

General Secretary's Report to the Convention
New Orleans, Louisiana, USA
May 2011

The 2010-11 Rotary year was a time of great strategic action. The Rotary Foundation launched its three-year [Future Vision pilot](#) in July with 100 districts putting our new grant model to the test. The [RI Strategic Plan](#) also took center stage as senior leaders and staff worked to align our activities more closely with the plan's three priorities: support and strengthen clubs, focus and increase humanitarian service, and enhance public image and awareness.

Supporting and strengthening clubs is essential to ensuring Rotary's vitality and relevance in the years and decades to come. Rotary's most important work begins at the club level, and without strong and effective clubs, Rotary will not survive. Dynamic clubs attract new members, invigorate existing members, motivate up-and-coming leaders, and carry out meaningful service in their communities and abroad. Rotary's vitality increases as clubs become more innovative, for it is through the ideas and energy of club leaders that Rotary can meet the needs of a changing world.

Achieving this level of energy can be a daunting task, especially for clubs that are struggling with issues of an aging or declining membership. The 41 [Rotary coordinators](#) (RCs) from every zone in the Rotary world are a key element in helping clubs overcome these problems and become bigger, better, and bolder. Every year, this group of experienced Rotarian consultants come together with senior leaders and staff to plan how they can best carry out their hefty responsibilities. This year, their meeting overlapped with that of the [regional Rotary Foundation coordinators](#) (RRFCs), who are charged with helping clubs and districts learn more about our Foundation and increase participation and support. Joining this group were representatives from a new team, the [Rotary public image coordinators](#) (RPICs), who will share their professional expertise to help clubs and districts tell their Rotary stories and increase public awareness.

The Secretariat is striving to support the efforts of all these key volunteers. This year, we created new [e-learning modules](#) on each priority of the strategic plan that offer concrete examples for implementing the plan at the club level. We're also increasing the use of webinars as an inexpensive way to offer training to members worldwide. For example, this year we offered five webinars to prepare RRFCs for governors-elect training seminars and 10 webinars in six languages as part of the GETS Online pilot. Other resources include a new publication called *Be a Vibrant Club: Your Club Leadership Plan* and the newly revised edition of the *Strategic Planning Guide* — both available at shop.rotary.org.

Over the past year, we have conducted a number of Rotarian and non-Rotarian focus groups, all of which yielded interesting results. One thing we learned is that prospective members are looking for opportunities to do good in their communities, but not in a prescriptive way. Much as they might admire Rotary's accomplishments, many nonmembers don't perceive a Rotary club as being sufficiently flexible or contemporary for their volunteer efforts.

We are responding to this information by refreshing our language to reflect a more action-oriented, modern organization and emphasizing some of the flexible aspects of Rotary. One such innovation is our [e-clubs](#), which have expanded following the 2010 Council on Legislation decision to make the pilot a permanent Rotary feature. Since the Council decision, the number of e-clubs has increased from 14 to 24, with 672 members in 13 countries and geographical areas, carrying out a wide range of service projects. E-clubs conduct meetings in Chinese, English, Finnish, French, German, Greek, Italian, Portuguese, and Spanish.

Another move toward greater flexibility that resulted from a Council decision is the development of [four different pilots](#) set to launch on 1 July: corporate membership, associate membership, satellite clubs, and new model clubs. Two hundred clubs are being selected to participate in each pilot from a pool of about 1,600 applicants. The Rotary coordinators and other Rotary leaders will be watching closely to assess the success of each of these pilot models.

Focusing and increasing humanitarian service reflects Rotary's century-long commitment to improving lives in the communities it serves. Rotary clubs target their service projects to meet the greatest needs in their communities, which makes our grassroots efforts remarkably effective. However, such a wide-ranging approach to service can also make it difficult for the general public to immediately connect Rotary to any one cause — with the notable exception of [global polio eradication](#). Our 25-year effort to eliminate a disease for only the second time in history has gained greater recognition for Rotary on the international stage and made us a valued partner to other nongovernmental organizations.

This year has been especially eventful, both on the ground in polio-endemic countries and in meeting [Rotary's US\\$200 Million Challenge](#) from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. In April, we learned that Uttar Pradesh in India has now gone a year without reporting a single case of polio. Traditionally a major exporter of the virus to other parts of India and the world, the state has been described as one of the most difficult places to eradicate polio, which makes this latest news especially encouraging. Nigeria is also showing huge reductions in polio cases, a fact that RI President Ray Klingensmith helped to celebrate at a PolioPlus Summit held there in September.

Rotarians have enjoyed great success on the fundraising front as well. As of early May, we had raised more than US\$170 million to meet the Gates Foundation challenge. Bill Gates is speaking here at our convention to recognize Rotarians' unwavering commitment to the eradication of this devastating disease as well as our extraordinary fundraising achievement.

The success of PolioPlus in associating Rotary with a specific mission led the Foundation Trustees to identify [six areas of focus](#) that correspond with the service interests and experience of Rotarians: peace and conflict prevention/resolution, disease prevention and treatment, water and sanitation, maternal and child health, basic education and literacy, and economic and community development. These areas form the nucleus of the Future Vision Plan, and the RI Board has also adopted them as part of the RI Strategic Plan. All Rotarians

are encouraged to plan service projects in these areas, and the Foundation has created naming and giving opportunities in each area. [Rotary's Areas of Focus Guide](#), a new publication from the Secretariat, provides a valuable resource for clubs as they begin or continue their work on these critical issues.

The Council decision to create the [New Generations Avenue of Service](#) fueled Rotarian interest in working with young people. A new publication, [An Introduction to New Generations Service](#), outlines how Rotary clubs can involve youth and young adults in their service projects and provide programs and resources that support New Generations.

Sometimes, strategic planning calls for reassessing programs and reallocating resources. This year, the Board agreed to discontinue the Rotary Volunteers and World Community Service programs and concentrate on developing new ways to bring Rotarians together to develop service partnerships and friendships.

Partnerships, at every level, are essential to Rotary's success. Clubs form service partnerships when members meet at a Rotary convention or come together online through [ProjectLINK](#) or one of Rotary's [social media sites](#). Clubs and districts form partnerships with other local organizations that share their service goals. And, of course, Rotary International and The Rotary Foundation are currently working with a range of partners to eradicate polio, promote literacy, and provide access to clean water and sanitation. This year, we formed two new strategic partnerships as part of our Future Vision pilot. We will be working to develop packaged global grants with [Oikocredit](#) in the Netherlands and [Aga Khan University](#), which is based in Pakistan with campuses in Africa and the Middle East.

Enhancing public image and awareness depends in large part on the action of our clubs. That's one reason behind the development of a new resource that is effective 1 July — the Rotary public image coordinators. With their expertise in communications, these 49 Rotarians can offer professional guidance in helping clubs and districts better coordinate and expand their public relations efforts.

RI [Public Relations Grants](#) are another tool to help clubs and districts share their stories with the public. Of the 305 PR grant applications received, 285 were approved for a total of US\$2.2 million in PR grants. This investment from RI was augmented by \$1.2 million in district contributions and \$8.7 million in in-kind donations, such as free or discounted air time or ad space, for a total of \$12.1 million worth of advertising and public awareness building.

Some of the most successful PR grant projects are multidistrict or national efforts. For example, the 18 districts in France joined together for a Rotary Awareness Week, using street signs, transit ads, newspaper ads and interviews, and radio and television spots to carry their message. In Brazil, 12 districts produced a 12-episode, 30-minute video broadcast on prime-time cable TV featuring district projects and incorporating the Humanity in Motion public service announcements into the programs. And in Hawaii, District 5000 convinced the Hawaiian Broadcasting Association to “adopt” Rotary as their charity, garnering nearly \$200,000 in production and airtime on all radio and TV stations in Hawaii. During this period, the district also chartered five new clubs.

You may have seen some of the PSAs from our campaign featuring well-known figures such as Queen Noor of Jordan, film star Jackie Chan, golf legend Jack Nicklaus, and Grammy-winning musicians Angelique Kidjo and Ziggy Marley telling the world “We are this close to ending polio.” We also developed a new site, www.thisclose.net, which lets you put your photograph and name into a This Close ad and share it with family and friends via social networking sites like Facebook and Twitter.

In celebration of Rotary’s 106th anniversary, clubs around the world illuminated more than 20 landmarks on five continents with the [End Polio Now message](#). The Trevi Fountain in Rome; a Lantern Festival gate in Taiwan; the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation headquarters in Seattle, Washington, USA; and the Byblos Castle in Byblos, Lebanon, were among the iconic sites spotlighting this vital message.

More clubs and districts are using websites and social networks to communicate with members and showcase their projects to the public. To help Rotarians put their best public face on these sites, we have developed a series of webinars on creating an effective club website, using social media to promote your club or district, and moving club and district newsletters from print to digital.

Rotary’s own public face — www.rotary.org — continues to attract increased traffic. In the third quarter of this year, visits totaled almost 2.2 million, up 26 percent from the same quarter in 2009-10. Traffic skyrocketed on 23 February this year when a double-recognition points offering brought in more than \$4 million in contributions to The Rotary Foundation.

RI’s social media sites have also grown dramatically in numbers. Our [Facebook](#) group has nearly 120,000 likes, almost twice as many as a year ago. At any given time, the 15,000 members of our [LinkedIn](#) group are carrying on lively discussions on dozens of topics. I encourage you to join the conversation. And, of course, there’s [Twitter](#), where Rotary’s English-language site has about 94,000 followers, with more to come as our Portuguese and German sites develop.

As Rotarians, we take pride in the good work of all of our clubs worldwide. A new coffee-table book, [A Visual Journey](#), captures the essence of Rotary service with professional photography from projects in more than 30 countries. These striking photos tell a story of commitment, competence, and compassion — the story of what it means to be a Rotarian. It’s a compelling reminder to all of us of the importance of what we do and a wonderful way to share our story with non-Rotarians.

Finally, I’d like to end this report on a personal note. As you may know, I will be retiring on 30 June. It’s been my privilege to serve as your general secretary for the past 11 years and to work with so many of the dedicated men and women of Rotary. I’ve also had opportunity to lead and further develop a highly professional staff who will continue to provide the same high level of service under my successor, [John Hewko](#). I know that the staff will work to make the transition run smoothly and that John’s experience and knowledge will contribute greatly to the future of this organization. I thank you for all the support you have given me over the years and assure you that my time with Rotary is far from over. I will be going back

to my first Rotary job that I took on 32 years ago — the extraordinarily rewarding job of being a Rotarian.