

General Secretary's Report to the Convention

Montréal, Québec, Canada

June 2010

Strategic thinking and planning have been the watchwords for Rotary International in 2009-10. The RI Board updated the organization's [strategic plan](#), concentrating priorities on the core activities of supporting and strengthening clubs, focusing and increasing humanitarian service, and enhancing public image and awareness. Each priority has a set of goals to support it. The new priorities and goals were developed largely based on the results of worldwide surveys of 14,000 Rotarians at all levels of the organizations and focus groups conducted with non-Rotarians in five countries.

The updated plan is guiding the Secretariat staff as we work to closely align our activities with its priorities and goals.

Supporting and strengthening clubs is an essential function of the RI Secretariat. In 2009-10, we developed or enhanced the following resources for clubs and districts:

- [Rotary Leader](#), a new digital bimonthly newsletter that offers best practices and innovative ideas for club and district leaders
- Twenty-eight training webinars for governors-elect, regional Rotary Foundation coordinators (RRFCs), training leaders, and others
- Rotary [E-Learning Center](#) on the RI website, which provides self-guided learning modules on many Rotary topics, including navigating the website, starting a service project, and qualifying a Future Vision pilot district
- Surveys of Rotarians to evaluate RI programs and resources and identify needs
- Training of [Rotary coordinators](#), a group of 41 Rotarians who, beginning in 2010-11, will assist clubs and districts in building membership, adopting best practices, and carrying out RI programs
- Informational kits on all RI programs for district chairs
- [Brochure templates](#) that clubs can customize and distribute to prospective members and others
- [Your Voice, Your Solution](#), a monthly online feature that poses a typical challenge that clubs and districts may face and encourages Rotarians to respond with solutions

At its triennial meeting in April, the [Council on Legislation](#) considered more than 200 proposed enactments and resolutions. Among the decisions that will affect all of our member clubs are a per capita dues increase of \$1 per year for three years and the adoption of e-clubs and a fifth Avenue of Service: New Generations. In addition, the Council sent a number of resolutions to the RI Board for consideration. Revision of the *Manual of Procedure* to reflect the Council action is now underway; the new edition will be available in 2010-11.

Focusing and increasing humanitarian service relates closely to the [Future Vision Plan](#), which will support large-scale, sustainable projects in six areas of focus. The Future Vision Committee continued to work out the details of the plan in anticipation of the pilot launch on 1 July. All pilot district governors and Rotary Foundation chairs received training before the International Assembly in

January, almost all of the 100 pilot districts have completed the qualification process, and the first district and global grants have been approved.

Rotary's primary humanitarian service goal is, of course, global [polio eradication](#), and we have seen some promising advances this year. A powerful new bivalent oral polio vaccine and new strategic approaches have combined to lower polio rates in both India and Nigeria, two of the four countries (along with Afghanistan and Pakistan) that remain polio-endemic. As of 20 April, Nigeria had reported two cases of polio in 2010, compared to 193 cases for the same period in 2009, and India had reported 19 polio cases compared with 32.

Thanks to the enthusiastic efforts of clubs and districts, Rotarians have raised \$131.5 million toward the [\\$200 million challenge](#) from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation as of 27 May. On Rotary's birthday, 23 February, clubs worldwide [lit up 25 landmarks](#) — from the Egyptian pyramids to the Tower of London — with the End Polio Now logo. Another successful polio awareness campaign — [Kick Polio Out of Africa](#) — culminates at the convention in Montréal when the soccer ball that has made stops in 23 African countries for celebrity signings and other media events reaches its goal. In addition, a [virtual ball](#) garnered thousands of signatures online from supporters worldwide. In the United States, concerts by violin virtuoso and polio survivor Itzhak Perlman in Iowa and with the New York Philharmonic also helped to raise awareness and money for the challenge.

Many clubs seeking a way to increase their humanitarian service use [ProjectLINK](#), a searchable database on RI's website that lists Rotary club and district community service projects in need of funding, volunteers, donated goods, or partners for a Rotary Foundation Matching Grant. ProjectLINK features projects in 50 countries — about 400 projects in need and 600 completed model projects that illustrate best practices. During 2009-10, projects in need received almost \$120,000 in donations through ProjectLINK.

Increasing humanitarian service depends, in large part, on a strong Rotary Foundation. Rotarian generosity remained constant this year, with a year-to-date increase of 8.7 percent in giving overall through 30 April. At that time, contributions to the [Annual Programs Fund](#) totaled more than \$70 million, PolioPlus contributions were close to \$30 million, and [Permanent Fund](#) contributions reached about \$8 million. In addition to these funds, The Rotary Foundation has established special funds for disaster recovery efforts in [Haiti](#) and [Chile](#). The donor advised fund for long-term recovery in Haiti had received contributions of \$1.6 million as of 30 April. Contributions to the fund established for Chile earthquake relief totaled \$956,600 as of 31 May.

Enhancing public image and awareness takes many forms. In 2009-10, we worked with clubs and districts to expand their efforts to gain media attention and make communities more aware of Rotary's good work. Three hundred districts received about \$2 million in 2008-09 [Public Relations Grants](#), with in-kind and district donations bringing the value of the grants to approximately \$10 million. In an effort to spread Rotary's message throughout the world, regional versions of [Humanity in Motion](#) public service announcements were developed for Germany, Arabic-speaking countries, and Argentina.

Rotary's presence on popular social media sites continues to grow. The number of people in RI's official [Facebook](#) group has grown from 26,000 last June to about 64,000 currently. Our [LinkedIn](#) site has almost 10,000 members, who carry on lively discussions on everything from Rotary pins to the business benefits of being a Rotarian to ethical dilemmas. The almost 30,000 people who follow RI on

[Twitter](#) receive daily updates with links to news and features on the website. Many of them “retweet” Rotary’s messages, increasing our audience by many thousands more.

Traffic continues to increase on Rotary.org, the public face of Rotary International, with visits totaling about 1.5 million each quarter. This year’s top news story focused on relief efforts in Haiti following the devastating earthquake. The story received more than 20,000 unique page views — about 11,500 more than the second most viewed story on the 2010-11 RI theme.

The first Interact video contest drew 24 entries from Interact clubs in nine countries. The winning video, *Giving Back through Interact*, was created by a club made up of juvenile offenders in South Carolina, USA, who have found new purpose in their lives as Interact members. The video was featured in [Interactive](#), a multimedia newsletter on Rotary.org, during World Interact Week in November.

Controlling costs and increasing efficiencies are essential elements of the Secretariat’s long-term strategy. This year, we have taken advantage of technology to achieve both these goals. For example, by converting the quarterly print publication *Rotary World* to the bimonthly digital publication *Rotary Leader*, we anticipate about \$300,000 in annual savings in print and postage. Going digital also enables us to increase readership and offer more targeted content in a variety of media.

Eliminating many onsite committee meetings was another successful cost-cutting measure. This year, numerous committees conducted web-based meetings, saving the organization an estimated \$15,000 per meeting on average. This approach allowed for shorter, more frequent meetings throughout the year and was a more convenient option for many of the committee members who would have had to travel long distances.

We also used web-based tools to conduct 28 training webinars. Rotarian experts served as moderators and panelists, discussing and answering questions on such topics as motivating volunteers, membership, and risk management. The technology allows for up to 1,000 participants per training event. Thus far, webinars have been conducted mainly in English, with some in English and one other language. We plan to offer webinars on more topics and explore adding additional languages in the coming year.

A major upgrade is underway on [Shop.Rotary.org](#), where Rotarians can purchase publications, videos, and other Rotary products online. In 2010-11, our site will be powered by Amazon.com, enabling us to offer members a more pleasant shopping experience along with special sales and promotions. The English site is scheduled to launch in July, with other languages to follow later.

I’m very happy to report that Rotary’s financial picture improved greatly over the past year, so much so that the Board was able to lower its recommended per capita dues increase from \$2 to \$1 per year. More detailed information about RI’s finances can be found in the 2009-10 [Treasurer’s Report to the Convention](#).

Ed Futa
RI General Secretary, 2009-10