition in the Rotary International magazine. Kyle Haugen, former District Governor of Rotary District 5960 of my Prior Lake Rotary Club traveled there in 2018 and through him I learned about Nakivale.

Nakivale is an old refugee settlement opened in 1958 in SW Uganda, about a 6 to 7 hour drive from Kampala, the nation's capital. Many of its residents have lived there for over 20 years. The refugees come from countries all around Uganda, but over 50 percent of the over 140,000 refugees in Nakivale came from the Democratic Republic of Congo, where they speak French (vs. the official language of Uganda which is English). There were about 60,000 refugees there in 2014 so there have been many relatively recent arrivals.

When the refugees arrive at the Welcome Center, they are given some food, clothing, and some basic supplies, including some materials to build their own mud huts. They are allocated a 30 meter by 30 meter plot on which they can build their houses and grow food to survive. Supplementing that, they receive less than \$6 per person per month to live on (this can be compared with \$1.90 per day or \$57 per month, which is the World Bank definition of "extreme poverty").

Julius, one of the Rotaract members found me as one of Kyle Haugen's Facebook friends and we began messaging. Julius had organized members of the community to manufacture bricks from the local clay and together they built a three-classroom school building. They began running a free, non-discriminatory, boys' and girls' primary school and early childhood development center (the "Best Future School"). The school started with 370 students in early February 2020 on a hope and a prayer – no school supplies and no money for teacher wages.

I really liked their initiative and went to visit there in late February 2020 with the idea that I might be willing to help or, if I did not like what I saw, to walk away. I left having donated some solar panels installed, an Internet hub, office furniture, a computer, printer, speakers, a projector, and some teaching supplies. They were connected to the world and on their way. You don't go there and get to know the refugees and leave quite the same person you were before you went.



Photos: The school before the project with students in a small crowded classroom.

Founding a Charitable Organization

When I returned home, I founded a non-profit organization, Best Future Center (<http://bestfuture.center/>), as I knew there needed to be a tax deductible funnel to get donations for food and wages. The Prior Lake Rotary Club funded the construction of a school kitchen to feed a mid-morning cup of porridge for young children. They have also started a commercial bakery out of that kitchen to help make Best Future School more self-sufficient.

Donations through Best Future Center funded the construction of a 5 meter x 10 meter building in which there now is a sewing center with 30 women in each cohort learning how to sew for 3 months so they can become more self-sufficient. An Australian group donated the 30 sewing machines. The staff and volunteers (and more donations from Best Future Center) constructed another 5 meter x 8 meter building. Surrounding property has been acquired for future school buildings.

Meanwhile, we have been working with two Rotary International Global Grants. The first for \$35,000 will provide school supplies, furniture, laptop computers, a gas generator to provide a backup supply of electricity to the unreliable “government power”, 8 hand washing

stations and 12 latrines. The second Global Grant of \$79,500 will extend a pipeline to Best Future School to supply safe drinking water and also install a 100,000 liter water tank on top of a hill in a Rubondo, new part of Nakivale, to provide more water to about 280 families.

In March 2021 I brought 8 laptop computers purchased from PC's for People for Best Future School so they could start a computer school. We have also applied for a \$10,000 grant for bed nets to help control malaria which sickens many in Nakivale.

With all of the activity at Best Future School even during the pandemic, the school compound is an attractive busy place. The activities include the meals from the kitchen, the bakery, the sewing center, entrepreneurship classes, a motivational club, English lessons, and now the computer classes. From time-to-time classes are taught regarding young girls' menstruation in an attempt to reduce the stigma of their periods and to keep them in school.

To date, since February 2020, 49 Rotary clubs have contributed to the Rotary Grants sponsored by the Prior Lake Rotary Club or to Best Future Center to aid the refugees in Nakivale.



Photos: School kitchen/bakery (left) and sewing center and school kitchen (right).



Photos: Inside the bakery/kitchen (above) and sewing center class (below).





Photos: Computer room (above) and class for adolescent girls (below).





Photos: Motivational club (above) and English lessons (below)



Looking Ahead

Once school opens up again fully, 570 students are expected there in addition to all of the teens and adults. The great need is classroom space, so we are currently requesting another grant from Prior Lake Rotary for more classrooms.

I have found in the settlement an abundance of talented people who have had to flee for their lives from their home

countries to reside in the settlements. The challenge is to bring to them sufficient resources so they can learn how to help themselves. They don't want to be dependent. The parents desperately want their children to be educated, as they see education as the only chance their children have in life.

But the adults too need to survive. My hope is that once we get the school up to standards to perhaps be absorbed into the U.N.'s "government school" system, we can

provide training in better growing of crops to reduce the severe food insecurity. In refugee settlements where few may ever leave, support for self-sustaining enterprises is

critical to allow the refugees to break out of their dependency. Malaria prevention will also be a huge task to improve their lives. We hope to build Best Futures.

Box 1: Upcoming Global Grants

Improving Education, Access to Water and Sanitation in Nakivale Refugee Settlement, Uganda Rotary Global Grant 2121577.

- Provide education supplies and furniture for Best Future School, secure consistent electricity, provide for student safety.
- Bring school up to sanitary standards by building 12 “composting” latrines, a water collection system, and 8 hand washing stations.
- Provide computer laptops.

Total Budget: \$35,000, funded by 6 Rotary Clubs and 3 Rotary Districts

Status: Submitted to The Rotary Foundation for approval and World Fund match.

Providing Safe Drinking Water Nakivale Refugee Settlement, Uganda Rotary Global Grant 2122662.

- Extension of pipe to Best Future School (this would serve the school and surrounding community, serve about 500 families.
- Rubondo (with water quantity, quality, and environmental benefits, serving about 2800 families): 100,000 liter tank added to hilltop already supplied by water pumped from Lake Nakivale and fed by pumping station and existing pipeline

Total Budget: \$79,500. Funded by 41 Rotary Clubs and two Rotary Districts.

Status: About to be submitted to The Rotary Foundation for approval and World Fund match.

CHAPTER 7

HOW A ROTARY MEMBER IS ADDRESSING EDUCATIONAL INEQUALITY ON HER HOME TURF

Jeff Ruby

The Piyali Learning Center is a school for more than 200 girls ranging from nursery to 12th grade. Each student receives a state-approved academic education, books and supplies, uniforms, breakfast and lunch, hygiene kits, medical care, and life skills training. PACE Universal is a 501c(3) charitable in the United States that supports the center. Deepa Willingham established PACE and the learning center to provide a better future for girls. This story originally appeared in the October 2020 issue of Rotary magazine. For more information on the Piyali Learning Center, go to <http://paceuniversal.com/our-schools/>.

Oasis. Everybody who visits the PACE Learning Center, an all-girls school near Kolkata, India, uses the same word: oasis. They take a long look at the campus's pristine green lawns and the swaying palm trees. They contemplate the serene meditation center, the laughter-filled playground, and the outdoor complex full of girls in yellow polo shirts bending this way and that in yoga class. That's when the questions begin: Where did this gleaming, environmentally sustainable Shangri-La come from? Who made it happen? And why here, in the rural village of Piyali Junction in West Bengal, where much of the population is illiterate and extreme poverty abounds?

Today, the girls swarm around a woman with a deep, intense smile and dark hair shot through with shades of gray and white. The older kids look up at her adoringly, as do the smaller ones, though they don't really know who she is yet. They only understand by the way the teachers are treating her that she must be

someone important. All of them call her Dida, which means "Grandmother," and the hugs and kisses never seem to end. "Every time I come, they're all over me," says Dida. "There is not enough cheek space."

Dida is Deepa Biswas Willingham, and her deliberate manner and the proud look in her eyes suggest she might have something to do with this oasis. Sylvia Whitlock, a friend of Willingham and of the school, dispels any doubt. "Deepa is a selfless woman," says Whitlock, a retired educational administrator who is herself rather extraordinary — she was the first woman to serve as president of a Rotary club. "She put herself and her resources on the line to create worthy lives for all these girls who walk through the doors of the PACE Learning Center. Where would these girls be if they were not in this school? For this Deepa deserves the credit."

But Willingham, a past president of the Rotary Club of Santa Ynez Valley, California (and a past governor of District 5240), would never dream of taking credit for all this. She'd rather tell you about the tireless teachers, whose influence goes way beyond the classroom. She'd enumerate all the generous people and organizations that have contributed time and money to the school. She'd sing the praises of the Rotary Club of Calcutta Metropolitan (where she's an honorary member) and the many other clubs in India and around the world that have provided essential support. She'd single out those families and other Piyali Junction residents who took a chance on something so completely at odds with a patriarchal society that all too often renders females invisible. But mostly, she'd pay tribute to the girls.



Photo: Cycle vans, a gift from the Rotary Club of Calcutta Mayfair, transport students and teachers to and from school. Miriam Doan / Rotary International.

‘When I grow up, I will take care of children like that’

Born in Kolkata in 1941, Deepa Willingham was her parents’ middle child and only daughter. Her father, Manmatha Nath Biswas, was an English professor at Serampore College who later served as the school’s principal. Her mother, Latika, was a homemaker who was frustrated that she’d never been allowed to attend college. (Instead, her older brother had married her off.) A free thinker, Latika rejected the caste system and, as Willingham recalls, she never stopped reading.

Deepa and her two brothers grew up in campus housing. A middle-aged couple whom they regarded as their grandparents helped raise them. Later Deepa learned that they were household servants who had been discarded by society because of their interreligious relationship (he was Hindu; she was Muslim) and

that her parents, both Christians, had taken them in.

During the summer of 1946, when Deepa was five, tensions between Hindus and Muslims boiled over in Kolkata with widespread riots and massacres. Deepa watched as streams of children, women, men, and livestock took refuge on campus. Then she saw her mother and father stand between the students and the suddenly vulnerable Muslim settlement behind the school. “The students were threatening to kill people,” Willingham says. “My parents, particularly my mother, said, ‘You’re not going to kill anyone until you kill us.’” It’s one of her earliest memories.

Deepa attended Loreto Convent, a Roman Catholic girls’ school where Mother Teresa was her geography teacher. Willingham recalls that, even then, the future saint was troubled by the crippling poverty she could see from her window. It was a lesson reinforced at home. “You know how parents tell kids to finish

the food on their plate because there are starving children in Africa?” Willingham asks. “I grew up with my mother telling me to finish the food on my plate because there were starving children outside the window. I saw those children on our way to school, and I thought to myself, ‘When I grow up, I will take care of children like that.’”



Photo: Deepa Willingham is a member of the Rotary Club of Central Coast-Passport, District 5240, past president of the Rotary Club of Santa Ynez Valley, California, past governor of District 5240 and the founder and CEO of PACE Learning Center. Alyce Henson / Rotary International.

Willingham was a gifted student. After majoring in botany (with a minor in geology) at Presidency College (now Presidency University) in Kolkata and finishing first in her class, she was recruited through a U.S. State Department program seeking the top science graduates around the world. She had never left India and did not want to go. Her father insisted — in part

because he could not find a suitor for his dark-skinned daughter. “I knew that was a huge burden on my mother,” Willingham says today, “and from that point of view, I felt self-conscious.” She left for the United States in 1964; over the next 12 years, she would see her parents only once.

After earning her master’s at Miami University in Oxford, Ohio, Willingham moved on to doctoral work at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, where she studied molecular biology and met Richard Peter Howmiller, a biology student from that city. (The couple married in 1971.) In Wisconsin, Willingham also found herself dodging tear gas in the middle of Vietnam protests. Her embrace of social activism included a trip to Memphis in 1968 to listen to and march with Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. days before his death.

When Howmiller landed a teaching job in Santa Barbara, California, he and Willingham moved west to start their careers. One Sunday afternoon in 1976, the two were hit by a drunk driver while riding Howmiller’s motorcycle. Howmiller died two weeks later, and the crash broke both of Willingham’s legs. (Today she walks with an artificial left ankle.) The agony she felt seemed bottomless. She was angry — at the driver, at God, at the world.

But while working as a pathology department administrative director at Santa Barbara Cottage Hospital, she began counseling the families of dying patients. “In the hospital industry, even physicians don’t know how to deal with death very well,” Willingham says. “But losing my own spouse gave me an inner feeling of how to counsel others by just listening to them, holding their hand, and letting them cry on my shoulder. From then on, a lot of people would call me if someone was having a hard time. That was the beginning of my realization that something must be in there, inside me. That I can help people.”

Giving the gift of education

In 2001 Willingham was still living in Santa Barbara County. She had a grown daughter and a successful career in hospital administration behind her, yet she woke up on her 60th birthday and was surprised to find herself ashamed. You have been on this planet 60 years, said a voice in her head, and you have done nothing to help the world. Whether right or wrong, the voice did not go away. “At the back of my mind was this idea that I wanted to give the gift of education,” Willingham says. “But I didn’t know where or how.”

Around this time, spurred by a neighbor, Willingham attended a meeting of the Rotary Club of Santa Ynez Valley, and she found herself impressed enough to join. When she mentioned that she was interested in opening a school for girls, things began to happen quickly. Willingham

soon established PACE (Promise of Assurance to Children Everywhere) Universal, a 501(c)(3) dedicated to empowering girls and women through education. Her plan was to open a school in Mexico. Then, Willingham recalls, “the PACE board said, ‘You were born in Kolkata, and Mother Teresa was your teacher. You should do the first one in Kolkata.’”

With help from her brother Bashker Biswas and from a humanitarian organization in India, Willingham settled on a site for her school in Piyali Junction. Situated about 25 miles southeast of Kolkata, the village is in one of the biggest districts for sex trafficking in the country. Many girls there are abused and sold into sexual slavery by their overwhelmed families for as little as \$30 — often by the age of five — or they are married off at 13. The lucky ones work the fields or become house servants.



Photo: In addition to their classroom studies, students at the PACE Learning Center participate in afterschool sports and arts programs. Miriam Doan / Rotary International.

“Deepa identified the main challenges facing the community,” says Jayanta Chatterji, the India director for PACE and a member of the Rotary Club of Calcutta Metropolitan. “They were illiteracy, child labor, child marriage, child trafficking, and other atrocities, including extreme physical and mental abuse. And she took an oath to address those issues.” (Willingham is equally effusive in her praise for Chatterji. “God was smiling on me the day I met him,” she says. “I’m not at the school every day. Jayanta is.”)

Willingham secured a parcel of land and began recruiting girls for the school, only to find their parents resistant. “The girls were part of their family income, so they didn’t see any value in giving them an education,” she says. “Somebody told me, ‘You’re taking a family’s commodity away. They may come after you; they may even kill you.’ But like Gandhi said, if they kill me, they will only have my dead body, not my spirit. And as long as I am alive, I will not allow the girls to be sold.” Willingham explained to the fathers in Piyali how her education had enabled her to take care of her own parents in their old age. But it wasn’t until she promised to feed their daughters two meals a day that parents began to agree to let their girls attend the school.

“We can’t just give them education. We have to give them something to heal their hearts and their psyches.”

Opening of PACE Learning Center

In 2003, the PACE Learning Center opened. On that first day, 25 filthy and hungry girls packed into a four-room shack with a tin roof, straw siding, and a mud floor. The school was equipped with a few kitchen utensils, some portable fans, and a few benches. The early days were not easy. Girls sometimes disappeared from one day to the next. When teachers wanted to throw birthday parties, they found that the children didn’t know when they were born; they also didn’t know what a party was. Most of the girls had intestinal worms, so Willingham put in

a well, providing them with clean water for the first time in their lives.

“Soon, any time something went wrong in the village, they would come to the school for help,” she says. “The roof of someone’s hut blew off from the monsoon storms? We went to fix it. When a girl was on the verge of dying from a hole in her heart, we arranged for her to get surgery free of charge in the city.” Within six months, enrollment had risen to 85 girls. Mothers began bringing their daughters and saying, I don’t want her to have a life like mine. Help me.

Box 1: Rotary Foundation Funding

Your money at work: **Rotary Foundation** grants have supported the PACE Learning Center and the surrounding community. Here’s what those Foundation dollars helped to provide.

2007: Clean water for local villages, \$21,200
 2009: Adult literacy and vocational training programs, \$18,425
 2009: Community development program, \$330,000
 2010: Computer equipment for the school, \$10,696
 2011: School toilets, \$55,555
 2011: Diesel generator for the school, \$14,559
 2012: School bus, \$23,020
 2012: School furniture, \$49,215
 2012: After-school programs, \$16,869
 2013: Science lab and library, \$10,437
 2013: Commercial kitchen, \$17,748
 2013: Playground and landscaping, \$50,000

As the school grew, so did its connection to the adjacent village. When Willingham realized the girls were still drinking dirty pond water on weekends, she applied for a Matching Grant from The Rotary Foundation for \$15,200 to dig more wells in the village. (With a second grant, that amount grew to more than \$21,000.) “That was the real beginning,” Willingham says. “The village saw that not only were we building the school, we were bringing them clean water.

With support from Rotary clubs and The Rotary Foundation, PACE began to build roads

and plant 10,000 fruit trees throughout the village. They added wells and built 400 sanitation units. And then came the health clinic and the ambulance, the ultramodern commercial kitchen, and the self-contained soil biotechnology treatment plant. The PACE Learning Center also launched an adult literacy program and began offering vocational training for the students' mothers. Little by little, what began as a tin-roofed hut grew into a sustainable village model for poverty eradication. "PLC is not just a school," Chatterji says. "It's a movement that provides holistic education to the first generation of girls in their families to attend school, while also empowering women of the community."

Today, the campus covers 3 acres and educates more than 230 girls from nursery school through 12th grade. And those girls are thriving, often through force of will. With no place to study in her home, one 10th grader, Anamika Sarkar, lugged her books to a nearby temple where she spent hours preparing for the board exam, which can significantly impact a student's prospect of getting into university or pursuing her choice of career. (She received the highest grade in the class.) Other girls, traumatized by years of sexual abuse, find solace in after-school sports and arts programs. More than one student has written a play about the abuse she's experienced — and performed it in front of an audience that included her attacker. "We can't just give them education," Willingham says. "We have to give them something to heal their hearts and their psyches. The courage and perseverance that these girls show is amazing."

The impact of PACE

At the beginning of each year, families line up in hopes of landing one of the PACE Learning Center's 25 coveted spots for four- and five-year-olds. Admission is still need-based, but a funny thing has happened: The school has been so successful that the average family income in Piyali has jumped from \$1 a day to nearly \$5 a day. The process of identifying the neediest among the children has become so intensive that a former staff member joked that it was easier to get into Harvard.

If all goes as planned (and hoped), the PACE Learning Center will one day build a full-time vocational training center for students' mothers, who are currently crammed into the space behind the stage in the auditorium. Next? Jewelry and spice factories, and maybe a village-oriented bank. Only then will Willingham — now a member of the Rotary Club of Central Coast-Passport, District 5240 — consider the school "complete," a prototype that Rotary clubs and PACE can replicate in other places. "After my first visit to the school, the lingering memory I had was of happy girls eager to be learning and developing skills they didn't even know they had," says Lulu Kamatoy, international chair of the Rotary Club of San Fernando Valley Evening, California. "I then thought of possibly opening something like this model in the Philippines, where I was born and raised. We have rural areas in the Philippines with conditions similar to Piyali."



Photo: Even kindergarten students are eager to learn at the school, which educates more than 230 girls from nursery school through 12th grade. Miriam Doan / Rotary International.

In February, during her most recent visit to Piyali Junction, Willingham wandered into an art class being held in the school's outdoor pavilion. She was blown away by the creativity on display and the beauty of the girls' paintings — vivid nature landscapes and sophisticated statements about climate change. "No painting outside the lines!" the teacher implored.

Willingham winced. These were the kind of words she had heard growing up. "I understood," she said later. "India is an old country, and by sticking to the same mode, they probably feel that's the best thing." But she still encouraged the girls in the class to forget about the lines and paint wherever their hearts led them.

CHAPTER 8

TRAIN FOR CHANGE: THE HONDURAN TEACHER EMPOWERMENT PROJECT

Maxie Gluckman, Katey Summers, and Mia Wallace

Train for Change is a Honduran Teacher Empowerment project that began in 2017 through a partnership between the Rotary E-Club of San Diego Global and the El Progreso Rotary Club. With a Vocational Training Team Grant, the project focused on building skills, strategies, and leadership in teachers, most of whom are women. For more information, please visit the project's [website](#) or send an email to maxie.gluckman@instructural.com. The project is continuing to expand through a recently approved grant in Santa Barbara, Honduras.

Origins of the Project

The Train for Change project emerged as a teacher professional development program focusing on building teaching capacity, creating leadership opportunities, and increasing student achievement. Through partnering with Students Helping Honduras (SHH), a 501(c)3 non-profit organization focused on improving school infrastructure in Honduras, we focused our intervention on schools who had previously engaged in a school construction project with SHH. Over the first three years of the program, we were able to train 160 teachers in 24 schools, as well as 314 parents, improving the quality of education for more than 4,000 students.

Maxie Gluckman, Rotarian Past President and Vocational Training Team lead for the project, worked under the guidance of Rotarians such as Maureen Duncan and Carolyn Johnson, among others, to spearhead this work. Maxie's interest in Honduras emerged from her time spent on the ground volunteering with SHH and meeting with teachers from community partner schools, as well as hearing of their

challenges with regards to teaching, receiving training, and maximizing student learning. Through several months of on-going conversations, a team of U.S. bilingual educators called the "Vocational Training Team" and Honduran teachers created a training program which was transformed into a series of four modules presented over a two-year period.

With the help of a Rotary Global Vocational Training Team Grant, this vision came to life and has continued to be adjusted and adapted to new struggles and emerging challenges such as Covid-19, natural disasters, and political shifts, while focusing on building skills, strategies, and leadership in teachers, many of whom are women. By focusing on enhancing the quality of education children received through empowering local teachers with opportunities and skills, we are able to create a sustainable and scalable program that will continue to reach more students as long as these teachers continue in the profession.

Initial Intervention

Our original intervention focused on supporting teachers in rural schools to improve techniques, share knowledge, and create a collaborative network to improve teacher self-efficacy as a means to positively transform their communities. We chose this approach because of the stark educational realities many Honduras face, especially those in more rural or marginalized areas and circumstances. For instance, the average Honduran only completes four years of schooling, as compared to the global average of 12 years (Orozco & Valdivia, 2017).



Photo: July 2019 training where teachers learned about dynamic exercises to use in the classroom.

Currently less than 50% of Honduran youth enroll in secondary school; by strengthening the capacity of teachers in under-resourced communities to support basic education and literacy, we are working to create positive systemic change and improve children's educational attainment and outcomes (INE, 2016).

Most of the schools we work in are PROHECO schools which are community-run schools in rural areas, consisting of approximately 10% of Honduras' primary school population (Secretaria de Educacion de Honduras, 2018). PROHECO teachers often have little to no formal teacher training, and face ongoing challenges such as low teacher qualifications, high teacher turnover, and budgetary concerns (Di Gropello & Marshall, 2011). Our project works to improve student attendance and graduation rates as well as

educational attainment through better teacher quality through strategy-based teacher training.

Throughout the three years of our grant, we focused on supporting rural schools because they are some of the more underserved population in a country that holistically faces underperformance across the education sector. Children in rural schools have statistically less schooling, with only one third of 12-14-year-olds enrolled in secondary schools in 2016 (INE, 2016). In these areas, overall 48.7% of children and youth are outside of the educational system (FEREMA & IAD, 2017). Within rural schools, our main focus is improving literacy and teaching these skills because while only 12.8% of 15-year-old Hondurans are illiterate nationally (CIA, 2020), this number is considerably higher in rural areas where illiteracy jumps to 21.5% for 15-year-olds (OECD, 2016).



Photos: Above, two teachers collaborating on a partner assignment during our July 2019 training. Below, teachers holding up their Rotary plaque, recognizing their school's completion of the two-year training program.





Photos: Above, a newly inaugurated school library space at a school. Below, students looking at their new books as training staff give a demonstration on proper book handling and active reading techniques.



Instilling children with a love of reading and core literacy competencies can support improving other educational outcomes and enhance work opportunities. Beyond teaching literacy strategies, part of our project involved the creation of a dedicated school library space. Once this space is created by the school and their community, we donate culturally relevant reading materials and train teachers on appropriate reading strategies to continue fostering literacy through stories in which children can see themselves reflected. By accessing books that contain imagery and text that relate to these students' lived experiences, the children will have more opportunities to connect classroom themes to the wider world and see themselves and their experiences represented in other mediums.

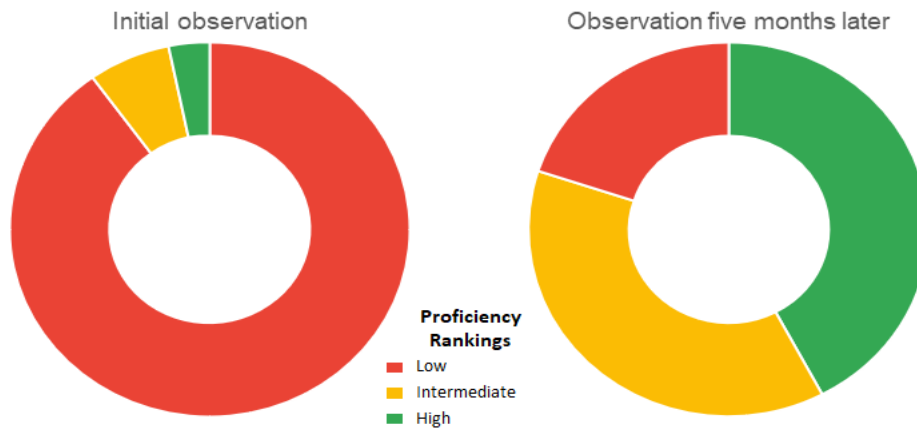
Given that 15% of the Honduran population is non-schooled, this reality contributes considerably to the cycle of poverty and violence that is currently driving much of recent migration. Education provides an opportunity for the country to heal and grow considerably starting with the next generation. Our work builds upon the Honduran Educational Standards, pushing for additional rigor in terms of critical thinking, building connections across subjects, and connecting learning to students' everyday lives. We also go beyond the traditional Honduran model, instead being grounded in a constructivist approach to teaching and learning in which teachers are facilitators for student active learning. We also lean heavily on the

social-emotional aspects of education, focusing on creating a safe and welcoming space for all children in each school. We evaluate our work through analyzing students' reading and math test scores, teacher observation results, and determining demonstrated growth, as indicated through increased attendance records, measures of participation, and critical thinking.

Impact of the project

Figure 1 provides an example of one teacher's growth from initial observations at the beginning of the program and a follow-up observation five months later. Several times throughout the two-year program, Train for Change's lead teacher developers visit teachers' individual classrooms to observe and give feedback on their efforts to incorporate strategies, skills, and tools from training into their classroom activities. The teacher developers fill out observation forms listing over 60 indicators, such as "did the teacher ask open ended questions," "did the teacher explain the theme of the lesson," and "did the teacher leave time for the students to practice the lesson". The graphic is based on proficiency rankings (low, medium, or high) from over 60 indicators which look at how teachers have incorporated strategies, skills, and tools from training into their classroom activities. As you can see this teacher improved considerably after only 5 months in the program.

Figure 1: One Teacher's Growth through the Program



Source: Authors.

Next Steps

Moving forward, we are drawing on the lessons learned and success of our initial Global Grant and are turning our focus to our newest Rotary collaboration between the Rotary Club of Santa Bárbara and Chula Vista Sunrise Rotary Club. As we continue to provide teacher training and support increased literacy achievement for students, we are adapting our methods to the context of COVID-19. Our project aims to support 18 schools in Santa Barbara, Honduras, reaching approximately 150 teachers and 2,000 students over a three-year period. Santa Barbara is a neighboring town which faces similar educational realities and whose teachers and students are facing an immediate and urgent need for support due to the educational disruptions caused by COVID-19.

While still emphasizing interventions for rural and marginalized student populations, our new program includes an additional focus on providing educational continuity to support the students who have been outside of the school system since the national lockdown in early March 2020, providing alternative lessons in core subjects. Given that half of Honduran

students lack reliable internet access, there is a salient need for educational programming and training to support teachers in serving students who are at a greater risk of dropping out.

We will provide blended learning modules for teachers to implement, teach valuable technological skills, and aid teachers in adjusting their practices to COVID-19 realities. We have created a YouTube channel with training modules for teachers to use as well.

Additionally, we piloted a text message program that provided education to 600 students who lacked access to internet. This pilot program is informing efforts to support schools as they begin re-opening. Long-term, we will build an educational community across the 18 schools to provide avenues for teachers to learn, share, and grow, inspiring innovation and leadership as Honduran schools emerge from COVID-19. We will continue to collaborate with and reach for innovative solutions to this pressing educational challenge in Honduran schools through this Global Grant project. We would like to thank all of our generous donors for contributing to this vision a reality.

CHAPTER 9

PAVING THE PATHWAY OUT OF POVERTY: EDUCATING GIRLS IN GUATEMALA

By Howard Lobb

The Guatemala Literacy Project (GLP) is one of the largest grassroots, multi-club, multi-district projects in Rotary. More than 600 clubs and 80 districts have been working together since 1997 to improve education for underserved students in Guatemala. In that time, nearly 225,500 students have been served through four sustainable programs that are tested and proven to work. In 2017, then-Rotary International President Ian Riseley called the GLP “the gold standard of Rotary projects” for its sustainability and impact. For information, go to <https://www.guatemalaliteracy.org/>.

Origins of the Project

In 1996, I went to Guatemala for a week to see a developing country and to explore volunteer opportunities. I was in awe of how beautiful Guatemala is—home to tropical rainforests, mountains, valleys, lowland forests, beaches, and more than 30 volcanoes. But during my first exploratory week in Guatemala, I just couldn't get over the heartbreaking condition of the villages, towns, and Guatemala City. The roads, schools, and living conditions of the people were unlike anything I had ever seen before. I found out that Guatemala's Western Highlands exhibit one of the most extreme combinations of systemic poverty, illiteracy, and inequality in the hemisphere—even to this day, 79% of indigenous Guatemalans live in poverty.

Compounding the problem, the majority of the Maya population does not have access to affordable, quality education. Teachers in rural schools often lack the formal training and resources—like books and computers—they need to facilitate learning. As a result, educational attainment is low, and illiteracy and

dropout rates are high. A staggering 90% of children living in poverty never graduate from high school. Young people lack the education to secure higher-paying jobs, and the cycle of poverty continues. For indigenous girls, the situation is even worse. Their families often spend their limited funds to educate their male children first, pulling the girls out of school after just a few years.

In addition to witnessing poverty around me every day, I was told stories from the civil war that had just officially ended that year—stories of military trucks driving down the road picking up boys as they walked home from school, "recruiting them into the Army," just like that. During that same short week, I connected with several Guatemalans who were helping out at the school and we had such a good time together, despite me not knowing Spanish yet. Everything was so raw and exciting. There was so much opportunity for me to learn, and it seemed like a country with great potential, where so much could be done in terms of development and improvement to the quality of life of its people.

After that trip, I was offered an opportunity to come back and volunteer for a Catholic mission by helping to teach in their middle school. It turns out that the school, "La Labor," was where two brothers, Joe and Jeff Berninger (who would go on to found the nonprofit organization Cooperative for Education or "CoEd"), had just started their first textbook cooperative. The brothers had combined some of their personal savings with a grant from Jeff's former employer, Procter and Gamble, to purchase textbooks for the school, which couldn't afford to provide these vital educational resources on their own.



Photos: Left, Howard teaching in “La Labor” school in 1997. Right, Howard showing the new computers to female students and their mothers in the GLP Computer Center in 2004, Hacienda Maria, Guatemala.

But the brothers also wanted to make sure that their gift would outlast their initial investment, and so they helped the school set up a system where students would “rent” their books for a small fee each year, which they called the “revolving fund” model. Once enough money had accumulated in the fund, the school would be able to purchase brand new textbooks with no further investment needed, making the program 100% sustainable! I met Jeff and Joe, and we quickly became friends as we realized that we had many shared values, including a passion for education.

Joining Forces

I wasn’t the only one whose attention was drawn to the textbook project the Berninger brothers had started at La Labor. Every year, a dentist and Rotarian from Lander, Wyoming—Walt Girgen—would come down to Guatemala to volunteer his services at a free dental clinic. And when the La Labor school community received their new textbooks ecstatically, with all the children gathered in their bright red school uniforms to celebrate and dance to the marimba band, all the excitement caught Walt’s

attention. Walt was the first Rotarian who told me (and Joe and Jeff) about what Rotary did—and more specifically, how interested Rotary would be in the sustainable revolving fund used to provide textbooks in perpetuity to the La Labor school (which, by the way, still has up-to-date textbooks to this day thanks to that initial investment more than 20 years ago—and the magic of the revolving fund model!)

As the Berninger brothers left the corporate world behind to form a nonprofit organization (Cooperative for Education or CoEd) that would enable them to expand the model to additional schools, Walt took news of the project back to his club in Lander, Wyoming. The club quickly agreed to join the brothers’ efforts, recruiting additional clubs to partner on a matching grant: Raleigh, North Carolina and Guatemala West, Guatemala City. That was the beginning of the Guatemala Literacy Project (GLP) partnership—a network of Rotarians and CoEd that improves education for underserved students in Guatemala. The project soon grew beyond textbooks to include computer, primary literacy, and youth development / gender equality programs.



Photo: A family in poverty (<https://flic.kr/p/R6KKue>).

Service above Self

In 2001, I also left my corporate career in engineering to help start the second of GLP's four educational programs in Guatemala: the Computer Centers Program. This program provides young people with access to state-of-the-art technology, using a similar revolving fund model to the Textbook Program. This was so important because while almost 60% of entry-level jobs in Guatemala require computer skills, children in rural communities lack access to computer instruction. With a GLP Computer Center, 95% of graduates go on to find a job or continue their education in high school.

Even though the GLP was only a few years old, I jumped right in and wanted to help provide a vision for expanding the program into the vital arena of technology skills. Back then, I had no idea that this leap of faith would root me in Guatemala for the next 20 years. But here I am, two decades later, still working with our

Rotarian friends and our team at CoEd to help more students break the cycle of poverty in Guatemala through education. Now, as Director of Partner Development for Cooperative for Education, I work to build relationships with CoEd's supporters all over the globe. After I started working for CoEd, and as the years went past, I met and worked with more and more Rotarians who would come down to Guatemala to volunteer for GLP programs. More than 300 Rotarians from around the world have traveled with the GLP over the years!

With time, I realized that Rotary was a good fit for me. I had absorbed the same affection for Rotary; its passion for service and the fun that I saw the members have over the years. I realized how lucky I was to be surrounded by such good people. In 2018, I was fortunate enough to be asked by the eClub of District 6600 Ohio Pathways to become a member, and so I joined!



Photo: Howard (right) with 2022-23 RI President-Nominee Jennifer Jones (3rd from left) and other Rotarians in front of a world map showing the 600+ clubs who have supported the GLP since 1997 (<https://flic.kr/p/2aHD6tE>).

Since the GLP was formed in 1997, more than 600 Rotary clubs from around the world have banded together to support these projects. Together, the four programs have served nearly 225,500 children! In 2017, then-RI President Ian Riseley visited the GLP headquarters in Guatemala and described the GLP as “the gold standard of Rotary projects” for its sustainability and impact.

Girls’ Education

In Guatemala, the lack of access to quality education is compounded by the lack of *equal* access to education for both genders, as girls are traditionally not supported in their desire to go to school. Often, when parents have to decide which child to educate on their meager earnings, they prioritize the boys, and the girls get left behind. In some parts of Guatemala (where CoEd works), there is a boy and a half in school for every girl. In Guatemala as a whole,

80% of men are literate, compared to 58% of women. In the publication “What Works in Girls’ Education,” the Brookings Institution identifies Guatemala as a “girls’ education hot spot,” where girls are enrolled “at low rates relative to the global average, and also relative to boys.”

Ever since I came to Guatemala in the first place, I knew it was so important to help expand access to education for girls. I saw young girls getting left behind, and I knew the value in helping them get back into school and reach that ever-critical 12 years of education that it takes to support a two-person family above the poverty line.

According to a growing number of experts, “girls’ education is the world’s best investment with the widest ranging returns” (also from “What Works in Girls’ Education”). Educating girls improves the health and survival rates of infants and children, leads to higher rates of school attendance and completion in the next generation, improves the status of women

within families, communities, and the political arena, and much more!

Thankfully, Rotary is also on the cutting edge of smart investments in international development, and our GLP partners recognized the need for a program that would help address the need for gender equity in education. That's why the youth development component of the GLP gets girls into school and keeps them there, helping them reach that critical milestone of high-school graduation. I'm so proud of the girls that we serve in GLP programs, and it's incredible to see them grow up and develop from shy middle school girls to confident, well-spoken young ladies as they graduate from high school. Specifically though, I'm touched by the story of Lesly Patzán.

Lesly's Story

Many students like Lesly come from regions where the average level of education is less than two years. Families often live on less than \$4 a day and can neither afford the direct cost of attending school (tuition and fees) nor the opportunity cost of keeping children in school when they could be working and contributing to the family's income. In addition to economic challenges, students face many other pressures to drop out, including alcoholism, gangs, child marriage, abuse, and a lack of support from their families.

In Lesly's case, her father was diagnosed with cancer when she was still a child. Because of this, Lesly decided early on that she wanted to do something in medicine. Her mother started working at a vegetable packing plant to pay the medical bills. With seven children and only one income, they were struggling to put food on the

table. Lesly was on the verge of dropping out of school to start working. Fortunately, Lesly was selected to enter our Rise Youth Development Program, enabling her to continue studying after primary school—a must if she was going to achieve her dream of working in medicine someday.

The Rise Program identifies promising young students like Lesly who would otherwise be forced to drop out of school, and gives them the tools to break the cycle of poverty. The program focuses on selecting mainly girls, who face increased barriers to education, and as a result, 73% of Rise scholars are female. Rise offers comprehensive support services from mentors, counselors, and psychologists, and engages students in workshops, community service, and visits to local businesses and universities that transform the way they think about their futures. In addition, all students participating in the program are matched with sponsors from around the world who cover a portion of their costs of participating in the program, including a full academic scholarship. Many of the students are sponsored personally by Rotarians who are also involved with the Guatemala Literacy Project.

During her time in school, Lesly also benefitted from GLP textbooks and computers. With the help of our programs, she was able to stay in school and graduate from high school as a nursing assistant. Only 1 out of 10 kids in Guatemala graduate from high school, and she was now one of them! Her father is back in good health now, and could not be prouder of Lesly's accomplishments. A proud papa in every way, he constantly brags about how she has been first in her class since sixth grade.



Photos: Left, Lesly traveled to Cincinnati to share her story at CoEd's annual fundraising event.
Right, Lesly at her high school graduation.

But what really touches me is that she was able to get hired as a nurse in the maternity ward of one of the best hospitals in Guatemala City—in the same maternity ward where both of my sons were born! Imagine that...an impoverished young girl from a poor, rural town is close to having to drop out after primary school, but Rotary and CoEd come together to give her the opportunity to continue studying. Not only that, we ensure that she gets a high-quality education with textbooks and computers. And then, in what seems like the blink of an eye, she goes on to work in a first-class hospital where she could have been helping my own newborn children. I am moved at how our lives crossed paths, and I am so proud of Lesly.

Just like Lesly, 8 out of 10 Rise students successfully graduate from high school. The Rise Program has perhaps the most sustainable impact of any of the GLP's programs—transforming the lives of indigenous young people who then contribute to the development of their entire country. The education that Lesly obtained thanks to Rise will endure and benefit her throughout her lifetime. Currently, 53% of

program graduates are even helping to pay for their younger siblings' education—breaking the cycle of poverty for more young people in their own generation!

The GLP's projects are based in the belief that all children born into the cycle of poverty deserve the opportunity to rise above their current circumstances, and leveling the playing field for girls in education is a key component of this. We envision a future where indigenous youth—especially girls—are not only educated, but empowered to become leaders. As Rise expands to more and more youth across Guatemala, we are slowly building an entire cohort of educated graduates who are pulling themselves and their families out of poverty. As more and more young women like Lesly graduate and take on leadership positions, entire communities reap the benefits. When enough girls are educated, levels of poverty, malnutrition, parasitic disease, and illiteracy all fall. The girls that the GLP serves through the Rise Program will lead the way to a stronger future for all of Guatemala.

CHAPTER 10

SMALL SCHOLARSHIPS HELP ILLINOIS ADULTS BUILD THEIR CAREER

Vanessa Glavinskis
Photography by Ramon Palacios-Pelletier

In a seemingly affluent Chicago suburb, poverty stops many adult students from affording classes to advance their skillsets. Local Rotary clubs are helping pay for school. This story originally appeared in the September 2020 issue of Rotary magazine.

Stephanie Wallace was 13 years old when she gave birth to her first child. By age 19, she had five children and was raising them in Cabrini-Green, a notoriously violent Chicago public housing project, the same place where she had grown up.

“There was a lot of gun activity in Cabrini, and the apartment under ours was vacant,” Wallace recalls. “People would go in there and shoot out of the window.” One day, when two of her sons were four and five years old, she overheard them playing a game where they listened for a gunshot and tried to guess the kind of weapon that fired it. When one of her boys ran up to tell her, ‘You heard that, Mom? That’s a .45!’ she realized she needed to get her kids out of the projects.

But her family was against the idea. “My mom, my aunts, my whole family lived there. We helped each other,” Wallace says. If she moved to the suburbs, she would be on her own.

But Wallace was determined. She found a subsidized town house in Arlington Heights, a quiet suburb northwest of the city, and started working the night shift at a Kinko’s copy shop. She walked over an hour each way; she didn’t have a car, and there was no bus. It took her almost a year to save \$900 for a used car. Once she did, she found a job in health care with better hours and eventually became a certified nursing assistant.

Today, Wallace’s children are adults. “They’re all prospering,” she says proudly. Her elder daughter, who was the first in the family to

graduate from college, is pursuing a doctoral degree. One son became a nurse, another a welder, and the youngest joined the military. Her younger daughter is raising children of her own.

But with her children grown, Wallace felt adrift. “All I’d done was care for people since I was 13 years old,” she says. A doctor prescribed medication for depression and recommended she think about what she wanted to do next, now that she had time for herself. Wallace had earned a GED certificate and an associate degree in arts, but was never sure what direction she wanted to go. Now she thought of becoming a registered nurse — but discovered that the classes she had taken had eaten up all of the financial aid she was eligible to receive.

From Surviving to Thriving

Lauren Chilvers, a member of the Rotary Club of Schaumburg-Hoffman Estates, Illinois, says Wallace’s story reflects a hard reality facing many adult students: If they manage to find the time to attend classes, they often can’t afford it. Chilvers manages scholarship programs for Harper College, a community college that serves 35,000 students in Chicago’s northwest suburbs. She met Wallace through Harper’s Rita and John Canning Women’s Program, which helps women — often single mothers or victims of abuse — pursue their goals. After reading Wallace’s application, Chilvers thought she would be a good fit for a scholarship, funded by a Rotary Foundation global grant, that her Rotary club had started in partnership with Harper College. The program is called ACE, which stands for Advancing Community Economics. Since the program began in 2018, 21 adult students have received scholarships covering all their tuition and books through the \$80,000 ACE grant.



Photo: Stephanie Wallace says that the ACE scholarship still feels too good to be true.

“The ACE scholarship is for adults who have a low-income job and want to do better and build a career,” says Jean Schlinkmann, also a member of the Schaumburg-Hoffman Estates club. “We focus on the working poor and underemployed.”

Wallace applied, and a few weeks later she was sitting in front of a dozen people, some from the Rotary club and others from Harper, explaining why she thought nursing would be a good fit for her. A few days later, she learned that she had been accepted and that her tuition at Harper would be paid in full. “I’ve aced my classes, because I wasn’t worried about how I was going to pay for each class,” Wallace says. “Just having the funding alleviates so much stress. Nursing is a demanding program, and it’s hard to focus when you’re worried you’ll be dropped because of nonpayment.”

When the COVID-19 pandemic interrupted her studies, Wallace signed up with a staffing agency to help care for patients at

Illinois hospitals. “They need us during this pandemic, even students,” she says.

The ACE scholarship, Wallace says, made it all possible: “When they told me to come in for the interview, I didn’t understand the impact it was going to have on my life. I’d never gotten a scholarship, and when I found out it covered everything, I couldn’t do anything but cry and thank God. I have never been given anything. It still feels too good to be true.”



Photo: From left, Schaumburg-Hoffman Estates Rotarians Jean Schlinkmann, Shawn Parker, Eileen Higginbotham, and Lauren Chilvers.

Scholarships Support the Economically Vulnerable

Between 2010 and 2016, the number of people living below the poverty line in Chicago’s suburbs increased by 54 percent. Experts cite causes including gentrification trends that have priced families out of city neighborhoods as well as the suburbanization of jobs. But Kathy Millin, a member of the Rotary Club of Palatine who helps suburban families in need as the executive

director of the nonprofit Partners for Our Communities, says most of the families she works with — many of them immigrant families — moved to the suburbs seeking safer neighborhoods and better schools. “Safety seems to be the No. 1 reason they leave their country and why they leave the city,” she says. But life in the suburbs can also be difficult. In Chicago’s suburbs, public transportation is limited and there are fewer social service organizations than in the city.

Members of the Rotary Club of Schaumburg-Hoffman Estates — neighboring towns with median household incomes ranging from \$79,000 to \$89,000 — grew concerned about the number of struggling families in their area when they learned that one-third of the public high school students in the two communities were receiving free or reduced-price lunches. Although the area is considered affluent, that’s an “indicator of poverty in the township,” says Schaumburg-Hoffman Estates club member Eileen Higginbotham.

In 2015, club member Shawn Parker told the group about an idea she had that she thought could reduce poverty in the area and provide more skilled workers for local employers. It came to her when her son-in-law had a toothache.

Her daughter’s husband, she explains, never graduated from high school but had earned a GED certificate. He was working full time for a water filtration company when he developed dental problems that cost several thousand dollars to treat. Parker was shocked to learn that despite working full time, he had no benefits: “He didn’t have dental insurance, so I wrote a check for his dental bill,” she says. “I wrote a second check to help him get his commercial driver’s license [CDL]. He went from making \$10 an hour to making \$90,000 per year with full benefits driving a truck.”



Photo: Aaron Gross. “When I moved to Illinois from Texas, I got a job as an auto tech. But when the 2008 crash hit, I lost my job. I worked retail at Walgreens, then mall security and other jobs. From there, I transitioned to doing mechanical work, eventually working for a manufacturing company. But you can only go so high on the pay scale; opportunities don’t present themselves unless you pursue higher learning. Through the ACE grant, I’m getting the training now to transition into a career as an electrician. I’m a husband and a father, so I’m striving to make more money so I can better support my family.”

“He only needed \$2,000 to do the CDL course,” she told her fellow club members. “I thought, we have so many people doing minimum-wage jobs right here in our community. What if we gave them \$2,000 to get their CDL or an associate degree to become a lab tech or nurse? It’s not very expensive to do. Couldn’t we get people off government assistance just by giving them a career path?”

Parker, who is a certified financial planner, put up \$100,000 of her own money, and her club created a scholarship program that tapped Rotarians to serve as mentors to the

beneficiaries. “The club ran with it,” she says. They called it the Fishing Well.

Higginbotham says club members realized they had created a successful model when 89 percent of the adult students graduated — an unusually high “persistence ratio.” That inspired the club to try to reach more students by applying for a global grant and creating the ACE scholarship. The club asked a Rotary club in Taiwan whose members had taken part in a 2017 Rotary Friendship Exchange trip to the Chicago area — which included a visit to Rotary International headquarters in Evanston — to serve as the international partner on the grant. Five other clubs in Taiwan provided funds, and six additional Chicago-area clubs signed on to contribute financially or provide mentors for the students.

“We were astonished to know there are still many economically vulnerable people in

communities near Evanston,” says Uen Hua (Aircon) Chao, a member of the Rotary Club of DaDu in Taiwan. “This project gives us an opportunity to help improve productivity and bring peace and harmony.”

Students Who Will Persist

Gloria and Alberto Pérez grew up in Teotitlán del Valle, a village in the foothills of Mexico’s Sierra Madre de Oaxaca. For generations, families there have made a living by weaving rugs in intricate designs passed down from parents to children. “I stopped going to school at 15 to help at home,” Gloria says. “We’d wash the wool, dye the wool, wash it again. I would help set up everything so it’s ready to weave. I liked it. It was good to learn all that.”



Photo: Gloria and Alberto Pérez with their children, Amelia and Julián.

But when she turned 22, Gloria started to feel restless. By this time, Alberto, her childhood sweetheart, was living in the United States with his family, his father working in California's fields. But when Gloria told her parents she wanted to join Alberto there, they said no. Eventually, she gave them an ultimatum: If she couldn't go the United States, she wanted to move to Mexico City and finish school. "I wanted to know other things," she says. Reluctantly, her parents gave in, and she went to California.

Alberto and Gloria married in 2002 and later moved to the Chicago area, where Gloria's brother lived. Her brother recommended they take classes to become certified nursing assistants, as he had done.

The couple found work in nursing homes and moved to the suburb of Palatine. Gloria started visiting Partners for Our Communities, which houses a food pantry as well as a community center that offers educational programs for children. The first time she visited, she felt at ease. "I didn't understand all that they were saying, but I felt good," she recalls. There she met Rotarian Kathy Millin, who in addition to serving as director of the center also teaches in the GED program held there, which Gloria completed. When the ACE scholarship program was launched, Millin encouraged her to apply. But Gloria felt conflicted — if anyone in the family were to continue their education, she thought it should be Alberto. He was working two jobs, and with more education, maybe he could work only one.

In the end, they both applied. "I was shaking when I came out of the interview. I'd never done anything like that," Gloria recalls. She explained to the interviewers why she wanted to pursue a certificate to become a community health worker and answered their questions as best she could in English. "I didn't tell Alberto what it was like. I didn't want to scare him."

Much to her surprise, they were both accepted into the scholarship program. "Alberto and Gloria were in our first interview class," Chilvers says. "They were at the top of the list of

candidates who would be great for this scholarship. Not everyone gets picked. They may not be ready yet. You want students who will persist."

Alberto opted to study residential HVAC, a good fit for the former auto mechanic, and he gets hands-on experience at Harper's HVAC lab. Gloria is taking one class at a time when she is not working so she can spend time with their 11-year-old son and 15-year-old daughter. The COVID-19 pandemic forced the couple to switch to online classes, but they hope to finish their programs by the end of this year — and to land jobs with higher salaries just in time to send their daughter to college.

"I wouldn't have gone back to school if I hadn't gotten this grant," Alberto says. Because his mentor, Tim Gerhardt, a member of the Rotary Club of Schaumburg A.M., runs an industrial HVAC company, Alberto is optimistic about finding a job. "When I finish, he said he could guide me toward companies that might be hiring."

'Paying Bills and Paying for Classes Is So Hard.'

Since the Schaumburg-Hoffman Estates club started awarding scholarships to adult students in 2016, Parker has continued to help fund the program; she has personally given \$430,000 to date.

Parker's passion for the scholarship program stems from her experience as a single mother. By the time she was 26, she was divorced with two small children and was studying for a degree in finance and management. Overcoming the difficulties she faced changed her, she says. "I went back to school looking to reinvent myself," she explains. "I paid for it myself, working full time. I didn't have family or financial support. If you can get through it, you're a stronger person. But just because I did it on my own doesn't mean everyone can. Today, the cost of child care and of living in the suburbs is almost insurmountable. Paying bills and paying for classes is so hard."



Photo: Amy Hochberg. "I was a private piano and voice teacher until I got a divorce. Then I couldn't do that anymore because my lessons were at the same time that my kids were home from school. Also, I had no benefits. So I took a job in an office doing spreadsheets. But I missed the connection to people I had as a teacher; I also missed the sense that I was a benefit to the community somehow. I knew I couldn't spend the next 30 years doing spreadsheets. Because of the ACE grant, I'm able to study nursing. It's a profession you can do many things with; you can grow and change. Plus, it's recession-proof."

The toll on the economy caused by the COVID-19 pandemic makes these scholarships even more important. "Our students are doing the cleaning, they are nursing assistants, they work in factories," says Millin. "They've been exposed to this virus. Restaurant workers have lost their jobs. What we're facing is something we haven't seen before. Unemployment is affecting people who need to work two or three jobs to make it."

One consequence of that struggle is hunger, she says. The food pantry at Partners for Our Communities, which used to serve about 30 families every Saturday, was serving six times that many in April and May. "People are starting to despair," Millin says.

Scholarships like those provided by the ACE program are helping, one person at a time. "It allows people to earn a higher wage," Millin says. "A dad can work one job now and not two. A mom is able to find a job and be an example for her kids. It opens up a door for them. "I love being able to tell people, 'We have an opportunity that could change your life.'"

CHAPTER 11

REMEMBER NIGER COALITION

Ray Panczyk with contributions from Kara VanderKamp

Remember Niger Coalition is dedicated to expanding quality educational opportunities in Niger. Through a holistic approach and by working side-by-side with Nigerien partners, we are able to ensure that more children receive a high-quality education. For information, go to <https://www.rememberniger.org/>.

Origin of the Project

My first contact with the Remember Niger Coalition (Remember Niger) was in early 2016. Kara VanderKamp, their Executive Director, was a guest speaker at a regular weekly meeting at my Club, Montgomery Village Rotary in Maryland, U.S.A. Kara's presentation was a snapshot of Remember Niger's projects across the field of education for young girls and boys in Niger.

I was struck by the close cooperation with the local communities in establishing and then, jointly, successfully managing all of the 13 schools now up and operating. All had the needed host government authorizations and emphasized respect for all aspects of the local culture. Remember Niger's previous activity with Rotary International was part of a Global Grant coordinated by a number of Rotary Clubs in the U.S. Midwest.

As background, Niger is located in West-Central Africa on the southern edge of the Sahara Desert. It was recently listed on the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Human Development Index as 189th out of 189 countries. This makes it a target country for international aid and development.

I saw that myself in the mid-1970s. It was during the prolonged Sahel Drought. I traveled through a number of drought-affected countries carrying out survey work related to the impact of the drought in that part of Africa. Niger was one

of those countries. I later testified at a U.S. Congressional Subcommittee meeting on the Crisis in West Africa (Sahel) to present my findings.

In that first presentation at my Club, Kara discussed the Remember Niger's Girls Advancement Program, making special mention of the Hamsa Girls Education Center in Tahoua. As Kara has described it, the goal of Remember Niger's Girls Advancement Program is to reverse the negative gender statistics that affect the lives of millions of girls in Niger. By providing families, schools, and communities with an example of the value of educating girls, Remember Niger works to break down barriers of gender perception and stigma.

Further, by keeping girls in school, Remember Niger's Girls Advancement Program helps increase the age at which girls get married. The length of time a girl in Niger stays in school is most often correlated with the age at which she marries. By increasing the number of girls that stay in school, the program is contributing to overall systemic change to increase the age at marriage for girls in Niger. Studies show that a combination of education and age at which girls marry are also indicators of the health of their children, family income, and whether or not they educate their female children.

Girls in Niger face significant cultural and socioeconomic barriers to obtaining education. Mitigating these barriers are complex and have proven to require multifaceted approaches to break down.

Niger ranks among the top five poorest countries in the world. The economic position of the country directly impacts girls access to education. With limited resources, families in Niger prioritize boys education and keep girls home to help with house, water supply, and agricultural work. Although Niger has a free

public education system, costs related to school fees, uniforms, books, and meals are too expensive for families to afford for their children, in general, and the choice between educating male over female children continues to negatively impact girls.

Another important barrier to education in Niger is the incidence of early marriage. Overall, in Niger, 28% of girls are married before the age of 15 and 76% are married before their 18th birthday (Girls Not Brides). Early marriage is a main factor in girls ending their education before middle school because of the demands placed on young girls to manage their households and start families.

Scholarships and Hamsa Girls Education Center

School scholarships at the primary and secondary level provided through Remember Niger's Girls Advancement Program are an effective tool to remove the economic barrier to girls' education. Families with limited financial resources are more likely to send/support their daughters' education when there is not a financial impact associated with it. In addition to providing scholarships, Remember Niger helped establish the Hamsa Girls Education Center (HGEC) in 2019.



Photo: The first class of students.

HGEC addresses a critical need for female-focused secondary education. In Niger, only 7% of girls complete secondary school. Furthermore, because girls leave school at early ages, they miss critical opportunities to learn about health conditions, reproductive health, and illnesses that impact their lives. In addition to two-thirds of Nigerien girls marrying before the age of 18, Niger has the highest fertility rate in the world at almost seven children per woman.

The compounding factors of low-levels of female education, high levels of early child marriage, and high fertility rates, contribute to poor health, economic, and childhood indicators across the country. By providing an all-girls school with in-school health programming and professional skills courses, HGEC seeks to improve the futures of adolescent girls across Niger.

Under local community leadership, HGEC provides a safe space that offers both formal and informal learning opportunities for adolescent girls and young women in Niger. Through a culturally sensitive, diverse approach that offers both formal educational opportunities such as tutoring and test support, as well as skills training, the Center seeks to help break the cycle of multi-dimensional poverty, reduce early marriage rates, and improve the overall quality of life for this generation of young women and generations to come.

This project caught my attention because of the clearness of its focus, its needs such as solar-powered electricity to pump water from depths of over 100 ft., and the necessary physical security for the entire school compound.

School Facilities

Remember Niger had carefully considered the complexity of girls' education in Niger before constructing HGEC. In concert with their partners on the ground, they designed the

construction and implementation of the projects and programs with all of the challenges to girls' education in mind. For example, the first projects at HGEC included the construction of a security wall, the construction of a well and water tower and the installation of a solar-powered pump, as well as the construction of private latrines with wash stations.

The construction of these elements in the beginning were critical for giving parents confidence that their daughters would be safe at school. Additionally, it's estimated in Niger that girls in secondary school are absent 25% of the time because they don't have access to private bathrooms and wash stations during menstruation. By addressing these issues early, the school was able to begin successfully and they had a nearly 100% attendance rate their first year.

Later, members of my Rotary Club met to plan how our Club could help finance current needs at the HGEC. At that point, we learned that the solar-powered funding had just been financed by other sources, including the Gaithersburg Rotary Club in Maryland. What remained was the construction of the important security wall. We applied our Club's Foundation funds to start the wall. Bethesda-Chevy Chase Rotary, also in Maryland, joined our initial funding efforts.

At various stages, we used the detailed planning and cost estimates quickly provided by Remember Niger. Additional funding came from the Rotary Club of Niamey-Gaweye. A number of businesses in Niger also provided significant cash and in-kind support for the Center's needs.

As the security wall construction progressed, we studied Remember Niger's architectural plans and budgets for a state-of-the-art latrine block for the young women students. For that project, following our cash input, we secured additional funding from Gaithersburg Rotary and Bethesda-Chevy Chase Rotary.



Photos: The Hamsa school building (above) and latrines (below).



Along the way, timely progress reports, photos, and financial data came in from Remember Niger. Their U.S. representatives also gave presentations at all three of the above-mentioned Rotary Clubs

Note that with a small office in Maradi, Niger, Remember Niger is better able to maintain timely on-the-ground coordination with all of their partners.

Early in 2020, recognition of Remember Niger projects led to an invitation from the Literacy Rotary Action Group for Kara and me to be panelists in one of the major breakout sessions at the Rotary International Conference scheduled for July 2020 in Hawaii. The panel topic was: Educating Girls: A Long-Range Community Investment. Because of the threat of the emerging Covid-19 virus, as we know, the Conference was cancelled. However, in its place, there was a successful webinar in July 2020 with over 180 registrants. Kara and I were pleased to be the two panelists for the Remember Niger segment of the Webinar.



Photo: A student in the school.

Future Projects

Future cooperation with Remember Niger looks promising. For the Hamsa Girls Education Center, funds are needed for:

- A solar-powered electrical system to support classroom lighting, fans, laptops and other technology. This project also includes a computer training program for young women from a nearby college in Tahoua. Funding still needed.
- On a larger scale, funds are needed for capital improvement projects: Construction of a kitchen, cafeteria, and three classrooms.
- Support is also needed for remedial health and skills programs for out-of-school youth.



Photo: Water tower and bricks for construction.

To look at other programs underway in Niger, please take a glance at the latest Remember Niger Annual Report on their website. The annual report shows a number of areas where interested Rotary Clubs, other funding agencies, and individuals can play an important role in Niger's education programs.

CHAPTER 12

EDU-GIRLS

Anand Seth

The World Bank estimates that the cost to global society of not educating girls is around \$15-30 Trillion! In developing countries, only 67% of girls finish primary school, just 34% finish secondary school and a mere fraction complete High School. Edu-GIRLS focuses on the education of impoverished girls. We customize our program delivery to overcome all constraints faced by such girls due to economic hardships, gender biases, pressure to get married young, and demands on their time at home. For more information, go to <https://edugirls.org/>.

The Imperative of Educating Girls²⁵

Five years ago, at about the time I started Edu-GIRLS in 2016, I wrote a blog for Fair Observer. What I wrote then is still what motivates me today to work towards improving girls' education, including through Edu-Girls. The blog is reproduced.

My mother was a bright girl with a keen desire to learn, but she was not allowed to continue her education beyond Grade 8 as that meant she had to go to school in another town. Eighty years later, Malala wanted to go to school, but she was shot because of it, even though the school was in her own home town. They shot her to stop her from promoting education for girls. The moot question is: Are things getting worse for girls?

The power of educated girls in transforming society is so sweeping that societies resistant to change have attempted to halt change by first stopping girls from going to

school. While this is but expected of such societies, the attitude of most of their governments who have made tall promises before the United Nations (UN) to ensure universal primary and secondary school education is disappointing to say the least. In the year 2000, most of these governments had promised to achieve universal primary school education by 2015. However, a study by the UN in 2014 assessed that the last girl living in poverty will not complete her primary education before 2086. The silence on this monumental failure of the 21st century is deafening.

Empty Promises

Everyday nearly 700 million children go to school worldwide. But missing from amongst them are the 30 million girls living in poverty. The world has let them down with broken promises. The world has not yet achieved universal primary education, and grand new promises of universal secondary education by 2030 ring hollow. These targets are likely to remain mere promises because there is little evidence that relevant lessons have been learnt as we embark on the next ambitious step.

Barriers to girls getting a quality education are often in the schools themselves, where girls do not have separate toilets, teachers are untrained, under-motivated and quite often just absent doing second jobs. Most schools catering to the poor do not have adequate books and infrastructure, and teaching methods are outdated. Many governments in Africa and South Asia are unable to address these issues and have relied upon non-profit civil

²⁵ This introduction is reproduced from a blog "Will Girls Living in Poverty Ever Get an Education?"

published on August 17, 2016 by *Fair Observer*. The blog is available [here](#).

organizations to step in and promote teachers' training to construction of toilets.

But there are serious barriers to education of girls outside the school environment due to poverty and bias. Barriers manifest themselves when parents prefer to devote scarce family resources—be it milk or clothes—to the male child, keeping girls at home to take care of chores and siblings while they go out to eke out a living, or when parents concerned about girls' safety keep girls at home only to get them married off young.

Such barriers to learning are not limited to the developing world. In the USA, an educator named Tiffany Andersen was recently awarded an honorary PhD for her work to transform the performance of Jennings School District of St. Louis County in Missouri. What she brought to this school district of 3,000 underprivileged African-American students over three years with the help of corporate foundations was not better teaching methods but a set of social solutions: a basic health clinic for keeping children at school, a food bank for nutrition, a clothing outlet for free winter wear, an after-school care program and even, for some, a shelter. As she overcame these poverty and class-related barriers, which are a challenge for government systems to handle alone, performance improved significantly.

Innovation and creativity that are essential to overcoming such barriers need the passion, drive and flexibility of the not-for-profit sector, to find and pursue outside-the-box solutions, like Tiffany Anderson did.

Think Pink

When parents want to keep a girl at home doing chores, schools have to come up with schedules which allow for both—work at home and time for school. When parents worry about girls' security, schools have to come up with safe campuses and secure transportation. When lack of eyeglasses, ill health, poor nutrition and lack of warm clothing affect the child, schools have to find solutions to address these basic needs as a precursor to learning. Vimukti

Girls School in Jaipur, India, is a fine example of customizing delivery in the context of girls living in poverty.

When parents cannot provide pre- and post-school care, schools have to be ready to provide support. Where extreme poverty will only keep a girl at school if parents are given cash, it should be done. Cash incentives may be given out by way of scholarships and prizes. When parents want to marry a girl off at a young age, schools have to not only counsel the girl and her parents, but also ensure vocational training to prepare girls for jobs, so that they become income earners for their families and thus fend off pressure to get married.

In India, which prides itself of a Right to Education Law guaranteeing free primary education near one's home and a prime minister-led campaign to "Educate Girls, Save Girls," barriers to education for girls, both in school and out of it, are still quite serious. Enrollment is up, but completion rate for girls even at secondary level is shockingly low, besides being of very poor quality. Expenditures have been made on school buildings, many without students.

Governments have also spent money in raising teachers' salaries, instead of ensuring their attendance, with many teachers working at second jobs. On the whole there has been a lack of will in ensuring quality education at the primary and secondary levels for girls living in poverty. Also, while NGOs have been able to assist in increasing enrollment in rural areas and help improve quality of education in public schools, out-of-school barriers facing girls living in poverty persist and there is a surprising lack of engagement of the government with the NGOs in this field.

Many not-for-profit organizations are doing the kind of innovative things that need to be done to bring girls living in poverty a quality educational experience and they are producing good results. They are often doing it at half or a third of the costs incurred by governments, but they lack scale needed to reach the 30 million girls who are not enrolled. Therefore, governments have to be actively involved to

push innovative out-of-the-box approaches developed by NGOs as they launch new programs to bring in girls and increase secondary and high school completion rates. This has to be a global movement and the voices of girls living in poverty have to be heard above the din of hype and sloganeering. Without that, this monumental failure of the 21st century will hold us back as a society while we move into the future.

Edu-Girls

While some gains have been achieved towards girls' education since 2016, much remains to be done. Our goals at Edu-Girls is to enable girls living in extreme poverty to achieve financial independence through customized, quality education, vocational training and college scholarships. We are one of the few organizations in the world which stays with girls from early childhood to college and on to successful careers.

Edu-GIRLS is applying 10 Mantras that are based on holistic global best practice interventions uniquely responsive in addressing barriers of poverty and gender that stand in the way of educating girls. Our programs are implemented across four schools. They are executed at a low cost by applying economical solutions, developing partnerships, and minimizing non-educational overheads.

The 10 Edu-GIRLS Mantras are:

1. Free Education: Includes tuition, books, and uniforms.

2. Short School Days and Long School Year: 278 school days as opposed to a norm of 200, enabling girls to study as well as fulfill responsibilities at home.

3. Safe Campus and Transportation: Largely all-female campus, with safe and time saving transportation by school buses.

4. Nutrition, Health and Hygiene: Includes daily nutritious snack in school, annual health check-up and feminine hygiene products.

5. English Curriculum: Increased language proficiency for better performance on

School Board exams, and competitive advantage for better paying jobs.

6. Quality Education: Low teacher-student ratio, smart class technology, digital learning through personal tablets, regular teacher training, school library, and extracurricular activities.

7. Performance Incentives: Annual studentships linked to performance, deposited into accounts to be cashed upon completion of High School. Merit based awards for Science, Maths, English and Information Technology.

8. Science and Technology Streams will be added to the High School curriculum starting in 2020-21 for those aspiring towards professional careers in these fields.

9. Vocational and College Scholarships and Career Counseling: For acquiring vocational skills and/or college degrees, and job placements.

10. Community Outreach: To foster family support for the girls' careers and to delay marriage.

Figure 1: Edu-GIRLS' 10 mantras



Source: Edu-GIRLS.

Box 1: The Mantras at Work in Vimukti Girls School in Jaipur, India

We currently operate four schools: Vimukti Girls School in Jaipur, India; SRGVVK Trust School in Bengaluru, India; Saraswati School in Makwanpur, Nepal; and Malik School in Kohat, Pakistan. Vimukti Girls School in Jaipur, India was established in 2004, is one of the four schools sponsored by Edu-GIRLS. Over 600 girls receive free education, uniforms and books. The school has a 100% pass rate on Board exams, and 32 graduates are ready for their first job. With Vimukti as proof of concept for the 10 Mantras, we are on the way to cracking the glass ceiling of entrenched urban poverty. Edu-GIRLS support to date to the school is at \$712,000. In 2019, 629 girls were enrolled. The 10th Grade Board Exams results indicate that 56% of girls passed in the First Division. For the 12th Grade Board Exams, 83% of girls passed in First Division. The cost of a girl's education in the school is just \$0.75 per day.

The ten mantras at work: **1. Free Education:** Includes tuition, books, and uniforms; **2. Short School Days and Long School Year:** 278 school days as opposed to a norm of 200, enabling girls to study as well as fulfill responsibilities at home; **3. Safe Campus and Transportation:** Largely all-female campus, with safe and time saving transportation by school buses; **4. Nutrition, Health and Hygiene:** Includes daily nutritious snack in school, annual health check-up and feminine hygiene products; **5. English Curriculum:** Increased language proficiency for better performance on School Board exams, and competitive advantage for better paying jobs; **6. Quality Education:** Low teacher-student ratio, smart class technology, digital learning through personal tablets, regular teacher training, school library, and extracurricular activities; **7. Performance Incentives:** Annual studentships linked to performance, deposited into accounts to be cashed upon completion of High School. Merit based awards for Science, Maths, English and Information Technology; **8. Science and Technology Streams** will be added to the High School curriculum starting in 2020-21 for those aspiring towards professional careers in these fields; **9. Vocational and College Scholarships and Career Counseling:** For acquiring vocational skills and/or college degrees, and job placements; **10. Community Outreach:** To foster family support for the girls' careers and to delay marriage.



Photo: A group of students at Vimukti Girls School in Jaipur, India.

Portraits of Students

Perhaps more than statistics, the best way to share our work and how we are impacting girls' lives is to provide portraits of students. Below are six such portraits.

Sinchana - SRGVVK SCHOOL



Sinchana, a 6th grader at SRGGVK school, Bengaluru, is severely impacted by COVID-19, yet making a heroic attempt to continue her education. Her father is a painter and mother a maid, and both lost their earnings due to COVID lockdown. The school, with Edu-GIRLS funding, distributed food rations. With schools closed for an indefinite time, classes continued through smartphones.

Sinchana's parents do not have a smartphone and her mother has a hearing disability. This has not stopped Sinchana in her journey of learning. The lessons are sent either to her neighbor's phone, or to her uncle's phone who is an auto driver. She receives these lessons when her uncle returns at night, or by visiting her neighbor. Now, with your support she will get her own tablet. She is motivated to continue her

studies and excited to explore new ways of learning.

J. Rakshita - SRGVVK SCHOOL



RAKSHITHA.J
S.R.G.V.V.K (T)

Rakshita, a 10th Grade student of the SRGVVK Trust School, Bengaluru India, is a young girl living in poverty. Her father is a manual laborer on daily wages. Her mother works at a garment factory. During the COVID-19 lockdown, both her parents were not able to earn any income and financial ruin was just around the corner. Rakshita has said that were it not for the rations provided to her family during the COVID 19 lockdown, she and her sister Yashvanti, would have been on the street. This is why she hopes to become a Chartered Accountant. Her wish is to have a nest egg and look after her parents in their old age. She finished Grade 10 Board getting a "Distinction".

Preeti Mahavar - Vimukti School



Preeti Mahavar came to Vimukti as a toddler and grew into a motivated and disciplined student, with a dream to become a school teacher. She credits her parents with motivating her and her three siblings to get educated even when their family struggled financially. Preeti's father works as a driver on daily wages, and her mother stays home to look after the four children, but the family made education a priority, sending all four children to school. Preeti excelled in 12th grade with distinction in Economics and Home Science. Today, she is a college student, in an integrated program which combines a Bachelor of Arts degree along with a Bachelor's of Education degree, qualifying her to become a school teacher. Preeti is a role model for the children in her neighborhood who are inspired by her and wish to follow in her footsteps. Preeti misses her teachers at Vimukti, who always motivated her to excel. Looking at Preeti's positive outlook one would never know the adversity she has faced. An Edu-GIRLS scholarship will ensure that Preeti can follow her dreams and make her parents proud.

Amulya R. - SRGVVK School



Amulya R. is just like any teenage girl with dreams of making something of herself. Her father worked as a manual laborer in a bicycle shop and money was tight. After her father's recent death, her mother was the sole provider earning \$150/month as a housemaid. Having no home to call their own, Amulya, her mom and brother live with relatives.

When Amulya finished 7th grade at SRGVVK School, her mother could not afford to send her to school anymore. Amulya hoped to go to a good school to continue her education in English, a gateway to a better life. An Edu-GIRLS scholarship enabled her to not only to continue her studies but also receive tutoring in English to keep up with the rigorous curriculum of her new school. She hopes to develop her IT skills and is determined to overcome all obstacles that stand in her way. Her Edu-GIRLS scholarship will ensure she can complete her education.

Kanchan Sain - Vimukti School Alumnus



“Ambition is the first step to success. The second step is action” says Kanchan. Kanchan Sain is 19 years old. She is an Ex-student of Vimukti Girls School. She studied in VGS till class VIII and then appeared for her class X through open schooling under the guidance of VGS. She then joined a Government school in class XI.

After completing her school in April 2016, she opted for a 2 year Beautician course from Government Polytechnic, Jaipur. Vimukti Sanstha, aided by Edu-GIRLS, provided financial support to Kanchan to pursue this course. She completed the course this year and is now placed in a Beauty Parlor and earning around Rs. 6000 per month. She wants to become a make-up artist and to open her own Parlor.

Kanchan's father, Mr. Raju Sain is a driver. Her mother, Mrs Pushpa Sain works in a boutique. Kanchan has one younger sister who is studying in college, and one younger brother studying in class VIII in a government school. The family is finding it difficult to support their education expenses and Kanchan is now happy to support her family financially.

Kanchan is a strong and ambitious girl. She wants all girls to focus on their ambitions, and more importantly, she wants that parents should support their daughters and them fulfill their dreams.

Neetu Sahu - Vimukti School



Neetu Sahu is 14 years old and is studying in Grade 7. She joined Vimukti in 2012 in class I. Earlier, she was in a private school and her father could not afford the high fee so she was forced to drop out. One of her father's cousins told him about Vimukti and that is how Neetu started schooling again. She lives in Jawahar Nagar slum. Her father is an auto driver and is not able to earn much. There are five family members consisting of Neetu, her parents and two elder brothers. Neetu's mother is hearing and speech impaired - she doesn't keep too well and a lot of money is spent on her medication. Neetu's brothers haven't studied much and do petty jobs in motor repair shops. Her father is disappointed with his sons and has high hopes from Neetu. He encourages her all the time to study hard, take up a job and contribute to the financial health of the family.

They have just one room in their house. There is no attached toilet and bathroom and have to use public facilities for the same. Till recently, Neetu had to fetch water daily from a far-off place for the entire family. Somehow, Neetu's father saved money and got them a water pump. Earlier, her father was very short tempered, abusive and fought with her mother. Neetu started objecting to this and he now tries to control his temper. He does not fight with her mother any more.

Neetu wants to be financially independent so that she can help her parents. She wants to become an English Teacher.

Seeta Lal - Malik School



“I used to see elder children wearing school uniforms and carrying their backpacks and I always wanted to have a backpack of my own. My teachers and my friends never let me feel any different from them,” says Seeta.

Seeta Laal, a resident of a remote village in the Khyber Pakhtoon Khuwa province is the eldest sister among 5 siblings. Her father, Pyaarey Laal, an herbal physician, had always wanted to provide the best for his daughters. In search for good education, he moved to Kohat and was happy to find a place for Seeta at the Malik School. The curriculum at this school is

authorized by Oxford. The family had never imagined being able to receive private quality education with an elaborate English Language course.

Conclusion

Edu-GIRLS is an innovative program that achieves results. As a nimble organization, we are also able to adapt quickly to new challenges. This was the case for our response to the COVID-19 pandemic. We were able to implement a comprehensive set of interventions to minimize the impact of the crisis. This included (1) Meal Rations: Distributing rations and saving the family from financial ruin during the lockdown; (2) Tablets for Online Learning: Providing tablets loaded with relevant software for on-line learning from slum homes; (3) Incentives for Teachers: Supporting teachers with digital training and incentives, to deliver excellence; (4) Incentives for Students: Providing incentives to girls to stay and excel girls resist pressure to drop out; and (5) Mentors from Community: Recruiting educated mothers as mentors to substitute for direct teacher interaction (for more details see Box 2).

We hope that you will join our efforts as so much remains to be done!



Photo: Tablets being distributed at Vimukti Girls School.

Box 2: Edu-GIRLS' COVID Action Agenda (CAA)

The objective of CAA is to ensure that poverty itself does not prevent girls from getting an education they need to get out of poverty. Simply, to give girls living in poverty the same opportunity to get an education during the pandemic that better off children have. It is also to ensure that the efforts of the last 5 years do not go up in smoke! CAA has five components:

1. Distribution of Rations to save family from financial ruin and to keep girls off the street. Rations cover the entire family during the months of lock down when daily wage earners are at most risk. This component will cost \$25,000.

2. Effective Digital Learning: Both teachers and girls are provided with digital devices loaded with syllabus linked software to continue digital learning and to be competitive with other children in School Board examinations. Unlike in computer rooms, girls would be allowed to take devices to their homes to continue self-learning. Teachers are being trained. Devices are protected against use for other than school work. Siblings will share a device. There are risks that devices will be lost, damaged or even sold: but the reward to risk ratio is very high to justify the program. This component will cost about \$75,000 in 2020/21 for 700 girls.

3. Incentives for girls: they need to stay in school, learn and achieve excellence. During the pandemic, the girls feel greater pressure to pick up menial jobs to bring some income to the family at the cost of education. Financial incentive are provided to stay in school and show results so that parents can feel the learning and support the girls yearning to be bright. This component will cost about \$5000 in 2020/21.

4. Incentives for teachers: Their important role has now become absolutely critical. They need to work smarter and harder to accelerate their progress to become ideal teachers who plan well, interact effectively, promote problem solving over rote learning, integrate technology in lesson delivery and help girls master the English language. Both effort and achievement are being rewarded through an objective assessment and multiyear support program of counseling and training for teachers. This component will cost about \$10,000 in 2020/21.

5. Mentoring Mothers program: Lack of face to face schooling has disrupted the valuable bonds developed between teachers and girls, which went beyond course work to counseling and personal development. This gap is to be filled by inviting educated mothers and retired teachers living in the "bastis" to play this role for an honorarium. This component will cost about \$2,500 in 2020/21.

CAA Add-ons for the Second and Third Wave.

The second wave is more intense and has over-stretched the capacity of government institutions to provide needed support. The talk is now of a potential 3rd wave and school re-opening plans have been shelved to later in 2021. In response Edu-GIRLS has joined forces with the schools and other nonprofits to help fight off these new waves, by adding three components: (1) Vaccination drive for girls, families and school staff in partnership with local hospitals as they gain access to vaccines on the open market. This component will cost about \$30,000; (2) Basic treatment facility at school site with 25 beds and oxygen concentrators and bipap machines to be ready for a possible third wave. This component will cost about \$30,000 in 2021, subject to need re-assessments in July; and (3) Effective return to school, will involve independent learning assessments and remediation courses for those who may have fallen behind grade, with the help of digital self-learning software. This component will cost \$20,000 in 2021/22.

CHAPTER 13

IMPROVING GIRLS' EDUCATION IN KENYA

Emily Manjeru

In Turkana County, Northern Kenya, where cases of early marriage, girls dropping out of school due in part to social norms, and lack of access to quality education are an unsettling norm, girls are 1.3 times more likely not to go back to school against their male counterparts. Rotary International, the Global Partnership for Education (GPE), and the Ministry of Education are piloting a three-year comprehensive education project in the County dubbed 'GPE-Elimika Project'. This article explains the rationale for the project and some of its characteristics.



Photo: A child going to school in Turkana County.

Dorcas Lokidor, the Deputy Head teacher of Loyo Primary School in Turkana County is losing students to teenage pregnancies. One of her class 7 pupils, Deborah, is 16 years old. She gave birth in December amid complications. To save her student, Dorcas pleaded with Deborah's mother, Alice, to allow

her to join her classmates in January as they figured out how to balance academics and parenting.

"The school has a strong guidance and counselling unit that inspires hope in our girls. We try to encourage the teen mothers to get back on track as soon as they give birth and support them by allowing them to take their children for clinic visits or to breastfeed their children during break. They must however remain focused on their academics," says Dorcas.



Photo: Dorcas Lokidor, the Deputy Headteacher of Loyo Primary School in Turkana County.

Deborah's story is not unique in Turkana County where cases of early marriage, girls dropping out of school due to culture and lack of access to quality education are an unsettling norm. Deborah falls in the grim statistics of girls in Turkana County being 1.3 times more likely not to go back to school against their male

counterparts. Her 36-year-old mother also failed to attend school and does menial jobs to sustain her five children.

Deborah's aspirations of becoming a doctor could become a reality thanks to a partnership between Rotary International, the Global Partnership for Education (GPE), and the Ministry of Education for a pilot three-year comprehensive education project in the County dubbed '*GPE-Elimika Project*'. The project is led by the Rotary Club of Muthaiga in Kenya and the Rotary Club of Metro Bethesda in Washington, DC, with implementation support from the Rotary Clubs of Karen, Nairobi-East, Ruiru, Nairobi Connect and Nairobi-Lang'ata.

“One of our key areas of focus as Rotary is Basic Education and Literacy. Together with the Ministry of Education and key sector players, we earmarked Turkana based on the alarming rate of dropouts witnessed in the County. We need to act fast to save the girls, who still experience more hurdles than their male counterparts when pursuing quality life,” noted The Rotary Foundation Trustee Geeta Manek.

The effects of nomadism on the quality and access to education are evidenced by the low levels of literacy that are prevalent across the County.



Photo: Looking at a tablet for learning in Turkana County.

GPE is dedicated to giving children in the poorest countries, especially girls, the education they need to unlock their full potential. “The GPE program mobilizes global and national efforts to contribute to the achievement of equitable quality education and learning for all. GPE includes and supports close to 70 developing countries to help them develop and implement quality education sector plans and build strong education systems,” noted GPE Chief Executive Officer, Alice Albright.

GPE will leverage Rotarians in the country and beyond to monitor and implement the program on the ground. The tripartite partnership between Rotary International, the GPE, and the Ministry of Education will develop and disseminate messages and psychosocial support to teachers, non-teaching staff, learners, and parents. The project will also build the capacity of head teachers, teachers and non-teaching staff and learners with regards to COVID 19 management. This will also include aggressive back to school campaigns. Finally, the project will ensure that teachers can deliver on alternative mode of curriculum and on ICT to support e-learning and distance learning.

“The COVID-19 Pandemic has also driven creativity in our learning institutions, which calls for more stakeholder engagement across every tier. The GPE project will help accelerate the use of digital learning materials among underserved communities,” said Elyas Abdi, Director General of the Ministry of Education.

The ambitious and transformative project will seek funding from goodwill partners

to ensure continued learning through online content and provide offline resources to children not accessing online learning. It will strive to build the capacity of County Master Trainers and Training of Trainers on Public Health Protocols and changes, as well as develop training manuals to build capacity of various stakeholders. The pilot has started and will run until the end of 2022.



Photo: Alice Albright. “GPE includes and supports close to 70 developing countries to help them develop and implement quality education sector plans and build strong education systems.”



Photo: Young children at school in Kenya.

Box 1: Activities planned under the Project

The project has been approved under a Rotary Foundation global grant (GG2120048) with a budget of US\$ 134,500. The main activities planned for the project are as follows:

- a. Recruit additional Support Staff in Public Schools;
- b. Enhance communication to increase awareness on COVID-19 at the school level;
- c. Build the capacity of County Master Trainers and ToTs on public health protocols and changes in the management of education at the school level;
- d. Build the capacity of teachers on alternative mode of curriculum delivery and on ICT to support e-education and distance learning;
- e. Monitoring of capacity building exercise;
- f. Coordinate WASH activities at targeted schools;
- g. Facilitate logistical requirements for government officers and Rotary team;
- h. Conduct back to school campaign to ensure all learners return back to school;
- i. Conduct a survey on impact of COVID-19 to education in Turkana county;
- j. Conduct a baseline survey on school reopening in Turkana;
- k. Development and dissemination of messages for schools reopening;
- l. Procure and provide e-learning gadgets to learners in targeted schools;
- m. Identify opportunities and Establish Rotary Community Corps(RCC).

CHAPTER 14

MANOS A LA OBRA: A PROJECT FOR THE SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT OF GUATEMALAN MEN AND WOMEN IN POVERTY

Vicky van der Henst-Homsy

Guatemala, the country where color was born! I lived in one of the most beautiful places in the world: Guatemala. My country is rich with Spanish colonial heritage and Mayan ruins. It extends between two oceans and has a fortress-like ring of mountains and volcanos. Guatemala is home to epic tales and beautiful people proud of their traditions. This article tells the story of my involvement with "Manos a la Obra", an Economic and Community Development Project in Guatemala.

Highlights of the Project

The pilot project has been working for seven consecutive years in 21 municipalities of the Republic of Guatemala, establishing strategic alliances with the municipalities through the Municipal Office for Women, the Technical Institute of training-INTECAP, and the General Directorate Extracurricular Education-DIGEEX of the Ministry of Education.

During these years, the project has graduated 2,344 people. Of those, 1,242 are now seamstresses and tailors, creating mainly lines of whites, men's and women's clothing, and bags. The other 1,102 graduates are bakers, chefs, and bartenders.

There has been improvement in the quality of life of participants. The project has helped generate capacities and competencies that have encouraged entrepreneurship for their businesses. The project has thereby facilitated access to work and helped fight poverty at the municipal level.

My Involvement in the Project

I became directly involved during a summer visit to Guatemala in 2018 when Jose Moreno, a Past President of the Rotary Club Guatemala Este and Ms. Marina Alejos from the Women's Council invited me to join the project, serving as a Rotarian liaison in the USA and Canada. During that summer visit, we started gathering information from the different municipalities already working on the project and future ones considered through telephone conversations.

On the next trip to Guatemala, I contacted my classmates, women who were working with poor communities all over the country. Isabel Anderson offered her beautiful house in Antigua, and Mirella Rionda lent us a station wagon with which we covered the whole country for the ten-day trip.

The group included several Rotarians from Honduras and the USA working in different community development projects and Ms. Marina Alejos, the liaison between the Mayors, the Municipality Coordinators, and the Women's Council. After visiting several communities in the western region, we were all invited to visit El Corredor Seco, a rocky, dry area where clean running water lacks in the villages. It is one of the country's poorest regions and one of the regions that suffered the most from the powerful hurricanes Eta and Iota at the end of 2019. It is the region where people today flee to emigrate to the USA.



Photo: A haute couture class.



Photo: Students of a bakery class



Photo (left to right): Marina Alejos, two graduates, Vicky Homsy, Wade Bradford, Mayor-Federico Bethancourt, two graduates and their families.



Photo: Hurricane Iota destroys one of many towns in Guatemala (November 3, 2019).

We continued visiting villages and towns in the highlands of the Central Region, meeting with *Cocoles*, the representatives of indigenous villagers, and health officials. We met with several Rotarians involved with a WASH project that collected and contributed important information from the different villages in the region. It saved us time, effort, and money! On our final night of the trip, the project coordinator invited us to attend the 2019-20 graduation ceremony for *Manos a la Obra* in Ciudad Vieja, Sacatepéquez. Many young women and men were graduating and had completed a year-long training program to become professional seamstresses and chefs. I was amazed to see how successful the project had become!



Photo: The Mayor, Federico Bethancourt of Ciudad Vieja, Sacatepéquez, with a group of graduates.

Showcasing *Manos a la Obra* at a Rotary Fair

In early February 2020, two weeks after my return home in the USA, I was informed that *Uniendo América*, a Rotary fair, would take place two weeks later in Antigua, Guatemala. It was an incredible opportunity for us to introduce the project to members of other Rotary clubs. The next day I reserved our space. We had to be ready fast! Ms. Alejos and I began to create a professional booth that involved some graduate students from Ciudad Vieja cooking courses. We decided to give a tasting presentation using the sweets and pastries the students would prepare for the occasion. We would use the new sales kiosk that Ivonne Leiva, one of our success story students of *Mano a la Obra*, had created.

Ms. Alejos agreed to contact and supervised the students, and I would organize the information we had, design the brochures and business cards, and print posters with names and photos for the project. We worked long hours putting together printed informational brochures and preparing all the necessary elements to mount a beautiful display.

Two days before the fair, I flew again to Guatemala, and we traveled with Ms. Alejos to Antigua, where we stayed in a small hotel. There were many hours of exhaustive work. We now had a space in the exhibit hall room next to where the waiters served coffee break, a bustling area. Visitors would have the opportunity to taste the pastries and typical candy prepared by the project's students.

It was a significant and successful experience. We made many contacts. Perhaps the most important one was meeting a representative of the Rotary Foundation. She reviewed the written information we had and pointed out the changes and adjustments we needed to apply for a global grant. We also attended many educational workshops and social gatherings.



Photo: Ivonne Leiva's sales kiosk.



Photo: Our Bar-Tender graduates win Third Place in the National competition. They all became employed by prestigious hotels in the area.



Photo: Marina Alejos, Jose Moreno, and Vicky Homsy at the fair in Antigua, Guatemala.



Photo: This graduate has opened two candy stores in one of the busiest Guatemala City bus stations, the Centra Norte in zone 17.

Covid-19 Interrupts the Project.

A month after the Fair, in March 2020, Covid-19 spread globally. Everyone had to stay home and communicate virtually. The classes stopped, but we continued promoting our Project and building a platform for the future.

At the beginning of 2021, Mr. Moreno suggested that I contact Ms. Margarita Mejicanos, a Guatemalan who lives in San Antonio, Texas. She would collaborate with us, writing a project proposal that met all the logical framework requirements and documented our previous experiences. Ms. Mejicanos contacted Marina Alejos to get the necessary information, and in less than two months, they created the final manuscript. I also had met through Disaster Aid Canada with the most fantastic and energetic Rotarian, Ms. Elaine Hernandez, President of The Mission Rotary Club in Texas. She has been a true leader guiding us in the review and extension of the written project proposal. We are now using it to promote the Project. Rotary-Disaster Aid Canada has confirmed its participation as well as the Rotary Club Guatemala del Este. We await responses from the board of Mission Rotary Club in Texas and the Rotary Club Guatemala Centro. Ms. Hernandez is interested in starting the Project in Honduras in the most hurricane-affected areas.

Building Bridges of Cooperation

Based on the experience of our participation in the Guatemala Rotary Fair and other Rotarian presentations, I traveled in June 2021 to Mission, Texas to participate in a fundraising program organized by members of the Mission Rotary Club to promote this farmers project.

Also in June 2021, Sonia Quintero and I met with Dr. Luis Torres, Dean of the School of Social Work of the University of Texas in the Rio

Grande Valley. He expressed his interest in helping our project *Manos a la Obra* gather, record, and process the field information obtained by students of the participating universities in Guatemala. He is also interested in starting exchange educational programs with graduate students from Guatemalan universities.



Photo: Aleda Reyes, 2021-22 President, Sonia Quintero, Marlon Martínez, Hilda García of Jo4trailers, Vicky Homsy, and Mando Gonzalez at a fundraiser event in June 2021.

In the afternoon, we met with the President and Vice-President of the Chamber of Commerce in Mission, Texas, to find ways to make citizens of the Rio Grande Valley mindful of the Rotary Club's work with different local, national, and international projects. To date, we will participate as Rotarians in the following 2021-22 activities: The Health Fair, The Fund Sports Festival, the Winter Texas Fiesta Festival, the Texas Citrus Fiesta, the Texas Butterfly Festival, and a Night at Mission Museum.

We are also helping organize a high school Interact club and the city's Rotaract Clubs and teach them the skills that will enable them to become future leaders in the community. Today, we continue to contact wide range of entities that could be interested in supporting our project's progress.

CHAPTER 15

ROTARY INDIA LITERACY MISSION: T.E.A.C.H.

Excerpts from the Annual Report of Rotary India Literacy Mission

Through the Rotary India Literacy Mission (RILM), Rotary supports literacy in India through a comprehensive program called T-E-A-C-H: T - Teacher Support; E - E-Learning; A - Adult Literacy; C - Child Development; H - Happy School. TEACH is implemented in partnership with the Government, Corporate entities, National/state specific NGOs as well as international organizations. This chapter provides excerpts from RILM's 2019-20 annual report. For more information, go to <https://www.litrag.org/rotary-t-e-a-c-h>.

Empowering individuals through literacy!

Literacy and Quality education has the power to transform the society in a single generation; provide every individual with the protection they need from poverty, exploitation and diseases; and give them the knowledge, skills, and confidence to reach their full potential. With much needed clarity, enthusiasm, passion, dedication, Rotary India Literacy Mission (RILM) is poised to leap ahead and make more meaningful and sustainable difference in the lives of the people. With the turn of this year, RILM feels proud to present its Annual Report 2019-20, which provides a glimpse of what RILM did and achieved this year through its synergized effort.

In the journey of 7 years, Rotary India Literacy Mission has touched millions of lives. As RILM strives for sustainable solutions, the efforts are focused on securing the future of children, impacting their immediate families, transforming lives of the adults, benefitting teachers with training and ultimately benefitting the community with holistic approach.

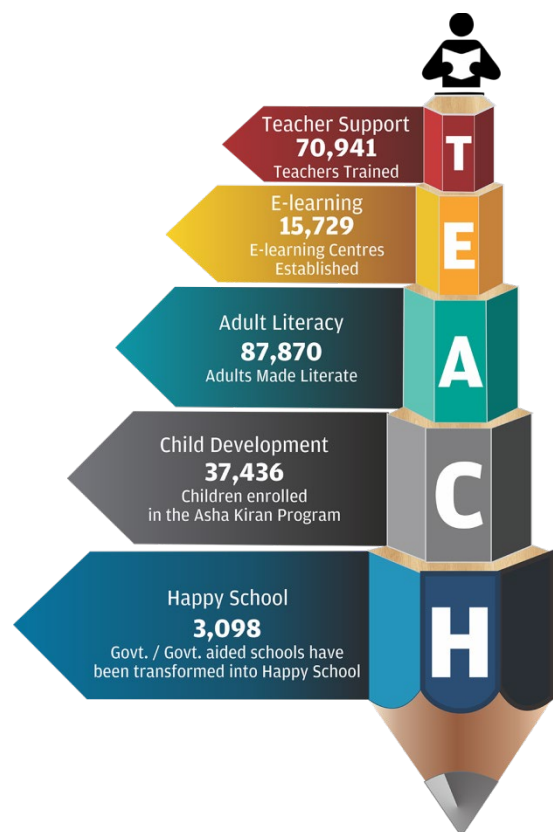
RILM continued to build partnerships under the TEACH program, to take forward the mission of providing total literacy and quality

education. We are thankful to all our donors, grass root level NGOs, our team, and of course, the community which has worked and continues to work tirelessly in this endeavor.

RILM is happy to report that not only is the program progressing well day by day but it has also been well adopted and applauded by various stakeholders. If numbers could tell the story more effectively then over these years RILM has changed millions of lives through its T-E-A-C-H program.

In the current year, RILM reached out to: 37,436 out-of-school children who have been enrolled in the Asha Kiran program, of whom 93.70% children have been mainstreamed into formal schools. 4,419 Teachers have benefitted from the training given to them and 2,514 teachers felicitated with Nation Builder Award under the Teacher Support program. E-learning facilities installed in 883 government schools resulted in improved retention among students. 87,870 Adults were reached out under the Adult Literacy program. Percentage of drop-out and absenteeism decreased in 186 government schools which were transformed into Happy Schools across the country.

All these have been possible because of the enthusiasm and tremendous hard work of Rotarians in both club and district level. The important partnerships forged by RILM also played a major role in achieving these numbers. With efforts and hard work of the Rotarians in India and with stalwarts in the field of literacy joining hands to work with the T-E-A-C-H program, Rotary India Literacy Mission is hopeful to make a positive impact in the literacy scenario of India.



Visual: RILM by the Numbers

About the Programs

T - Teacher Support

The aim of the Teacher Support program is to improve the professional abilities and performance of teachers through training and recognition to outstanding teachers.

- **Teacher Training:** This is the most vital element of the Teacher Support vertical. Through teacher training, RILM aims to improve the professional skills of the teachers, make them confident in their approach which will have a positive impact on the learning outcomes of the students.
- **Nation Builder Award:** RILM seeks to felicitate outstanding teachers for their role in shaping the minds of the youth with the Nation Builder Award. Every year during the month of September, outstanding teachers are awarded.

E - E-learning

RILM's E-learning program, also known as “E-Shiksha” is a single classroom installation which aims to improve the teaching-learning experience through an integrated solution consisting of a LCD projector/LED TV/Smart LED TV loaded with the educational audio-visual software mapped with State curriculum in local languages. Software content can be offline entrenched in a SD card/pen drive or online rooted to any educational application.

A - Adult Literacy

The adult Literacy component of the T-E-A-C-H program focuses on 'Total Literacy' and aims to make India a totally literate country. India is the home for world's more than one third adult non-literates by having 37% contribution which is approximately 27 Crore adults. As per 2011 census, the national literacy rate was 74.04% which is expected to be around 80 percent in the next census. RILM's Adult Literacy program aims to impart basic functional literacy to non- literate adults above the age of 15, across India to help them acquire necessary literacy and numerical skills to meet practical ends; the program also provides skill development training to adults (including neo-literates) above the age of 15.

Box 1: Skills Training through Project Dignity

Widowhood in India has traditionally been associated with social stigma discrimination and isolation, often subjecting the widows to grave economic deprivation. India is presently home to more than 46 million widows out of whom about 15 million widows live in abject poverty. Widows are thereby living as one of the most marginalized section of the society.

Project Dignity is planned to address the needs of one of the most marginalized communities in India, the widows and their children. The Host Rotary Clubs implement the program by taking up this project. Project dignity is aligned to the economic and community development are of focus of Rotary. Living the very spirit of The Rotary Foundation, of 'providing service to others and advancing world understanding, goodwill and peace through the fellowship of community leaders', this project is the beginning of a beautiful journey. It is aligned to economic and community development area of focus of Rotary. It has also sought to create sustainable employment opportunities for the beneficiaries to empower them to attain a sustainable mean of livelihood for themselves and their dependent children.

C - Child Development

Child Development program, known as Asha Kiran ... a ray of hope, aims to bring out-of-school children sent back to school. The program goal is to send 100,000 out of school children back to school. Under the Child development program, RILM partners with grass root level organizations to identify out-

of-school children between 7-14 years from vulnerable communities. Children, who have never been enrolled to any school or have been dropped out of school, are sent back to school after required brushing up. The objective is to facilitate these children's access to mainstream state funded primary / elementary schools. The child development program started in year 2014 and gradually it expanded its intervention areas across India.

H - Happy Schools

The Happy School Program aims to provide / upgrade the infrastructural and co-scholastic facilities in government and government-aided schools, to make them secure, attractive and happy learning places for students and teachers. During the year 2019-20, 186 government and government-aided schools were adopted across the country taking the count of Happy Schools to 2,944 since inception. As per the T-E-A- C-H norms, a school is defined as Happy School when the following 9 facilities are available in the premise: (1) Painted, well maintained and secure school building; (2) Adequate and functional separate toilets for boys and girls; (3) Hand-washing stations; (4) Clean and adequate drinking water for both students and teachers; (5) Library; (6) Play material (games and sports equipment); (7) Benches and desks for students; (8) Well maintained space for teaching staff; and (9) School shoes and school bags for students.

The full 2019-20 annual report is [here](#).

CHAPTER 16

EMPOWERING SCHOOL CHILDREN THROUGH ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING IN RURAL KARNATAKA, INDIA

H. Rajendra Rai, Ashok Shanbhagh, Satish Rao, and Jagadeesh

In India, the professional careers in medicine, engineering, and similar fields can lift rural children from generations of poverty. One of the key ingredients to such careers is proficiency in English. Undergraduate and graduate classes are taught in English, which makes it very difficult for students who lack the ability to comprehend lectures in English to perform well in college. Beyond college, it is difficult to confidently face interviews to secure and thrive in high paying careers. This is what led us to create a project to empower school children through English language training in rural Karnataka in India.

Community Needs Assessment

When preparing our project, the Community Need Assessment conducted in close coordination with the execution partner M/s Pratham in Mysore brought forth the following realities on the ground:

- English assessment results showed that 87% children were not able to read a paragraph fluently and 74% of parents and community members expressed that their children need support for reading, writing and speaking in English. As English plays important role in education and professional areas, children need English interventions to improve their learning levels in the subject and enhance parent's involvement in their progress.
- Reading assessment results showed that 28% children were able to read a simple story. This meant that almost 70% children were lagging behind the expected learning levels. Meanwhile, most of the parents were educated only up to 10th grade or below in the rural areas. They can help their children

in reading, writing, and other education related activities, but this is limited. Almost 90% parent in the villages expressed that they needed additional support for the quality of the education provided to their children. Overall findings showed that community libraries, where children learn together by accessing reading and learning materials after schools hours, provided a supportive role.

The Identification of community needs was done through a national survey (Annual Status of Education. Report or ASER) which is the largest household survey of children done in India each year. Even though the English language is prescribed as a subject of study in government schools, learning outcomes are far below expectations. The medium of instruction being in Kannada, the absence of an English-speaking environment on the one hand, and lack of practice in reading and writing in English on the other. makes it difficult for children to learn English as a language. Either they become passive listener or they completely lose interest in learning English as a medium of instruction.

Assessments of Basic English in the ASER survey for 2016 indicate that (1) 68% children in Standard (Grade) III cannot read simple words; (2) 75.5% children in Standard (Grade) V cannot read simple sentences; (3) 54.8% children in Standard (Grade) VIII cannot read simple sentences; and (4) of those who can read words (regardless of grade), roughly 40% cannot explain the meanings of the words read. Of those who can read sentences, 35.5% in Standard (Grade) V cannot explain the meaning of the sentences. Both these levels are virtually unchanged since 2014.

Literacy Projects in Rotary District 3190

The Rotary Club of Bangalore West and the Rotary club of Bangalore Yelahanka have been associated since 2007-08 with Pragathi, an NGO based in Texas, USA. The common objective is to promote literacy among primary and secondary level school children in Government schools in the state of Karnataka in India. The three organizations have collaborated with each other in more than 10 Literacy projects with support from the Rotary Foundation of Rotary International under the Matching Grants program and later through Global Grants.

The first Global Grant project started in 2014. Entitled "Teach India", it focused on Kannada, Math, and Library programs, reaching 29,556 children in its two-year duration. After successful implementation of the project, two more Global Grants were executed using the same template. They were also well received by the community, reaching 33,327 children. The fourth Global Grant focused on a Math Fair and Community Library for a one-year period, reaching 14,961 children.

Improving proficiency in English among school children in the Government schools in Karnataka was the fifth Global Grant project, heeding to the requests from the community, schools, and parents. Their request was aspirational as children would benefit from learning the language and take the first steps to being at par with peers in private schools. Hence this Global Grant project aimed to complement the school curriculum, providing support not only for basic English reading competencies, but also for reading at the Advanced levels. Overall, the children would be able to benefit more from the regular school syllabus.

Project Profile

The project took into account identifying participating schools, and pooling in resources such as manpower, training, materials (teaching aids) and monitoring to ensure quality. It is hoped that good practices developed under the project will become a part of the Government's policies at the grassroots level, with government teachers carrying the project forward.

In the first year of the English project, the project reached 12,651 children, covering 208 schools. In the second year, it reached 12,038 students from around 200 schools. Together, more than 25,000 children were therefore engaged. Overall, the Global Grant projects as a whole have touched the lives of 114,945 children.

The objectives of the English project were to: (1) teach English as a second language for children, with Kannada as their mother tongue; (2) improve English language among 24,000 children from 400 Government schools from grades 3 to 8; and (3) develop phonemic awareness among children and promoting listening, reading, and writing.

In every district, 4-5 teachers were identified. Almost all the teachers were part of the Global Grant projects for three years. They were assigned duties and tasks as Quality Educators. A block leader (called a Literacy Leader) was responsible for monitoring. Together, the project had 30 Quality Educators and 7 Literacy Leaders. When schools were open, each Quality Educator was responsible for conducting classes for 4 hours in a school, for a period of 30 days, covering two batches from grades 3-8, with 30 students in each batch (a total of 60 students per school). The Quality Educators were trained and each of them was given a kit, which consists of flash cards, work books, charts, and alphabet chunks to be used across levels in the classroom. Formats and data sheets also form part of the package.



Photos: Girls participating in the project.

To showcase what the children have learnt and demonstrate the teaching aids used in the program, English fairs were introduced. The fairs were held usually at the end of the program, gaining attention from the community, government officials, and surrounding villages. As a result, more schools are now interested in implement the program. Government officials see how the project is changing the perception of parents and hopefully increasing student enrolment, generating interest in other villages.

The community consists mostly of daily wage laborers and farmers. Among them are also those who own small shops and small businesses such as manufacturing wicks, incense sticks, baskets, pottery, sweets, and others. They cannot afford private tuitions for English. Though Government schools have qualified teachers, they are unable to allocate additional hours and they do have access to specialized content. It is also a challenge for them to work after school hours in the community, and to create awareness that education is crucial for every child in the village. Therefore all stakeholders need to work together. The Rotarians, Quality Educators and Literacy Leaders ensure that this indeed happens.

Table 1 shows results from both years, suggesting that initial targets were exceeded, in some cases substantially.

Table 1: Selected Results from the Project

	Target	Year 1	Year 2
Readers (children who can read a sentence and above)	40%	42%	41%
Picture identification (ability to identify actions, professions, objects using English words)	70%	74%	84%
Children able to tell the meaning of words from common vocabulary	50%	87%	89%

Source: Authors.

Because of the COVID-19 epidemic, during the months of September 2020 to April

2021, to supplement the classes which were held in the communities and in classrooms (for a brief period), content was sent through WhatsApp and SMS to mothers' groups who were trained in using technology like Zoom and WhatsApp video calls. This was adopted as a regular practice along with face-to-face interventions, which ensured that the children had assignments given to them when they went back home. Also, in villages where the projects were completed, the messages were sent to the mothers' groups and volunteers for a month. This helped to ensure the sustainability of the project. In addition, adjacent villages apart from the current one were made part of the Distance Education project. This ensured that they were prepared for classes before the project began. Parents, volunteers, and teachers appreciated the efforts of Rotary, which strived towards teaching a foreign language like English, given the circumstances.

Conclusion

More students can be reached in further projects, and the lives of girl students can be shaped with access to quality resources the Global Grant provides. This will enable more students to aspire to become scientists, engineers, or doctors, and help them give back to the communities where they come from. Gender disparity will be addressed, enabling young women to have access to more opportunities and a better quality of life.



Photos: Children in the program and members of their families.

CHAPTER 17

CHOCOLATE, MOLE, AND MUSHROOMS FOR POSITIVE PEACE IN THE MIXTECA OAXAQUENA REGION, MEXICO

Teresa Zorrilla and Ximena Murillo

In Oaxaca, Mexico, a local group consisting of mostly women started to make chocolate, mole, and mushrooms to sell in the local market and improve their circumstances. Their initiative represents an opportunity to develop a genuinely sustainable social enterprise for wealth creation and sharing. This chapter provides context for their work and describes their project which benefits from the support of Rotary Peace Fellows.

Mexico Context

Mexico and the Northern Triangle countries of Central America – El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras, suffer from violence as a result of organized crime and gangs. These countries are considered to be among the most violent nations in the world over the past decade. According to UNHCR, violence is the main driver of forced population displacement in the region, triggering immigration tensions and challenges throughout Central and Northern America. The violence perpetuated by organized criminal groups has resulted in an epidemic of forcible displacement and the economic devastation further exacerbated by COVID-19 as well as natural disasters, making the region fertile for growth in activities of drug cartels and gangs. This elevated pre-existing conditions of poverty, unemployment, social exclusion, and state-level corruption (International Crisis Group) to intolerable levels.

Mexico is the largest and most populous country in Central America. In recent years, according to the Institute for Economics and Peace (IEP), Mexico ranked 140th out of 163 countries in the Global Peace Index 2021 compared to ranking 138

in the GPI 2020. Due to heightened violence and conflict, Mexico alone had more than 345,000 citizens internally displaced (Internal Displacement Monitoring Center) and according to the 2020 Global Report on Internal Displacement, violence perpetrated by drug trafficking cartels, paramilitary and vigilante groups, triggered an additional 7,100 displacements in Mexico in 2019.

Much of this displacement occurred in the states of Chiapas, Chihuahua, Durango, Guerrero, Michoacán, Oaxaca and Sinaloa. However, this is not the only challenge faced by Mexico, the Country is also experiencing a refugee's crisis, with more than 50,000 (UNHCR) refugees and asylum seekers. What is worse, is that many Mexicans have decided to follow migrants and asylum seekers from the Northern Triangle countries on their route north to the US Border, which triggered the ongoing, seemingly unsolvable US-Mexico border crisis.

Challenges in Oaxaca

Based on the 2021 Mexico Peace Index (MPI) by IEP, Oaxaca recorded the largest deterioration recorded a near seven-fold increase in violent crime between 2015 and 2020. It was the most devastated area in Mexico in terms of all violent crime sub-indicators, except sexual assault where it recorded the second largest deterioration in the country. As with much of the crime across the country, the rise in violent crime in Oaxaca has been fueled by the growing number of organized criminal groups in the state, activities feed a more generalized climate of violence. In Oaxaca, there is a strong correlation ($r=0.91$) between the rise

in violent crime and organized crime rates over the past six years.

In the past 10 years, in 45.5% of Oaxaca's municipalities, the population has declined due to migration²⁶. Within Oaxaca, many people have left rural villages to work in the cities: City of Oaxaca, the Papaloapan area, Mexico City and other places in the coast, seeking security and job opportunities. Recently, the pandemic further tested the resilience of this region and its many communities, which were already challenged by extreme poverty, violence, political turmoil, high levels of corruption. It should also be noted that other overwhelming events such as earthquakes, wars, and violent conflicts have further challenged the region.

Among the most pressing challenges are the following.

More than 75.04% of the population don't have access to even the most fundamental versions of social security, almost 34% don't have basic services in their houses; and 57% have an income below the welfare line. Only 38.21% of the families are able to access fruits and vegetables in support of healthy dietary routines.

This seismic zone experiences thousands of micro-earthquakes (1-2 Richter degrees) during a year, which have occurred among the major earthquakes in 1980, 1997 and 2017, which reached a scale of 7 Richter degrees and which destroyed a large number of homes and public buildings in various cities and towns throughout the State.

During the COVID 19 pandemic, the situation has been even worse. Some migrants returned from unsuccessful efforts to reach safer, more sustainable regions, some were exposed and infected and spread the virus throughout these vulnerable communities. The economy was already broken and now it is even worse.

The educational quality is very low, Oaxaca is among the last three places of educational proficiency in the country. In addition, the state suffers the highest rate of absenteeism of educators. Out of a total of 200 school days in Oaxaca, only 60% are fulfilled on average, a figure that also includes the training stage of those who will be teachers. The challenge of quality education appropriate to the sociocultural context has not been achieved by teachers or the government. And in the circumstance of confinement due to Covid-19, the situation is getting progressively worse. Poverty conditions are compounded by the lack of computer equipment, Internet connectivity, teachers trained in digital technologies, and resulting digital deserts and technical illiteracy.

Health services are wildly insufficient. Some 75.04% of the population has no access to basic social security. When residents need services, even in the poorest communities, they turn to governmental sponsored services, but they typically lack fundamental equipment and medicines, causing many residents to be transferred to cities of Puebla and Oaxaca, and also in many cases, residents are forced to seek help from private medical service providers, paying with borrowed money.

It is important to recognize challenges related to forming organized and participative societies to advocate for quality public policies in the health sector. On the other hand, it is necessary to grow health programs in which people have health literacy and cultural wisdom, such as the program called "Health in the hands of the People", which has been an initiative in rural and suburban communities for more than 20 years.

Among the main challenges are job creation. Public and private investment in Oaxaca have been very low historically,

²⁶ Migracion y Pobreza en Oaxaca by Alvarado Juarez and Ana Margarita, 2010.

which partly explains poverty and high out-migration patterns. Despite potential implicit in a relative abundance of natural and human resources, opportunities for economic development in these regions have not been exploited and the few attempts to do so have been stopped due to the lack of understanding of the local indigenous culture, which requires being considered as a subject of law and dignity for the realization of any initiative involving outside actors.

On the other hand, machismo culture also manifests itself in intra-family violence, a phenomenon that persists intergenerationally. Public and private policies typically favor men and need to be enhanced effectively to empower women. We maintain that, from a very practical perspective, this more than a social justice issue, which it certainly is. We can see no genuine path toward sustainable economic development without the full and equal participation of women.

Despite all challenges, Oaxaca is rich in culture and history, home to 18 of the nation's 65 different ethnic groups. The region embraces the concept of *Tequio*, an ancestral custom where a group of people from the community come together to work and support each other. They come together not only for religious festivals but also to harvest crops and build houses.

This tradition continues to this day in many of these communities. The Oaxacan Mixteca is an arid area, with many people living in extreme poverty, which is why it was a center for the explosion of out-migration and is now also a disputed area for drug traffickers. The Mixteca Region includes the districts of Juxtlahuaca, Silacayoapam, Huajuapán, Coixtlahuaca, Teposcolula, Tlaxiaco and Nochistlán. Approximately 66.4% of the population lives in poverty. The primary source of income derives from remittances from expatriated (migrated) family members. This community's situation worsened after devastating earthquakes of

2017 and 2019, and even more so from isolation caused by the pandemic.

Chocolate, Mole, and Mushrooms

The municipality of Huajuapán de León is located in this region and it is home for the peace initiative "Chocolate, Mole & Mushrooms for Positive Peace" started by a community group, coordinated by Lety Rivera and led by Rotary Peace Fellows Teresa Zorrilla and Ximena Murillo.

Teresa Zorrilla leads Salud, Arte y Educacion (SAE), a local non-profit organization in Mexico, working with the Mixteca Oaxaquena community for more than 15 years, implementing several social and development projects. She has bonded with members of this community by supporting them in rebuilding the community after the earthquakes and has worked with volunteers from different universities. Together, they not only rebuilt houses but strengthened the social fabric of community-based native indigenous practices. SAE and volunteers from different parts of country have worked with local people who, especially women, in different colonies, the most affected during the earthquakes in 2017.

The main source of income derives from remittances from migrants living in the United States, and smaller part from the salaries received by the public servants (teachers, health personnel, administrators and engineers for public works). Presence of women of productive age is adversely affected by out-migration patterns. Also, unlike the national population pyramid and other communities, there are relatively few children. In Huajuapán and its surroundings, the Mixteca culture is a dominant influence and the Triqui culture is also present. However, it is notable that in the city of Huajuapán,, despite retaining many Mixtec features, only Spanish is spoken. It is in rural towns where the most characteristic of the

original culture/language is still lived and spoken.

Two years ago, a local group, mostly women, organized themselves and started to make chocolate, mole, and mushrooms, to sell in the local market and improve their economic circumstances. This group is led by Lety Rivera, who followed her family heritage of producing cacao. With the elaboration and commercialization of these products, they were able to generate modest income -establishing elements for Positive Peace in this arid area.

The local group call themselves the Rebuilding Group (Grupo de Reconstructores) which includes the following members: Leticia Rivera Palacios (44-year-old), Carmen Refugio Uribe Mendiola (62), María Guadalupe Rivera Palacios (52), Cynthia Ríos Rivera (30), Juan Mauro Hernandez Lopez (67) y Manuel Pablo Perez Balbuena (45). The initiative they have launched represents a significant opportunity in developing a genuinely sustainable social enterprise for wealth creation and sharing. They have access to the natural and human resources to produce and distribute value-added products for sale outside the immediate, participating community.

In addition to empowering women and families in this community, Teresa and SEA have created important synergy with local and international Rotary Clubs, Rotaract Clubs, and other Rotary Peace Fellows and Positive Peace Activators in Latin America and the United States.

The Peace Fellows and Activators share a passion for peace and economic development. Together, along with her partner Alejandro Presiga (Positive Peace Activator and Rotaractor based in

Colombia), a new business model is being developed. After participating in the first Rotarian Peace Project Incubator (RPPI), sponsored by the Rotary Action Group for Peace Geneva and being selected the 5 finalist among 50 projects, in partnership with United4Change Center, led by RPF Ximena Murillo, other RPF and Positive Peace Activators in Latin America, Maria Antonia Perez, the project “Chocolate, Mole & Mushrooms for Positive Peace” aims to scale up in order to build resilience in this Oaxaca's community.

The goal to build resilience by creating a sustainable business model that will improve the local economy, promote peace and therefore, reduce the migration to other parts of Mexico and/or the United States. The IEP defines Positive Peace as the absence of violence and the presence of conditions that help societies realize their full potential. Sustainable peace grows out of soil enriched by justice, education, access to health services, and genuinely distributed economic opportunity.

Economic development is especially critical to peacebuilding, and, likewise, peace fosters sustainable economic development and growth. The two are intrinsically interconnected and interdependent, as one is needed for the other to flourish. However, economic development initiatives do not automatically lead to peace; some can inadvertently undermine peace if they fail to exist under the Positive Peace framework or if they are not designed on a peace-conducive basis. This does not happen by accident, it requires intentionality, careful planning, and mutual benefit.



Photos: Members of the community at work.

This community-based group, with support from the aforementioned external partners/supporters, is planning a pilot project including training for at least 20 families in the community with technical and entrepreneurial skill, impacting the lives of more than 400 people (average of two people per family). The pilot project will also include the co-creation of a sustainable business model, based on their local culture and traditions, within a framework of transformative education, positive peace and human rights for the production, elaboration and commercialization of three products: Chocolate, Mole and Mushrooms. By creating elements of positive peace and improving their economic circumstances, they will be encouraged to stay and they won't be forced to migrate to other places. Furthermore, there will be less space for organized criminal groups.

In addition to enhancing local economic viability, participation in profits and benefits for workers of the team, especially in these times of pandemic, the initiative intends to facilitate educational interventions to improve human capital and advance the pillars of positive peace, which will promote prospects for sustainability for several families and benefit the community. Since the economic and educational situation especially affects children and women, we consider the possibility of reinforcing the spaces including the toy library and a computer support center, in synergy with other organizations such as REDIM.

These families will acquire entrepreneurial skills, helping them identify and define a sustainable business model based on their culture and native practices. They will get the necessary technical skills and new techniques to improve the elaboration of chocolate, mole, and mushrooms while improving upon the supply chain. During this process, families in this community will develop and further the practice empathic relationships while

learning how to resolve/prevent conflicts and deter violence within their production groups and enhance relations among neighbors throughout the community.

Experience of SAE working in Oaxaca

SAE is working on a project to rebuild homes and enhance the local social fabric with brigade volunteers and local groups with assistance from the Rotary Club of Huajuapán and make synergies with supporting organizations and U4C. Beyond the legally established authorities, sometimes informal local leaders are in the committees or organisms that the community creates to attend to different existing tasks: safe drinking water committee, school committee, religious festivals committee (stewards and brotherhood), temple committee, commissioner of communal goods, etc. Some concerned actors and collaborators have been religious congregations, the priest priests of the temple in the community and some people with economic resources who are sensitive to social problems.

In our case, there is a Reconstruction Committee, made up of people from the community recognized by the neighbors as people who for years have distinguished themselves for their commitment and participation in works of common benefit. We work with them, we support their training and they have grown in organizational capacity and in knowledge and practices of self-construction and of strengthening the so-called social fabric. In the local government there has been sympathy for the reconstruction program but there has not been any type of support. The excuse they give is that they have no resources.

We are working with the Reconstruction Committee. They are local leaders who are considered promoters of their community. They are recognized for their honesty, objectivity, and social

commitment. Teacher Gloria Trujillo, promoter Leticia Rivera P. and Mrs. Guillermina González García are among leaders for this initiative. The Rotary Club supports specific projects (construction of a school, donation of wheelchairs, student exchange, etc.). The Mexican Red Cross handles emergency health cases. The Civil Protection Committee helps the community in all kinds of natural disasters and in large-scale accidents. The Board of Trustees for the Care of the Elderly maintains a shelter for the elderly in a situation of abandonment. Caritas helps with food pantries and aid campaigns for people in extreme poverty. The Committee of Reconstructors addresses the problem of homelessness and reconstruction from the earthquakes of 2017, also seeks to strengthen the local social fabric by promoting identity, linking people and social groups and promoting productive projects that ensure income for the community (production and commercialization of chocolate, edible mushrooms and mole paste, a food typical of the country). All of

this will be done in ways that recognize, embrace, and honor long standing local culture.

The Committee of Housing and Social Fabric Rebuilders has a productive coordination with SAE. Our organization: legally recognized, grantee authorized to receive national and international funds and professionally accredited to carry out community development projects in the areas of health, education, art, training (self-construction), construction of the social fabric, promotion of productive projects and leadership training. Also, the Committee of Reconstructors and Health Art and Education together have a formal relationship with the Brigades Red de Amor por México (BRAM), an organization of university students who donate resources and time and labor for reconstruction tasks. The three organizations make synergy (achievements greater than the sum of the parts) and are effective in dealing with housing problems, income through production, and in good human relations for the strengthening of the social fabric.



Photo: rebuilding the community

ANNEX

20 NOTEWORTHY GLOBAL GRANTS

To celebrate its 100th year, The Rotary Foundation recognized 20 global grants that exemplify what a project should be: a sustainable endeavor that aligns with one of Rotary's areas of focus and that is designed in cooperation with the community to address a real need. These noteworthy projects demonstrate how your club can leverage the resources of the Foundation to do good in the world.

Equipping a neonatal intensive care unit in Brazil. Area of focus: Saving mothers and children. Host sponsor: Rotary Club of Registro, Brazil. International sponsor: Rotary Club of Nakatsugawa, Japan. Total budget: \$172,500. Background: Neonatal mortality rates were significantly higher in the Ribeira Valley area of southern São Paulo state than in other regions. Scope: The Rotarians worked with the Hospital Regional Dr. Leopoldo Bevilacqua in Pariquera-Açu to determine the best approach. The grant provided equipment for the hospital's neonatal ICU and provided prenatal care and breast-feeding workshops for pregnant adolescents. Impact: Infant mortality in the region has been halved to seven per 1,000 live births.

Supporting Rotary Family Health Days in Uganda. Area of focus: Saving mothers and children. Host sponsor: Rotary Club of Kiwatule, Uganda. International sponsor: District 5500 (Arizona, USA). Total budget: \$97,750. Background: A health care summit in Uganda, funded by a district grant, uncovered a need for improved prenatal diagnostic capabilities in rural communities and for better nutrition for expectant mothers. Scope: A combination global grant provided humanitarian supplies for Uganda's Rotary Family Health Days and a vocational training team for health care workers at the health camps. Impact: The team trained 23 nurses, midwives, and other health care practitioners to use ultrasound scanning devices to diagnose abnormalities in pregnancies and other life-threatening conditions.

Collecting donated human milk for newborns in the Philippines. Area of focus: Saving mothers and children. Host sponsor: Rotary Club of Chinatown-Manila, Philippines. International sponsor: Rotary Club of Tomobe, Japan. Total budget: \$82,000. Background: The Rotarians conducted a community needs assessment and decided to fund the creation of a human milk bank at a hospital in Manila. Scope: The facility collects, screens, processes, and distributes milk to premature and sick newborns, and to well babies whose mothers cannot provide their own breast milk, at Justice Jose Abad Santos General Hospital. It will also supply milk to infants in communities affected by natural disasters throughout the country.

Training young community leaders in Guatemala. Area of focus: Promoting peace. Host sponsor: Rotary Club of Valle de Guatemala, Guatemala. International sponsor: Rotary Club of Manhattan Beach, California, USA. Total budget: \$39,873. Background: Students attending overcrowded schools in poverty-stricken areas of Guatemala face bullying and street violence. Crimes stemming from gang and drug activity are common. Scope: Project sponsors worked with Alianza Joven, a Guatemalan organization focused on preventing crime and violence, to train students in four municipalities around Guatemala City on techniques for deflecting aggressiveness, strengthening leadership, making decisions, and serving their communities. Teachers, principals, and parents were involved. Impact: More than 6,500 teachers and students received training.

Teaching peaceful problem-solving in Israel. Area of focus: Promoting peace. Host sponsor: Rotary Club of Haifa, Israel. International sponsor: Rotary Club of Coral Springs-Parkland, Florida, USA. Total budget: \$161,750. Background: Israel faces challenges with water scarcity and ongoing conflict. Scope: This water

project has a “hidden” peace component: Water challenges form the basis of a science curriculum that helps schoolchildren from different backgrounds in Haifa find solutions peacefully and creatively. Impact: Students from 10 schools worked together to present 38 science projects focused on water and sanitation. One project involving students from three schools won first prize in a national competition. Schools also participated in 15 cross-cultural activities.

Bringing clean water to public schools in Lebanon. Area of focus: Providing clean water. Host sponsor: Rotary Club of Baabda, Lebanon. International sponsor: Rotary Club of Kernersville, North Carolina, USA. Total budget: \$43,550. Background: Municipal water supplies in Lebanon are often tainted because of deteriorating infrastructure, so most people buy bottled water for drinking. Many public schools collect rainwater in rusty tanks, leading to contamination, illness, and missed school days. The influx of refugees from Syria has made schools even more crowded and created an even greater need for clean water. Scope: This grant supplied new water tanks, pipes, filters, and faucets to 19 schools; it also provided hygiene training. Impact: Now, 6,743 children have access to clean water and the project is being replicated throughout the country. Rotarians in Lebanon aim to bring clean water to every public school – totaling more than 1,000.

Providing safe water for rural communities in Peru. Area of focus: Providing clean water. Host sponsor: Rotary Club of Cajamarca Layzón, Peru. International sponsor: District 2201 (Spain). Total budget: \$258,195. Background: Before the project, residents drank untreated spring water, and the rate of intestinal and respiratory diseases, especially among infants and the elderly, was high. Scope: The project repaired 32 reservoirs and installed gravity-fed drip chlorination systems for drinking water. The Rotarians also trained residents to administer and maintain the system. Impact: More than 10,000 people, including 1,138 children under age four, now have clean drinking water.

Improving sanitation and hygiene training in Benin. Area of focus: Providing clean water. Host sponsor: Rotary Club of Abomey-Calavi, Benin. International sponsor: District 2080 (Italy). Total budget: \$158,999. Background: The village of Paouignan needed improved clean water infrastructure. Scope: The Rotarians provided a new well and water tower and 10 new taps, repaired seven older taps, and provided hygiene training in Paouignan. Impact: Improved water access and sanitation practices benefited 17,000 people.

Bringing basic sanitation to a remote village in Colombia. Area of focus: Providing clean water. Host sponsor: Rotary Club of Cartagena de Indias, Colombia. International sponsor: Rotary Club of Los Angeles, California, USA. Total budget: \$38,507. Background: Sanitation facilities in the village of Leticia were nonexistent; residents had to relieve themselves outdoors. Environmental contamination and lack of hygiene contributed to illness among people in the village. Scope: The Rotary Community Corps in Leticia proposed a project to provide bathrooms – each including toilet, shower, sink, and septic tank – to 25 of the village’s 75 homes. University students and Rotarians trained residents in hygiene, food handling, and waste management.

Improving literacy in Guatemala. Area of focus: Supporting education. Host sponsor: Rotary Club of Guatemala Vista Hermosa, Guatemala. International sponsor: Rotary Club of Summit County (Frisco), Colorado, USA. Total budget: \$339,191. Background: The Guatemala Literacy Project is a 20-year partnership between Rotary clubs and districts and the nonprofit Cooperative for Education. Scope: This global grant provided textbooks, computer labs, teacher training, and scholarships to impoverished schools. The sustainable model requires families to pay a fee to rent the donated textbooks; schools use the money to buy new books when the old ones wear out. Impact: This grant served 5,880 students and

trained 337 teachers. First-graders in the program scored 71 percent higher than the national average in letter naming.

Providing equipment for indigenous farmers in Paraguay. Area of focus: Growing local economies. Host sponsor: Rotary Club of Asunción, Paraguay. International sponsor: Rotary Club of Flensburg, Germany. Total budget: \$52,500. Background: Indigenous residents of the village of El Paraiso, 300 miles north of the capital, Asunción, relied on subsistence farming. Scope: The Rotarians provided agricultural equipment – a tractor, plow, and harrow – and worked with an organization that provides vocational training to the village chiefs and makes regular visits to the village to monitor progress. Impact: Two weeks after the launch of the project, the villagers planted 500 acres of sesame.

Screening for breast cancer in Turkey. Area of focus: Fighting disease. Host sponsor: Rotary Club of Adana, Turkey. International sponsor: Rotary Club of San Antonio, Texas, USA. Total budget: \$38,000. Background: In Turkey, breast cancer is the eighth most common cause of death. Early detection is key to effective treatment, but women in rural areas have little access to, or education about, screening. Scope: Working with local officials, Rotarians provided breast models that health workers use to explain the effects of breast cancer and to demonstrate how women can detect signs of the disease. Rotarians and the Public Health Directorate worked together to organize breast cancer awareness events in 15 districts of Adana, a city in southern Turkey.

Fighting cervical cancer in rural Bangladesh. Area of focus: Fighting disease. Host sponsor: Rotary Club of Padma Rajshahi, Bangladesh. International sponsor: Rotary Club of North Columbus, Georgia, USA. Total budget: \$59,500. Background: Bangladesh ranks fourth in the world in deaths from cervical cancer. Prevention and early detection can lead to higher survival rates. Scope: Project sponsors worked with the Rajshahi Cancer Hospital and Research Center to reduce the incidence of cervical cancer through vaccinations. They also worked to raise awareness about symptoms and funded training for female paramedics in 10 villages around Rajshahi. Impact: Nearly 1,000 girls and women ages nine to 45 participated in the program.

Taking cancer screening on the road in India. Area of focus: Fighting disease. Host sponsor: Rotary Club of Madras East, India. International sponsor: Rotary Club of San Antonio, Texas, USA. Total budget: \$70,242. Background: India has more than 800,000 new cases of cancer every year; many people, especially in rural areas, are not aware of, cannot afford, or are afraid of screening for the disease. Late diagnosis of breast and cervical cancer leads to high mortality rates. Scope: Rotarians identified a significant public health problem in their area, then found a strong cooperating organization to work with. They helped design a special vehicle to bring screenings to women in rural areas and mobilized their networks to ensure that the mobile unit would reach as many women as possible. Impact: 3,650 women were screened during the project.

Equipping a specialized medical center in New York state. Area of focus: Fighting disease. Host sponsor: Rotary Club of Burnt Hills-Ballston Lake, N.Y. International sponsor: Rotary Club of Luanshya, Zambia. Total budget: \$34,650. Background: Children in need of comprehensive services to correct cleft craniofacial abnormalities had to travel several hundred miles to Boston or New York City. Scope: The grant funded specialized equipment, supplies, and educational materials for doctors and families at the Albany Medical Center, which serves an area of 15 million people.

Improving health services in Nepal with a VTT. Area of focus: Fighting disease. Host sponsor: Rotary Club of Patan West, Nepal. International sponsor: Rotary Club of Amagasaki West, Japan. Total budget:

\$33,781. Background: Rotarians in District 2680 (Japan-Hyogo) have supported the Dr. Iwamura Memorial Hospital in Bhaktapur, Nepal, since it was established in 1998. Every month, the hospital treats 225 patients for emergency care and 1,300 outpatients. Rotarians saw a need for improved quality of services. Scope: A vocational training team of an administrator and three nurses from the hospital received training on emergency care and dialysis treatment at Okamoto Hospital in Hyogo prefecture. Impact: The training team members observed how Japanese hospitals receive and treat patients, learned best practices for infection management and safety procedures, and gained skills in dialysis treatment and the use of other advanced medical equipment.

Bridging the health care gap in Mongolia with smartphones. Area of focus: Fighting disease. Host sponsor: Rotary Club of Khuree, Mongolia. International sponsor: Rotary Club of Cheonan-Dosol, Korea. Total budget: \$50,000. Background: More than 300 villages in Mongolia are so remote that access to advanced health services is limited. Scope: Doctors in 55 villages received smartphones and training in a tele-dermatology system through a user-friendly app.

Fighting malaria with mosquito nets in Venezuela. Area of focus: Fighting disease. Host sponsor: Rotary Club of Puerto Ordaz, Venezuela. International sponsor: Rotary Club of Key Biscayne, Florida, USA. Total budget: \$77,500. Background: Venezuela is facing a malaria epidemic, with the eastern city of Sifontes at the epicenter. Rotarians already had relationships with area residents thanks to a previous Matching Grant project. Scope: The project distributed 6,000 insecticide-treated bed nets to indigenous communities around Sifontes and provided instructions on how to use them. Local young people, including Rotaractors and indigenous representatives, received training on how to perform house-to-house follow-up visits. Impact: New malaria cases have been reduced by 60 to 80 percent. Sponsors hope to build on this success in Venezuela and are working on a similar project in Peru.

Mobilizing rural medical care in Mexico. Area of focus: Fighting disease. Host sponsor: Rotary Club of San Nicolás de los Garza, Mexico. International sponsor: Rotary Club of Austin, Texas, USA. Total budget: \$50,000. Background: Isolated rural communities lack access to medical care. Scope: Rotarians, through a series of global grants, donated mobile health units with medical and dental supplies to a fleet staffed by partner organization Cáritas de Monterrey. Impact: More than 5,000 people now have access to medical care.

Fighting dengue fever in Indonesia. Area of focus: Fighting disease. Host sponsor: Rotary Club of Solo Kartini, Indonesia. International sponsor: Rotary Club of Westport, Connecticut, USA. Total budget: \$70,725. Background: Dengue fever is the fastest-spreading tropical disease and a pandemic threat, according to the World Health Organization. An estimated 70 percent of cases occur in Asia. Scope: The project aimed to interrupt the life cycle of the mosquito that carries dengue in parts of Surakarta by eliminating a common breeding site. The sponsors tiled the cement bathtubs that are common in Indonesian homes with white ceramic tiles, which make mosquito larvae more visible, and trained residents to check for the larvae and to empty, scrub, and cover their tubs to prevent infestation. Community social workers followed up weekly. Impact: The Rotarians tiled 3,500 tubs. The government is now interested in taking up the project.

Source: <https://www.rotary.org/en/top-global-grant-projects>.