

OCTOBER 2026

Rotary

AFRICA SOUTH

15 The Hummingbird Pledge
of D9216

23 Still searching... but
changing lives





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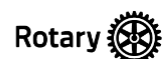
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WELCOME

Sarah van Heerden - Editor in Chief

A few months ago, I spoke at a District 9350 online public image seminar about the ethical use of generative artificial intelligence in storytelling.

The response was bigger than I expected. There were questions during and after the session, followed by requests from Rotarians who wanted to revisit the information or share it with their clubs.

So, rather than focus this column on that presentation, we have included the material from it elsewhere in this edition. I hope it proves useful, particularly as more clubs begin exploring these tools and considering how they fit into responsible Rotary storytelling.

What I would rather talk about here are the stories that make that storytelling worthwhile.

In this issue, 12-year-old Imaan Shaik is still searching for a matching stem cell donor. Yet something remarkable has happened during that search. The campaign to find her donor has helped bring hope to two other patients who found matching donors. Imaan is still waiting, but her journey is already reaching far beyond her own family.

Then there are the school children around Dundee whose worn shoes told their own story. Thanks to Rotary members and their partners, 486 pairs of school shoes were secured for children at 11 schools.

The Sunflower Library project offers another

reminder of what access to books can mean for children. It has effectively provided books and opportunities to read for children at 14 school libraries.

Then there is a special hummingbird story. District 9216's new Hummingbird pledge takes its inspiration from the story of a tiny bird carrying drops of water to a forest fire. Rotarians and Rotaractors are being asked to make their own contribution to The Rotary Foundation, with a district target of US\$300,000. In the first four days, pledges had already passed US\$70,000.

Rotary Family Health Days has repeatedly shown what happens when Rotary and its partners take health services directly into communities. This programme has connected people with screening, testing and other essential health services across Africa. The next South African Rotary Family Health Days launch is on 29 and 30 October in Limpopo province.

These are very different stories, yet each is about movement. A search for one child's donor helps others. Worn-out shoes are replaced. Books find young readers. Individual Foundation pledges gather into something much larger.

Across Africa, Rotary continues to create hope, goodwill and positive growth in ways both large and small. The people behind these stories, and the determination they bring to their communities, never fail to leave me in awe.



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RI PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

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Aminu Ahmed Tudun-Wada knows what polio takes from a child. He contracted the disease as a young boy in Kano, Nigeria, and was left paralysed.

Decades later, when Nigeria was struggling to eradicate polio, Aminu decided that he would use his experience to help protect other children.

He brought together polio survivors and began going door to door, talking with parents about vaccination. The survivors told their stories. They showed families the effects of polio. And they urged parents to make sure their children never had to experience what they had to go through.

By 2021, the Polio Survivors Group that Aminu founded had grown to more than 400 members. Their work helped Nigeria reach a milestone that once seemed impossible: In 2020, the World Health Organisation certified Nigeria and the entire African region, free of wild poliovirus.

I think about people like Aminu whenever we talk about ending polio. Eradication is about children who will never know what it means to lose the ability to walk. It is about parents who will never have to watch a healthy child become paralysed by a disease that vaccines can prevent.

It is about making sure the people who remember polio become the last generation that does. Rotary

has been part of this fight for more than four decades. Together with our partners, we have helped vaccinate more than 3 billion children, contributed more than \$3 billion to the global effort and reduced cases of wild poliovirus by 99.9 percent. But 99.9 percent is not 100 percent.

Wild poliovirus remains endemic in Afghanistan and Pakistan. As long as it circulates anywhere, children everywhere remain at risk. And even after wild poliovirus disappears from a country, we must maintain strong immunisation and surveillance systems so the virus cannot find a way back.

Aminu could have looked at his own experience and asked, “Why me?” Instead, he asked a different question: “How can I make sure this does not happen to another child?” That is the spirit we need now.

The final mile of any journey can be the hardest. But we have walked too far, worked too hard and protected too many children to stop here.

Let us remember why we began. Let us listen to those who have experienced polio. Let us be the generation that creates lasting impact and ensure no one ever experiences polio again.

YINKA

President, Rotary International



LIKE A Rock

Being a rock is Rotary's quiet superpower and with this year's instability we've been reminded how much that matters.

Families face displacement, communities navigate climate shocks and humanitarian needs rise both close to home and across the places we serve. These realities touch us. Yet even as the world shifts, Rotary's response remains steady, compassionate and effective. We don't turn away from uncertainty, we meet it with purpose.

The Rotary Foundation was not built for fair weather. Over the last decade, we have strengthened our approach: weaving sustainability into every project, expanding partnerships and embracing evidence-based solutions. This evolution has made us more resilient and more community driven.

It's why our comprehensive goal of raising \$500 million across the Annual Fund, Endowment Fund and PolioPlus Fund is not only ambitious but achievable. We've already proved we could reach it last year and again momentum is building.

While global attention shifts from one crisis to the next, Rotary stays. We convene partners who might never otherwise collaborate. We mobilise resources quickly because our networks are already in place, built through decades of trust.

And we strengthen communities not through one-time interventions but by sustained presence and shared commitment.

Nowhere is this dedication more evident than in our work to end polio. Last month, I asked you to reflect on your club's role in this historic effort and many of you responded with renewed energy and generosity.

Polio cases are down more than 99 percent since Rotary began this fight, a testament to the health workers, volunteers and members who kept vaccinating children through wars, border closures and every imaginable obstacle. They didn't know how the story would end. They knew who they were and they kept going.

That is our inspiration in this moment. When the ground feels unsteady, Rotary becomes the stable ground. When plans shift, we are the partner who responds. When the path forward is unclear, our strength of self becomes our compass.

By the time you read this, I will be in a place that has tested my own footing. I'll share the full story online and it's one you won't want to miss.

Let us continue being an organisation the world can count on. We may not always know how every challenge will be solved. But we know who we are and that's always been enough for us to begin.

JENNIFER JONES
Foundation Trustee Chair

ROTARY IN AFRICA

REG.NO. 1971/004840/07

NOTICE TO ALL MEMBERS*

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING – 20 NOVEMBER 2026 AT 09H00

Notice is hereby given that the Annual General Meeting of Rotary in Africa will be held at 728 Main Road Northdene, Durban, KwaZulu Natal, South Africa on Friday 20 November 2026 commencing at 09h00. A Zoom meeting link will be made available to those who wish to join the online meeting. Kindly send your Zoom link request to rotaryafrica@mweb.co.za

AGENDA

1. Call to order and announcements
2. Confirmation of the minutes of the last Annual General Meeting held on 21 November 2025.
3. Chairman's report
4. Editor's report
5. Treasurer's report and submission of annual financial statements for the year ended 30 June 2026.
6. Appointment of Auditors
7. Election of directors to serve on the Board for a period of 2 years. In terms of the Company's Article of Association, the following directors are due to retire from the Board:
 - i. Andy Gray D9370
 - ii. Natty Moodley D9370
 - iii. Leanne Shearing D9210

Being eligible, the abovenamed individuals make themselves available for re-election together with any other nominations that may be submitted to the Secretary by close of business on Friday 13th November 2026. Nominations must be emailed directly to Rotary in Africa at rotaryafrica@mweb.co.za.

8. To conduct or transact any other business pertinent to an Annual General Meeting.

**All District Governors, District Governor Elects and Past District Governors of Rotary District 9210, 9213, 9214, 9215, 9216, 9350, 9370 and 9400 are ex officio members of Rotary in Africa. A member may appoint a proxy to attend and vote on their behalf, provided that such appointment is advised to the Secretary at the offices of the company at least 48 hours before the meeting.*

Members can also attend online (contact us for a link).

PDG Natty Moodley

Company Secretary

03 September 2026

REGISTERED OFFICE: 728 Main Road, Northdene, Durban, 4064

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Community Health Promoter Josephine Oguta speaks to a community member.

The infodemic fighters

When Joanne Hassan became a mother in 2007, she set out looking for a community. She found one on Facebook, where thousands of other mothers convened to share parenting tips.

Then Hassan, a microbiologist and the technical head of the Essential Programme on Immunisation at the Kenya Medical Research Institute in Nairobi, began noticing a different kind of conversation. She saw posts that questioned vaccines and made allegations about vaccine-linked reactions and others that raised concerns over the frequent immunisation campaigns.

“You realise, oh, there’s fire in your [Facebook] group and the origin of the fire is coming from your work and you are in the best position to explain whatever is going on,” she recalls.

It started small: Hassan, alone on her computer, educating fellow group members by responding to their questions.

Since then, her work has grown to keep pace with a pressing problem that is confronting Kenya’s health system: how to prevent misinformation from undermining decades of progress in immunisation.

Today, that challenge is tackled by a little-known network within the Ministry of Health known informally as the Incidents and Rumours Team.

The team’s origins can be traced to the early 2010s, when repeated polio outbreaks in neighbouring countries prompted Kenya to conduct frequent supplementary immunisation campaigns, particularly in the vulnerable border counties.

That caused a kind of fatigue among parents and where communication gaps had been allowed to open, suspicion seemed to flow in.

Initially comprised of a loose working group of scientists and public health officials who addressed rumours as they came, the team has become a more regular, coordinated network with proper escalation systems.

“This team is crucial in not only answering the questions,” Hassan says, “but also in [addressing] assumptions that are around vaccines.”

The COVID-19 pandemic proved to be a turning point. It was the first time the team encountered misinformation, driven by technology and social media, at a scale great enough to qualify as an “infodemic.” Christine Miano, who leads social and behaviour change communication at the National Vaccines and Immunisation Programme, explains the term as a situation in which false information moves faster and farther than the facts.

“Technology has changed how people access information. Today, many people search online before consulting a health professional,” she says. “We realised that most individuals do not refuse vaccines because they are opposed to them; often, there is simply a gap in knowledge.”

Over the years, the team has grown to include a diverse cast of stakeholders from researchers and influencers to faith leaders, international partners and civil society organisations.

In Nairobi’s Makina neighbourhood, Josephine Oguta, a community health promoter, has seen firsthand how damaging rumours can be. In one incident, she says, a mother claimed that her child had died after vaccination. An investigation revealed that the child had been fatally ill independently of immunisation, but by the time the facts were established, the rumour was already circulating.

“They spread through social media, especially Facebook and then you find mothers refusing vaccines for their children because of what they saw online,” Oguta says.

At the central level, the ministry has set up structures using digital tools to track misinformation and incidents before and during immunisation campaigns. The most frequently articulated concerns are then used to inform both messaging and the channels along which those messages are disseminated.

Through the Vaccines Kenya social media channels, health officials push out factual information, videos, webinars and human-interest stories.

“We have also recruited and trained influencers

from all 47 counties to share accurate vaccine information with their followers and fill in the information gap,” Miano says. “People are looking for answers. If we don’t provide them, someone else will.”

Now, a new concern is emerging, artificial intelligence. “AI-generated misinformation and deepfakes are a growing concern because they can make false information appear more believable,” says Miano.

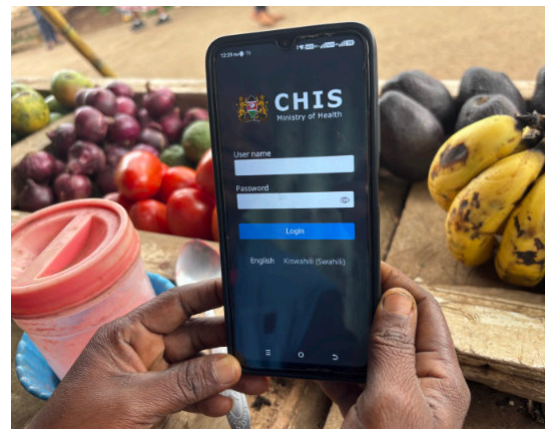
Kenya’s legal framework has yet to catch up. A 2025 amendment to the country’s Computer Misuse and Cybercrimes Act explicitly mentions AI as an emerging threat, but it stops short of regulating its use. That’s a gap that the team operates in and it’s something that, according to Miano, they are trying to change.

“We are working with our partners to come up with regulations around AI so that we can ensure that this does not hurt the progress made and endanger public health,” Miano says.

In laboratories, offices, communities and on social media channels across the country, this little-known team is working to tamp down the threat of myth and misinformation before it can derail progress.

The people involved have faith in their project. “Because of vaccines, you will one day find a generation that does not know what it means to have polio,” Hassan promises. - Pauline Achieng Tom

A version of this story was originally published on VaccinesWork, a digital platform hosted by Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance. Learn more at gavi.org/vaccineswork.



Joanne Hassan (left) and colleagues; community health promoters can report incidences electronically.



POLIO BASICS

Need to brush up on the facts? Here's a primer just in time for World Polio Day. Find out more on the refreshed End Polio Now website at endpolio.org.

What is polio?

The polio virus is an intestinal virus that spreads from person to person, typically through contaminated water. Poliomyelitis, the disease caused by the poliovirus, can attack the nervous system and, in some instances, lead to paralysis. For several weeks, infected individuals shed poliovirus into the environment, where it can spread rapidly, especially in areas with poor sanitation and under-immunised communities. Although there's no cure, safe and effective vaccines do exist. Rotary and its partners have used these to immunise over 3 billion children worldwide since 1988.

The vaccines

The Global Polio Eradication Initiative uses two types of vaccines: **The inactivated polio vaccine (IPV)** was developed by Dr. Jonas Salk and approved for use in 1955. The vaccine consists of inactivated (killed) poliovirus, producing antibodies in the blood that prevent the spread of the virus to the central nervous system and protect against paralysis. IPV is given by injection and needs to be administered by a trained health worker. **The oral polio vaccine (OPV)** is made from strains of poliovirus that are live but weakened. It was developed by Dr. Albert Sabin and began to be used in national immunisation programmes in 1959. The weakened vaccine virus provides better immunity in the gut where polio replicates. It's excreted in the stool and, in communities with low-quality sanitation, the vaccine virus can spread from person to person, resulting in "passive" immunisation and stopping transmission. It's also easier to administer, less expensive to produce and can be distributed quickly on a large scale.



Two types of polioviruses

High immunisation rates are the best protection against both wild and variant polioviruses. Wild polioviruses are the naturally occurring strains of polioviruses. Type 2 wild poliovirus was declared eradicated in September 2015. Type 3 wild poliovirus was declared eradicated in October 2019. The few cases of wild poliovirus that we see now are all of type 1. As of 17 August, only 22 cases have been confirmed in 2026 and it's circulating in only two countries: Afghanistan and Pakistan. Variant polioviruses can occur in areas with low immunisation rates. As the weakened vaccine virus is spread from one unvaccinated child to another over an extended period (often 12-18 months), it can revert to a form that can cause paralysis. This reverted poliovirus can then spread. A new version of the oral polio vaccine has reduced this risk. As of 17 August, there have been 124 cases of variant poliovirus in 2026.



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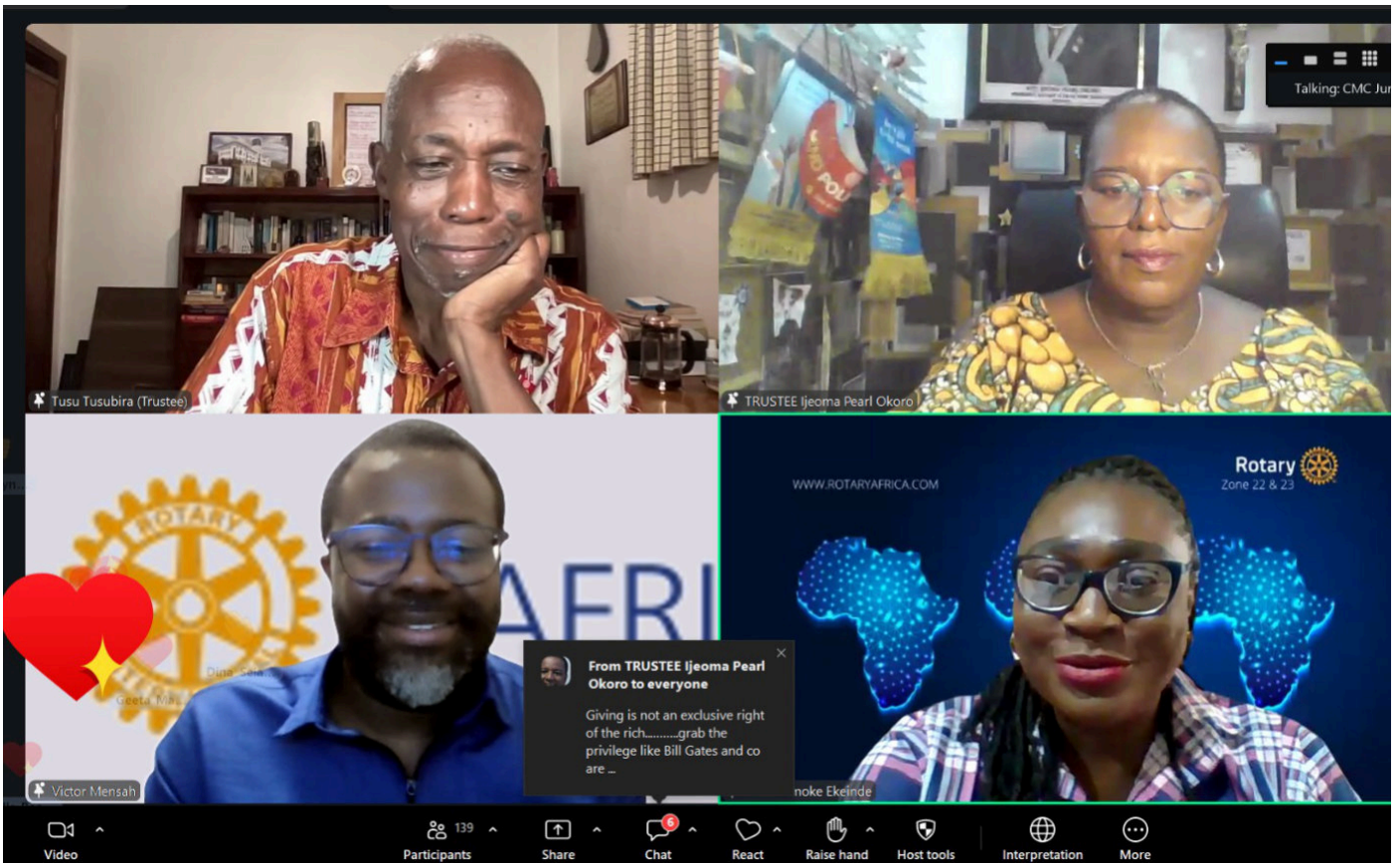
Healthy Communities Build Stronger Economies

Malaria costs Africa half a billion workdays every year. Rotarians lead projects that get people back to work and back to school.



Get your Rotary club involved.

malariapartnersinternational.org/take-action.



Six online sessions brought Rotarians and Rotaractors into conversation with regional Rotary leaders on leadership, The Rotary Foundation, membership, public image and club support.

Online sessions are connecting the continent and Rotary members with leadership

ACROSS THE SCREEN

The formalities of a Rotary leadership meeting can change considerably when everyone occupies the same-sized square on a computer screen.

That was part of the thinking behind Leaders' Transition & Engagement, a six-session Zoom series organised by the Rotary International Zone 22-23 Communication & Media Coordination Team. The series was designed to give Rotarians and Rotaractors direct access to regional leaders and to create space for questions and conversation, rather than relying on presentations.

"We wanted to create an interactive, warm and friendly space for dialogue with our leaders, where engagement isn't dictated, but shared with passion and sincerity," said Zone 22 Communication & Media Coordinator Olajumoke Ekeinde.

Each session tackled a different part of Rotary's work. Outgoing Zone 21-22 Director Daniel Tanase looked back on his term before incoming Director Emanuel Katongole discussed priorities

for 2026 to 2028.

Other sessions focused on The Rotary Foundation, membership and public image, bringing trustees and regional coordinators into the conversation. Topics included Foundation giving, End Polio Now, youth and professional exchanges, membership growth and the way Rotary communicates its work. The final session introduced the Zone 22 Support Team and the resources available to clubs.

Presentations were accompanied by personal experiences, field stories and discussions about plans for the region, while participants used the chat function throughout the sessions.

Taken together, the programme also showed how closely Rotary's different areas of work overlap. Membership affects the capacity of clubs, Foundation support helps finance projects and public image determines how that work is understood beyond Rotary.

I am Sweet 16.

I am a hummingbird. I do what I can.

I fund The Rotary Foundation!



Hummingbird

PLEDGE

A hummingbird carrying a single drop of water has become the symbol of a District 9216 campaign to encourage Rotarians to support The Rotary Foundation.

The idea grew from a story shared by the late Nobel Peace laureate Professor Wangari Maathai and has been adopted as part of the district's "Sweet 16" identity. The name was coined by Jane Joan Muthui, now President of the Rotary Club of Ruiru, during Presidents-Elect training last year and embraced by District Governor Esayas Yeyesuswork.

District Rotary Foundation Chair Patrick Muchemi said his work with clubs highlighted a need for more information about The Rotary Foundation, its work and how individual contributions are used. The district's approach this Rotary year is to reach its 1 500 Rotarians and 900 Rotaractors with that information while encouraging each person to contribute what they can.

The campaign draws on Maathai's story of animals fleeing a forest fire while a hummingbird repeatedly carries drops of water from a pond to

the flames. When challenged about the difference such a small amount could make, the bird replies, "I am doing what I can."

That line became part of District 9216's campaign message: "I am Sweet 16. I am a hummingbird. I do what I can. I fund The Rotary Foundation!"

Rotaractor Lenny Kioko of the Rotaract Club of Syokimau developed an app through which members can register their giving pledges. Each participant receives a personalised card carrying the hummingbird message, which can be shared on social media and WhatsApp.

Following a one-week test with several clubs, DG Esayas officially launched the initiative during an online district meeting in mid-August. Within the first four days, 11 percent of the district's Rotarians had pledged more than \$70 000 to The Rotary Foundation.

The district aims to raise \$300 000, with its first target being pledges from the majority of its Rotarians. The next stage will focus on converting those pledges into contributions.

District 9216 covers Kenya, Ethiopia and Eritrea.

Stephanie Bergman of [Bright + Early](#) is a popular international speaker on the ethics of AI for nonprofit organisations. This month, she shares practical guidance for organisations navigating AI use thoughtfully, responsibly and with their people in mind.

Can AI Be Ethical?



Want to start a debate? Ask someone if they think AI is ethical. It's a bit of a spicy one, but worth sitting with, because AI has already shown up whether or not anyone voted on it. A note taker drafts minutes with a transcription app. A project lead runs a grant proposal through a chatbot. A volunteer uploads outreach photos to generate a report graphic.

These tools have become embedded in our day-to-day lives, but how are they selected? How are they being used? Where is the data being stored? If you've been wondering about this, you aren't alone.

So let's get into it. Short answer: AI isn't ethical on its own. It's not a person, it doesn't have values and it definitely doesn't have your organisation's mission in mind.

What makes it ethical is how it was built, whose data trained it and whether there's still a human accountable for what comes out the other end. A tool trained on scraped data with no real consent, or one that quietly reinforces bias in who gets flagged, funded or approved, becomes extractive. But the same underlying technology, used intentionally and deliberately with a human in the loop, can genuinely support the work instead of undermining it.

Things aren't ethical on their own. How we

choose to use them is what does the work. That distinction is critical for an organisation built on service and trust.

Organisations and volunteers are not in the same position

Most advice on "responsible AI use" is written as if everyone has the same access: adopt a policy, vet your vendors and train your staff. All good advice, but it quietly assumes an IT department and a procurement budget, which isn't the reality for many smaller organisations. A well-funded large organisation can negotiate data terms with a paid tool. A volunteer running a project in the field almost certainly cannot. They're more likely to be working with whatever is free and easy to download on their phone.

Some of the places where AI use, and risk, can show up are in those easy-to-access tools, without a clear policy. It's a free transcription app quietly holding onto a recording from a sensitive community meeting. It's beneficiary information typed into a public chatbot just to draft a summary faster. It's a photo of someone in a vulnerable situation run through an image generator with nobody asking if that was OK, or getting consent.

An effective policy really needs to consider three things at once: what the organisation vets, what can actually be monitored or enforced on the ground and what a volunteer or team member needs to know before reaching for the nearest free tool.

If you want somewhere easy to start, begin with these three questions: What will we never put into a public AI tool? Who's accountable for reviewing anything AI touches before it goes out? And when are we revisiting this? If you're a volunteer and these things aren't in place, having a discussion around those questions to get clarity is a great place to start.

Africa's AI landscape

So much of the discussion around ethical AI considerations centres on governance questions and there are some leading frameworks coming out of the African Union (AU) that form a great foundation. The AU's Continental AI Strategy focuses specifically on ethical, equitable use, providing guidelines for organisations across the continent.

Some countries have continued to build on the strategy, releasing their own guidelines. For example, Kenya's AI Strategy provides guidelines on governance and the use of national tools, while

Ethiopia approved a policy focused on AI use in agriculture and health, with further guidelines around data governance. Any organisational policies should be aligned with the recommendations in the locations where they operate.

At Bright + Early, we talked about the spectrum of AI use ranging from extractive to supportive and there are incredible examples of AI as a supportive tool coming out of the continent.

Lelapa AI, out of South Africa, builds speech-to-text and translation for isiZulu, Sesotho and other languages the big models mostly ignore. Masakhane is a grass-roots network of more than a thousand African NLP researchers building language technology by and for African communities.

GhanaNLP's Khaya app translates across 17 Ghanaian languages. These are community-led and consent-driven, built to reduce busywork without replacing judgement.

So what do we do? You don't have to ban AI and you don't have to embed AI into everything either, but you do need to take the time to explore each AI decision with intention, transparency and a clear line back to the values you actually stand for.

Image: www.brightandearly.ca

Coming up...

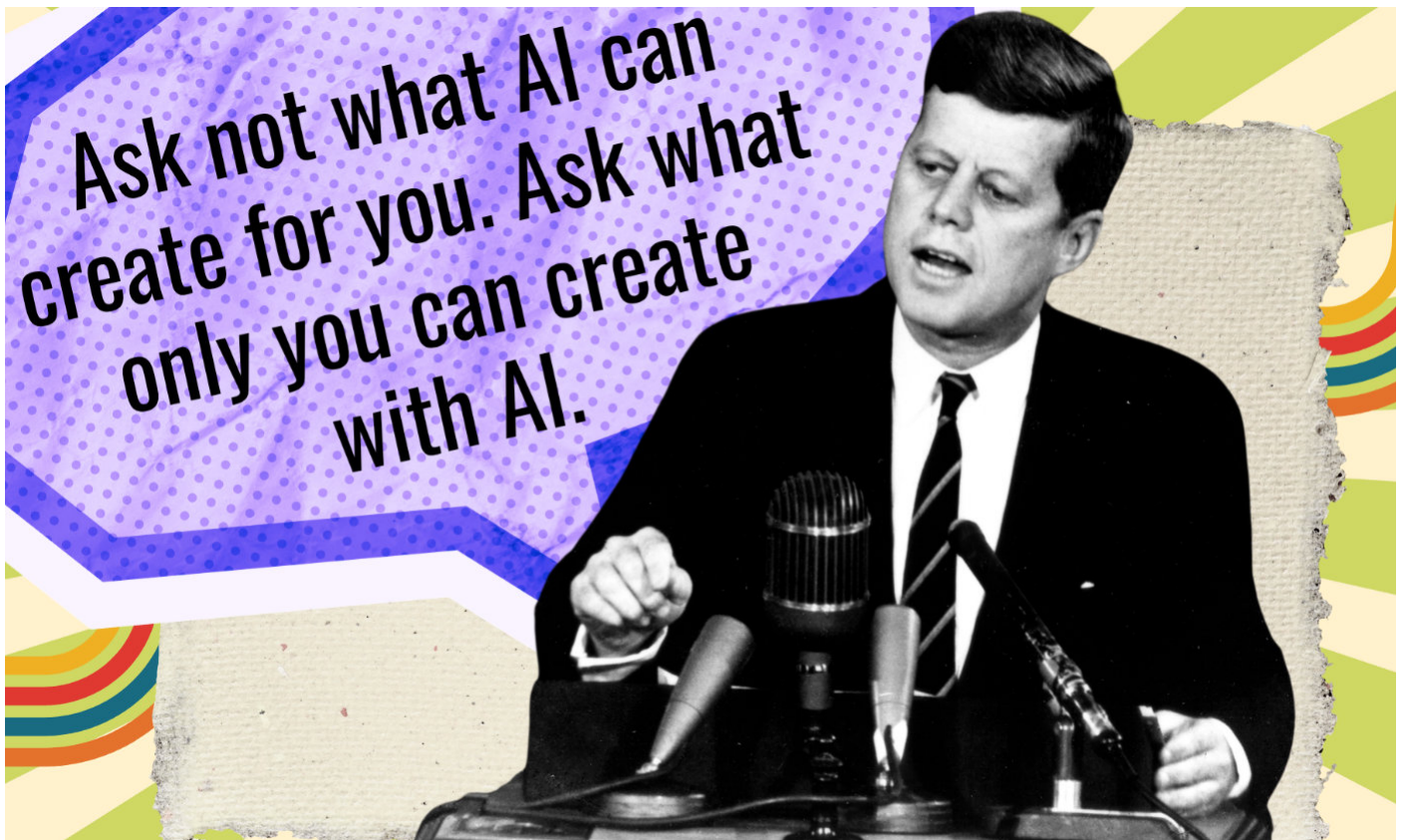
NOVEMBER 2026

26-28 NOV - 7TH ALL AFRICA ROTARY ZONE INSTITUTE. Rotary leaders and members from across Africa will gather for five days of strategic dialogue, leadership development, collaboration. Venue: Kampala, Uganda. Registration: www.africazoneinstitute.org.

JUNE 2027

26-30 JUNE - ROTARY INTERNATIONAL CONVENTION, Barcelona: Registration opens in September 2026. Learn more at www.convention.rotary.org.

Email info about your club's upcoming events to rotaryafrica@mweb.co.za



Lurking in the ether

Ethical Storytelling in the Age of Artificial Intelligence

Is generative AI a monster waiting to devour authentic storytelling, or a useful new friend? Perhaps we're asking the wrong question, writes editor-in-chief, Sarah van Heerden.

There is a strange sameness creeping into organisational storytelling and once you notice it, you can't unsee it.

Scroll through social media and you will find it everywhere. Different organisations, different projects, different countries, yet everyone seems to be "thrilled to announce", celebrating an "incredible milestone", working alongside "passionate volunteers" and, inevitably, "making a meaningful difference".

Then there are the enormous Facebook posts. You know the ones. Every person is thanked, every detail is included and somewhere, buried in paragraph seven, is the actual story. It would be easy to blame generative AI for all of this, but I don't. AI is a tool and the problem begins when we allow the tool to replace thinking.

AI can challenge wording, find repetition, help interrogate an idea, suggest another way of

approaching something and, very usefully, identify when six different thoughts are crammed into one paragraph. It can take 600 words and help find the 120 that actually matter.

However, there is an important distinction between helping us tell a story and becoming the storyteller... AI cannot witness. It wasn't there when your club visited the project and it certainly didn't sit across the table from the person you spoke to or interviewed. It didn't hear the hesitation before an answer, notice the laughter that followed or realise that the seemingly insignificant detail someone mentioned was actually the story. You did that.

Just as AI doesn't carry responsibility for what you eventually publish or post. You do.

This is important because generative AI is very good at producing language that sounds convincing. However, here is the danger. Give it

incomplete information and it may fill the gaps, making up things as it goes along. Ask it to make something more emotional and a fairly ordinary moment can become far more dramatic and even fictional. A quotation becomes cleaner, stronger and more eloquent, while quietly ceasing to be what somebody actually said and meant.

There is a simple rule: never, ever publish something you cannot verify. Remember, plausible is not the same as true.

We must also consider dignity. The people in our stories are not props who exist to demonstrate how wonderful our projects are. Their hardship is not ours to exaggerate for engagement and their lives should not be reduced to convenient stories of need, rescue and gratitude. AI cannot make this ethical judgement for us, but perhaps that is the point.

Sure, go ahead and use AI to shorten the ridiculously long Facebook post. Ask it for ten headline ideas, then let it find repetition or ask it to test whether your opening is interesting enough to make someone continue reading. Give it boundaries, challenge what it produces and then you stop, copy it onto a document and edit it again, by yourself. Please, don't ever hand it your judgement or organisation's voice either.

If we all give AI the same lazy instruction to "write an engaging social media post", we

shouldn't be surprised when we all begin sounding exactly the same.

AI can make us faster communicators. Used well, it can help us become better ones. It can give a small Rotary club without a communications team access to tools that, not very long ago, would have required expensive, professional help. That is exciting and I don't believe we should fear it.

What we should be afraid of is becoming careless because the technology makes producing content so easy.

Sometimes the better communication decision is to say less and sometimes the best decision is to put the AI away and listen. However, when it comes to quoting people, it is always best, even essential, to leave the imperfect sentence exactly as somebody said it, because their words carry something a perfectly constructed sentence never could.

Generative AI is going to continue changing the way we communicate. AI tools will become better, faster and more convincing. Trying to pretend they don't exist is pointless. Our challenge is to become better at deciding where they belong and, equally importantly, where they don't.

Fortunately, Rotarians already have a remarkably useful framework for doing exactly that.

Of the things we think, say or do:

Is it the TRUTH? Not: does it sound true? Not:





AI is a tool... We are accountable

- This is an important distinction.
- If AI invents something...
- The software isn't accountable.
- The organisation is.
- The writer is.
- The communicator is.

That responsibility never transfers.

could this reasonably have happened? Not even: did AI provide a source? But rather, can we verify it? If AI has added a fact, altered the meaning of a quotation, exaggerated an outcome or filled a gap in our information, it doesn't belong in the story until we have checked it. The confidence with which something is written has absolutely no bearing on whether it is true.

Is it FAIR to all concerned? This is particularly important when we are telling stories about people whose circumstances may give us considerably more power over the narrative than they have. Would the person in the photograph recognise themselves in the story we have told? Have we given them dignity and agency, or reduced them to their hardship? Would we be comfortable showing them the finished article? Did they understand how their story or image would be used? Have we considered what information we are putting into an AI system in the first place?

Fairness does not disappear because a computer helped write the words.

Will it build GOODWILL and BETTER FRIENDSHIPS?

Good storytelling creates connection, but generic content doesn't. Nor does communication that treats people as statistics, beneficiaries, victims or props in somebody else's success story.

The best Rotary stories allow us to meet people,

to understand another person's experience without pretending that experience is simple. AI can help us structure those stories, but the connection must remain human.

Will it be BENEFICIAL to all concerned?

This may be the question we need to ask more often. Beneficial to whom? The club that wants engagement? The project that needs publicity? The donor who wants to see an outcome? The person whose most difficult circumstances we have just shared publicly? Those interests are not automatically the same.

A story can be excellent for an organisation and deeply uncomfortable for the person whose life provided the content. Something can generate likes, donations and attention and still not be ethical storytelling.

The Four-Way Test doesn't tell us whether to use generative AI.

When applied to how we use AI, it simply asks if are we using it responsibly.

AI can write. It can summarise, restructure, imitate, suggest and generate, but it cannot witness. It cannot care about the person behind the story. It cannot take responsibility when we get something wrong and it cannot be our conscience.

That part of storytelling still belongs to us!

The technology is new, the responsibility isn't. It still, and always will, lie with us.



Missing men

By the time the doors opened in Robega, Limpopo province, people were already waiting. The queue kept growing as residents arrived for HIV testing, TB screening, maternal and child health services and other healthcare offered through the Rotary Family Health Days programme.

For Dr Malebo Maponyane, who leads Health and Social Development Services within the Royal Bafokeng Administration, the turnout in March provided a practical demonstration of what can happen when services are taken closer to communities. The Robega activation reached 1,549 people and marked the administration's first direct collaboration with the Rotary Action Group

for Family Health & AIDS Prevention (RFHA).

"It was beautiful. It was lively," she said. "People were genuinely excited, and our community made our day."

The partnership brought together the Royal Bafokeng Administration, RFHA, Implats, Gift of the Givers, national and provincial health departments, SANAC and other stakeholders. Gift of the Givers helped broaden the services available, including providing ultrasounds alongside comprehensive screening.

Maponyane has spent more than 25 years in health. A medical doctor who studied microbiology, biochemistry and medicine before

moving into public health, she now oversees services within an administration serving close to 150,000 people across 29 villages.

Her connection with Rotary Family Health Days began when Implats Group Executive for Health Dr Bogosi Moagi invited her to the South African RFHD launch in 2024. There she met RFHA CEO Sue Paget and recognised an approach that fitted her own thinking.

"I was drawn in because what Sue was offering was exactly what I wanted to see happening in our community," she said. "It was a real opportunity for collaboration."

Robega also exposed a gap Maponyane wants future programmes to tackle: men aren't using health services as readily as women and older people.

Part of the problem, she said, is timing. Health services generally operate while men are at work and have closed by the time they finish. She also believes the predominance of female healthcare workers can discourage some men from discussing personal concerns.

"We need to make sure the healthcare providers themselves include men. It needs to be a good mixture and balance, so men feel more encouraged to come and open up."

Mental health is another growing concern. Maponyane said it remains poorly understood in many black communities and expects pressures including unemployment, gender-based violence, mental health difficulties and non-communicable diseases to become increasingly important as



Dr Malebo Maponyane leads Health and Social Development Services within the Royal Bafokeng Administration, which collaborated directly with RFHA during the Rotary Family Health Days activation in Robega in March.

mining operations wind down.

RFHA's next South African Rotary Family Health Days launch is scheduled for 29 and 30 October in Limpopo province, with Implats and Royal Bafokeng continuing their support.

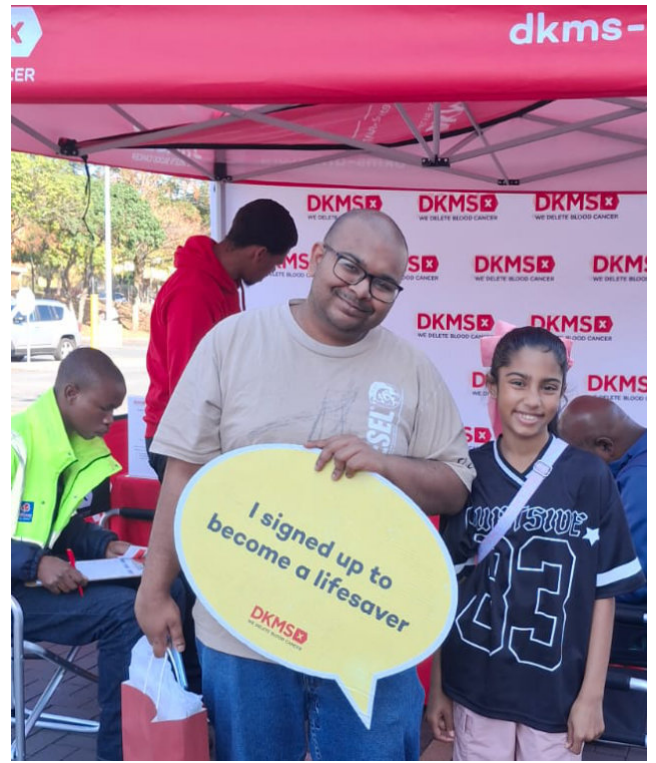
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Twelve-year-old Imaan Shaik (far right) is still searching for a compatible stem-cell donor. With the support of the Chatsworth High Noon club, regular donor awareness and registration campaigns are being held. In the meantime expanded awareness of stem-cell donor registration has already helped bring hope to two other people.

Still Searching...

Imaan Shaik is 12 years old and saving lives while still waiting to find a compatible stem-cell donor who could change hers.

During the campaign to find a matching donor for Imaan, something unexpected happened: donors for two other people were found.

The Rotary Club of Chatsworth High Noon (D9370) has taken up Imaan's cause, working to broaden awareness of stem-cell donation and connect her search with organisations and communities that may be able to help.

The club has engaged with DKMS International and Rotary clubs and members in Bangalore, India, taking what began as a local appeal into a much wider network.

Closer to home, that work was visible at Chatsworth Centre, where the club recently worked with the South African National Blood Service and DKMS on a combined blood donation and stem-cell donor awareness drive. People arriving to donate blood were also introduced to

stem-cell donor registration and why a larger donor pool matters to patients searching for compatible matches.

Finding that match can be particularly difficult because compatibility depends on genetic characteristics. For Imaan, the search continues.

Her case has also prompted the Chatsworth High Noon club to look beyond a single campaign. The club is encouraging other Rotary clubs that already organise blood donation drives to consider including stem-cell donor awareness and registration alongside them. This approach uses an activity many clubs already understand and have experience organising, while introducing another form of donor engagement and recruitment.

Imaan remains at the centre of it all, a 12-year-old waiting for news that has not yet come. In the meantime, the search carrying her name has reached considerably further than anyone first intended, including two other patients looking for the same thing she is: a compatible donor.



Jireh (G-Ray) Mabamba served as the youngest-ever president of The Rotary Club of Minneapolis, USA, completing his term for the 2025–2026 leadership year.

Doors opened

Jireh Mabamba kept turning up. He attended Rotary meetings, joined Youth Exchange orientations at Durban High School and made the most of opportunities which, only a few years earlier, would have seemed a long way from the life his family had left behind.

Mabamba arrived in South Africa with his parents and seven siblings after the family fled conflict in the Democratic Republic of Congo. As refugees starting again in Durban, education became one of the routes through which he began building a new life.

He found his way into Addington Primary School and later received a scholarship to attend

Durban High School. There, he combined strong academic performance with sport and eventually became deputy head boy.

The Rotary Club of Durban Berea (D9370) became part of his life during those school years, providing support which Mabamba regards as the foundation for many of the opportunities which followed.

His regular attendance at Youth Exchange orientations eventually led to an opportunity of his own. Mabamba travelled to Duluth, Minnesota, for a Rotary Youth Exchange year in the United States.

It proved to be a turning point.

He later attended the University of Minnesota Duluth, graduating with a bachelor's degree in marketing and organisational management. It was also where he met his future wife.

Mabamba went on to complete a master's degree in technology security and remained in Minnesota, where he and his wife are now raising four children, aged one, three, six and seven.

Rotary remained part of his life too.

He founded the Twin Ports Rotaract Club before joining the Rotary Club of Minneapolis #9, eventually becoming its President. His term marked two firsts for the 116-year-old club: Mabamba became its first black president and its youngest.

His involvement in community work extended beyond regular club activities. During the Ice Surge crisis, Mabamba mobilised partners and community members to raise R3,236,014, which was distributed directly to families and organisations needing assistance.

He now serves on the board of the American Red Cross of Minnesota.

Professionally, Mabamba leads Mission North Advisors, a non-profit strategy and advisory firm which works with organisations on fundraising, leadership and longer-term planning. He also manages a growing real estate portfolio.

The route from Durban to Minnesota has been accompanied by a Rotary connection at several stages. First came the Rotarians who supported a young refugee settling into South African schools. Then came the Youth Exchange opportunity which took him to the US. Years later, Mabamba found himself on the other side of that relationship, organising Rotaractors and leading a Rotary club of his own.

For those who knew him as a student in Durban, there had already been signs of what he might do with an opportunity. He attended the orientations even before he had an exchange of his own and regularly joined Rotary meetings while still at school.

Mabamba continues to credit his faith and the Rotarians who supported him during those early years for helping shape what followed.



Today, the former Durban High School deputy head boy has built a career and family in Minnesota while continuing his involvement in humanitarian and community work.



Rotarians joined principals, educators, library assistants and community partners at the Sunflower Library to celebrate the completion of the Waterfront global grant project.

Beyond books

Fourteen school libraries and more than 22 000 learners later, a 16-year literacy effort in Cape Town has reached the end of one chapter, with plans already taking shape for what comes next.

The Rotary Club of Waterfront (D9350) marked the close of its global grant School Library Project at the Sunflower Library in Zonnebloem on 29 July.

The project began with a straightforward aim: to establish sustainable libraries at schools where learners had limited access to books and other reading resources.

Over time, the work expanded beyond shelves and books. Fourteen school libraries were established or strengthened, while library assistants were trained, educators supported and

systems developed to keep the facilities operating after the grant period.

Project Leader Janet Kriseman has been closely involved in that development.

“We didn't just build bookshelves, we built possibility,” she said. “We filled minds with wonder and created spaces where children discover that reading matters, their questions matter and they matter.”

Results from the 2026 School Library Impact Survey were presented during the celebration. Eighty-three percent of participating schools reported moderate to significant improvements in learners' engagement with reading, while 92 percent reported a positive effect on teaching and learning.



Along with the Waterfront club and The Bookery, the project's partners included The Rotary Foundation, the Rotary Club of Alturas Sunrise in District 5190, the Western Cape Education Department, the Otto Foundation and leadership teams at participating schools.

The project has also created employment opportunities for library assistants, who work with learners and educators while helping to keep the libraries active.

Their role is important to the project's approach. A stocked room alone doesn't necessarily become part of daily school life.

Having someone available to manage the collection, help children find books and encourage reading gives schools a way to make regular use of the resource.

Waterfront club president Hamilton Zwane thanked Kriseman, the club's literacy committee and the organisations involved in the project.

"The library gives us a strong foundation to work alongside schools, partners and communities," he said. "Our vision is a whole-school ecosystem where every learner can grow, learn and succeed."

Although the global grant project has formally closed, participants used the July gathering to discuss how the schools could continue learning from one another.

One outcome was an agreement to establish a Community of Practice for principals, educators and library assistants.

The network will give participating schools a way to share ideas, discuss approaches which are working and find solutions to common challenges.

The project has involved several partner organisations during its 16 years. Each partner brought different resources and experience to the project, from funding and books to school-level implementation and the training needed to keep libraries operating.

The gathering at Sunflower Library provided an opportunity to look at what those partnerships had produced, not only in the number of libraries established, but in how schools were using them.





Deputy Minister Hambaleleni Ndjaleka, centre front in beige, joined representatives of the Ministry of Health and Social Services, WHO, UNICEF, regional governments and Rotary at the recognition ceremony in Windhoek.

CLOSING THE GAPS

More than 1,000 vaccination vehicles moving through Namibia carried an extra message during the country's third polio vaccination round. Rotary-funded stickers had turned them into mobile signposts for a campaign trying to reach children who had been missed.

The effort followed the detection of circulating vaccine-derived poliovirus type 2 in wastewater collected in Rundu, near the Angolan border, in October 2025. Laboratory analysis linked the virus to strains circulating in Angola.

No child had developed paralysis when the virus was detected, but its presence in wastewater indicated silent transmission and prompted a national response.

The Ministry of Health and Social Services, supported by WHO and UNICEF, launched nationwide vaccination campaigns. More than 800,000 children were reached during the first two

rounds, but about 100,000 were missed.

Rotarians became involved following a national briefing organised by UNICEF. Representatives from Namibia's eight Rotary clubs formed the Rotary Polio Support Group Namibia, coordinated by Karin Kuntze and Thomas Bieler.

Kuntze is a member of the Rotary Club of Klein Windhoek Valley (D9350) and serves as volunteer coordinator of the support group.

The challenges facing vaccination teams went beyond the availability of vaccines. Some parents believed routine immunisation meant their children were already sufficiently protected, while others hadn't heard about the campaign. Misinformation circulated on social media and Namibia's distances, informal settlements and seasonal flooding complicated access.

Rotarians and supporters in Namibia, Germany and South Africa raised funds within a month to



Dr Nguundja Uamburu, Incident Task Force Manager, with Thomas Bieler and Karin Kuntze during Namibia's polio vaccination campaign.

support public awareness ahead of the third vaccination round.

The funds paid for megaphones used for community mobilisation, banners at vaccination points and stickers for more than 1,000 vehicles. Rotary also worked with UNICEF and Ministry communication teams on answers to frequently asked questions, which were distributed through WhatsApp and radio in several languages.

Vaccination coverage reached about 91 percent after the third round.

“Looking back on Namibia's polio response, I won't remember the long hours, I will remember the people,” said Dr Nguundja Uamburu, Incident Task Force Manager for the Polio Campaign at the Ministry of Health and Social Services.

“The team that gave up evenings and weekends before the response even began, the quiet commitment behind every plan, every surveillance visit, and every campaign, and partners like Rotary who stood with us throughout.”

Another nationwide campaign is planned for September. This time, injectable inactivated polio vaccine will be integrated with measles and rubella

vaccination, allowing health teams to address several childhood immunisation needs during the same campaign.

The partnership was recognised at the Gateway Conference Centre in Windhoek on 3 July, when the Ministry honoured people involved in the vaccination campaign.

Those recognised included Uamburu, Dr Steffen Bau, Dr Wolfgang Bückendorf, Kuntze and Bieler, along with representatives from the Ministry, UNICEF, CDC, WHO and the Omusati, Kavango West and Zambezi regions.

Deputy Minister Hambaleleni Ndjaleka, a member of the Rotary Club of Lüderitz (D9350), asked for the ceremony to open with The Four-Way Test. Bieler read it at the start of proceedings and Ndjaleka recited it again at the close.

The Rotary Polio Support Group is now preparing to assist with the September campaign. The same practical communication tools used previously, including vehicle branding, roadside banners and megaphones, are expected to help families identify vaccination points and understand why another round is necessary.



A successful grant application provided the Worcester club with a way to respond using Rotary's District Flood Relief funding. Sandy's Eden Animal Shelter was one of the organisations impacted by the floods. Once approved, the emphasis was on obtaining the required products locally and getting them to the shelter.



SHELTER AFTER FLOODS

Keeping an animal shelter clean is a daily job, but flooding in Worcester left Sandy's Eden Animal Shelter without some of the basic supplies needed to do it. The Rotary Club of Worcester (D9350) stepped in after severe flooding in the Western Cape on 11 May affected the shelter's facilities and its stocks of hygiene and sanitation products.

Sandy's Eden cares for abandoned and rescued animals in Worcester. Along with damage caused by the flooding, the shelter lost supplies used for cleaning and maintaining hygienic conditions for the animals in its care.

Past President Juanita Wilkinson led the Worcester club's response and successfully secured a District Flood Relief Grant under the hygiene category. The funding was used to purchase hygiene packs, cleaning products and water filtration supplies, addressing some of the practical needs which emerged after the flooding.

For an organisation caring for rescued animals, access to cleaning products and safe water is particularly important. Kennels, feeding areas and

other shared spaces require regular cleaning, while hygiene measures help staff and volunteers maintain suitable conditions for animals housed together. The water filtration supplies provided another practical component of the assistance, helping the shelter manage its water needs following the disruption caused by the floods.

The Sandy's Eden project was part of the Worcester club's response to flood-related needs in its community. While disaster relief often focuses on homes, public facilities and services, the damage at the shelter created a different set of immediate requirements.

With animals still needing feeding, cleaning and daily care regardless of the disruption around them, replacing lost supplies became part of keeping the shelter functioning.

The delivery allowed staff and volunteers to return their attention to the work which continues every day at Sandy's Eden, caring for abandoned and rescued animals while the shelter recovers from the effects of the flooding.



For more than 10 years, the Mtwapa club has supported mothers and young children living in the prison nursery, providing regular nutritional assistance while improving the environment in which the children spend their earliest years.

BEYOND PRISON WALLS

Every Monday, milk, porridge, cereals, fresh fruit, vegetables and clean drinking water make their way into Shimo la Tewa Women's Maximum Security Prison in Kenya. They are destined for some of its youngest residents.

Between 11 and 20 children may be living there at any given time. They are either born while their mothers are incarcerated or arrive at the prison as infants with them. Over the years, the Rotary Club of Mtwapa (D9216) involvement has developed to include regular deliveries, improvements to the nursery and support for nursing mothers.

Working with a long-standing German donor and Dutch Water Ltd Mtwapa, the club renovated the nursery, repainted its walls and added colourful murals. A playground with swings, a seesaw and a slide was also constructed, giving the children a dedicated space for physical activity and play.

The work reflects the particular circumstances of children living with their mothers in a correctional facility. Although the prison determines much of their surroundings, the nursery and playground provide spaces designed specifically for their needs. The club also donated 10 mattresses and household utensils for nursing mothers.

Nutrition remains one of the project's most

consistent elements. Rather than relying on occasional distributions, the project has been built around providing these supplies regularly.

The club has introduced another routine for the children: birthdays. Cakes and balloons are brought in to mark birthdays with their mothers, giving the children birthday celebration similar to those experienced by children on the outside the prison.

The Mtwapa club's involvement is focused on the first four years of the children's lives.

Children remain in the prison nursery until they reach four, after which, the courts facilitate reunification with immediate family where possible. When family placement cannot be achieved, the next option is placement in a children's home.

More than a decade after the Mtwapa club first became involved, volunteers are still arriving on Mondays. The nursery walls have been painted, a playground now stands within the facility and birthdays are marked as they come around. Then there are the items that don't change much from week to week: milk, porridge, cereals, fruit, vegetables and drinking water, packed for another Monday delivery behind the prison walls.



Step for Shoes has provided 486 pairs of school shoes to learners at 11 schools in the Endumeni area. Donations, business sponsorships and money raised through a community walk have all contributed to the Dundee club's project.

SHOES THAT FIT

The toes showing through the front of a child's school shoes tell most of this story. Another pair is split across the toe caps, the leather worn away after being pushed far beyond its useful life.

Shoes in this condition were becoming a familiar sight to Past President Michele du Plessis, a primary school principal. When she raised the problem with the Rotary Club of Dundee (D9370), it led to Step for Shoes, a project that has now provided 486 pairs of school shoes to learners at 11 schools in the Endumeni area of KwaZulu-Natal.

Getting to 486 has involved contributions of very different sizes. A donor from Wasbank supplied 32 pairs and Dundee Charlie's Spar sponsored

another 50. Pick n Pay Dundee contributed R10,000, the Dundee club R11,000 and Pick n Pay Corporate R16,000. Together, those financial contributions enabled 276 pairs to be bought through Pick n Pay Clothing.

Another 128 pairs of Bata school shoes were ordered using donations and money raised through a Step for Shoes community walk.

For the children receiving them, the change is decidedly practical. School shoes have to withstand daily walking, classrooms, playgrounds and whatever the journey to and from school demands. Once a pair has split or worn through, there isn't always another waiting at home.

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AFRICA IN BRIEF



Senior women from the Worcester community had an afternoon set aside for them when Desire Wesch, owner of Taste Catering & Events in Worcester, hosted a Women's Day tea party on 10 August. Guests enjoyed food, drinks and time together, while the Rotary Club of Worcester (D9350), working with Dis-Chem Worcester, added a practical touch by providing the women with much-needed toiletries. The gathering celebrated mothers, grandmothers and matriarchs in the community and gave them an opportunity to spend the afternoon sharing conversation and enjoying one another's company. Photo: Justin Sias of Dis-Chem with Desire Wesch.



Women's Day celebrations continued a little longer in Worcester as members of the Worcester club visited staff at Boland Hospice, Brewelskloof Hospital, Worcester Hospital's maternity ward and Worcester Mediclinic. The Rotarians arrived with warm beanies, tea and cupcakes made by staff at APD, along with a simple message for the people who spend their working days caring for others: "Thank you. We see you. We appreciate you." The visits formed part of the Worcester club's Women's Day activities and gave members an opportunity to recognise healthcare and hospice staff serving communities across the Breede Valley.



There were two kinds of new growth when District Governor Grace van Zyl and her husband, John, visited the Rotary Club of Vanderbijlpark (D9400). At the club's community garden, Rotarian Alice de Jager explained how members became involved in the project and shared some of the experiences of people who have worked there. Van Zyl then planted the garden's first orange tree, while she and Assistant Governor Fiona Brokensha each received a plant grown in its hothouse. Later that evening, the club welcomed three new Rotarians; Dries Swanepoel, Ernest Modise and Veronique Murray. The visit also introduced van Zyl to club President Jackie van Waveren and gave members an opportunity to show how the garden has developed alongside their other community work.





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The Rotary Club of Grahamstown Sunset (D9370) and Grahamstown Round Table 11 handed over blankets, duvets and winter jackets to Joza SAPS for distribution to community members and households needing immediate assistance. The items were collected during the Grahamstown Sunset club's annual Polar Plunge and Round Table 11's Winter Knights clothing collection in June. Joza SAPS officers will identify recipients following accidents, incidents or other circumstances where immediate support is required. At the handover are Rotarian Greg Wilmot, Colonel Nomsa Mtshagi, Joza SAPS Station Commander, Grahamstown Sunset club President Lester Isaacs, Captain Nomzolisi Dike-Jaca, Amanda Mpokeli and Captain Jackie de Klerk.



Eleven years after losing her dominant hand in an accident with a grass-cutting machine, Purity Ndolo has received an LN-4 prosthetic hand through the Rotary Club of Nairobi-Utumishi (D9215) LN-4 prosthetic hand project in Kenya. The 42-year-old from Machakos was fitted with the hand in Nairobi on 31 August, with Rotarian Dr Mussadiq Mir (left) recording the fitting. Ndolo hopes to use the prosthesis for housework and everyday personal tasks. The Nairobi-Utumishi club works with Rotary clubs in Oregon, USA, and the Ellen Meadows Prosthetic Hand Foundation to provide LN-4 hands at no cost to recipients who meet the fitting requirements. The lightweight prosthetic hand was developed by industrial designer Ernie Meadows, who later entrusted its distribution to Rotarians with the condition that recipients would never be charged for it.



A chicken braai brought several generations together when the Rotary Club of Worcester (D9350) prepared lunch for residents of Awendrus Old Age Home. Rotarians, partners and family members gathered at the home of Past President Stephne' Botha to prepare braaiied chicken, potato salad and pasta salad before serving the meal to the residents. Among those helping were Rotarians in Training Robyn and Jason, giving the younger participants a hands-on role alongside the adults. The Worcester club encourages families and young people to become involved in its service activities, and this time the lesson came with braai tongs, bowls of salad and lunch shared with Awendrus residents.

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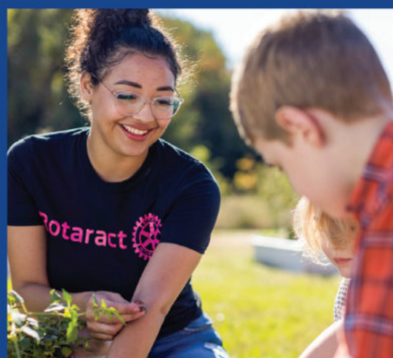
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