Rotary Club of Sonde

THE SONDE TIMES MAGAZINE

VOLUME 5 / ISSUE 21



SERVICE THAT HEALS: ROTARY CLUB OF SONDE'S COMMITMENT TO SPECIAL NEEDS CARE

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Editorial Note

Dear Sonde Times readers,

In this February edition, we focus on peace. At the Rotary Club of Sonde, peace is action.

This month, we engaged young people in hands-on soap making, equipping them with practical, income-generating skills and a renewed sense of purpose.

We believe that when a young person can earn, contribute at home and feel useful, peace stops being a theory; it becomes a lived experience.

The club also had several medical interventions at the cerebral palsy day care centre as the school opened for the new year.

These and more updates are here for your enjoyment. Read on.

Editorial Team, Sonde Times

Editorial Team



Rtn Dianah Trisha Kagere



Rtn Susan Nafuna



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RI President's Message



Peace is a Result of Sustained Action

At last month's International Assembly, President-elect Olayinka "Yinka" Hakeem Babalola called on members of the Rotary world to live out our presidential message for the 2026-27 Rotary year: *Create Lasting Impact*.

This February, as we observe Peacebuilding and Conflict Prevention Month, we have an opportunity to channel Yinka's call to action into real change.

Peace is not simply the absence of war. A life free from conflict but marked by hunger, instability, or the inability to care for one's family is not true peace. Peace requires liberty, opportunity, and respect for human dignity. Yet fear often blocks that path — fear of change, of cultural loss, of people we don't understand.

Fear isn't defeated through avoidance or aggression. Knowledge is the first step toward peace. Rotary embraces this idea. Our Rotary Peace Centers and their peace fellows, along with other peace education initiatives, demonstrate how knowledge builds trust and helps communities find solutions to conflict.

In Colombia, decades of conflict have left deep wounds. The 2026 Rotary Foundation Programs of Scale awardee, Pathways to Peace and Prosperity, partners with the United Nations World Food Programme to expand opportunity, improve conflict resolution, and connect people with social services. Its goal is to break cycles of violence, poverty, and food insecurity so peace can take root.

In Maharashtra, India, People of Action honoree Swati Herkal built peace through prosperity. Her project confronted farmers' declining soil health, rising debt, and illness caused by chemical fertilizers. She and her Rotary partners launched a regenerative agriculture program that revitalized the land, lowered costs, and restored stability. More than 1,100 farmers now participate and over 50 villages have adopted the model.

Rotary also advances peace by restoring dignity. In Chad, Rotary Peace Fellow Domino Frank discovered that more than 1,500 women who fought in a rebellion had been erased from reintegration programs. His advocacy led to Chad's first Rotary Foundation global grant and the creation of Corridors of Peace. More than 100 women — triple the goal — completed literacy and vocational training and formed a cooperative to support their families.

From Colombia to India to Chad, the lesson is clear: Peace is not a dream. It is the result of sustained action with a focus on true, lasting impact. To replicate these successes, Rotary clubs can take three steps: Learn from peace fellows and other peace experts in our organization, apply a peacebuilding lens to community assessments, and prioritize impact over ceremony.

In a world filled with fear, Rotary cannot be satisfied with half-measures and empty words. If we are truly people of action, then action must define us. Together, we can Create Lasting Impact — across the globe, in our communities, and in ourselves.

Francesco Arezzo
President, Rotary International, 2025-26

Rotaract
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DG's Message



When there is Peace, our communities thrive

Uganda, like many nations, has known both the pain of conflict and the promise of peace. Our history reminds us that conflict leaves scars, not only on land and infrastructure, but on opportunity, and human dignity. Yet our story also shows something remarkable: **the resilience of people and the power of reconciliation as we have seen in Northern Uganda.**

Peace is often misunderstood as the absence of war. But true peace is much more than silence after guns fall quiet. Peace is **justice, inclusion, dialogue, and opportunity.** Peace is when young people see a future worth building. Peace is when differences, of tribe, religion, politics, or opinion; are managed not with violence, but with respect. Peace is when one gender respects the other to end Gender based violence.

Disagreement is natural. What turns disagreement or conflict destructive is how we handle it. When dialogue fails, when inequality grows, when fear replaces understanding, conflict becomes dangerous. That is why **conflict resolution is not a reaction; it is a skill and a commitment.** And this skill has to be passed on to our communities.

In Uganda, **Rotarians have been quietly and consistently shaping peace where it matters most at community level.** Our impact is found in changes in lives, tensions reduced, and futures restored. Across communities, Rotary clubs have brought together people of different tribes, faiths, professions, and political views. By creating neutral spaces for conversation through Rotary Community Corps , vocational meetings, and service projects, Rotarians help transform mistrust into understanding. Dialogue is often the first step away from conflict, and Rotary has made that step possible.

In our communities, many conflicts are fueled by poverty, unemployment, and limited access to basic services. Rotary projects in clean water, sanitation, health, education, and economic empowerment have reduced competition over scarce resources.

When communities have water, livelihoods, and hope, conflict loses its fuel.

Through Interact and Rotaract clubs, leadership training, mentorship, and community service, Rotary equips young people with values of tolerance, service, and responsible leadership. Youth who feel included and empowered are far less likely to be drawn into violence and far more likely to become peacebuilders in their communities.

In post-conflict and vulnerable communities like Northern Uganda, Rotary-supported initiatives in health, education have helped restore dignity and rebuild trust. Healing is a critical but often overlooked part of conflict resolution. I was impressed by Rotary Club of Gulu City that supports young ladies that were affected by years of conflict in Northern Uganda. Rotary understands that peace must reach the heart as well as the mind.

Our strength as Rotarians lies in partnership. We work with local leaders, civil society, faith institutions, government agencies, and international Rotary networks. **The Makerere University Peace and Conflict Studies Centre (often called the Makerere Peace Center)** has been helpful in several practical, long-term ways to Uganda and the wider region especially in strengthening peacebuilding, conflict resolution, and evidence-based policy.

The Makerere Peace Center has contributed to **healing and rebuilding efforts**, especially in post-conflict communities. By engaging with local leaders, traditional institutions, and civil society, these partnerships multiply impact and ensure that peace efforts are locally owned and sustainable.

I thank Rotarians for leading by example. The way we conduct our meetings, resolve disagreements, and treat one another demonstrates that conflict can be managed respectfully and constructively. The Rotary FourWay Test remains a powerful guide for peaceful engagement in both public and private life.

As Rotarians, we are uniquely positioned to be peacebuilders. Let us also remember that peace is not someone else's responsibility. Governments, institutions, and international bodies matter but lasting peace is sustained by citizens, by families, by community leaders like us Rotarians.

For now, the next generation is watching us and learning how to disagree by watching how we disagree. They are learning how to lead by watching how we lead. Let us therefore show them that strength is not found in domination, but in dialogue, not in revenge, but in reconciliation.

Let us commit, through our clubs, our projects, and our personal conduct to be ambassadors of peace. Let us resolve conflicts with wisdom, build bridges where walls once stood, and leave behind communities that are more united than we found them. Because when Rotary works for peace, peace works for everyone.

#RotaryEyamba

Geoffrey Martin Kitakule Rotary District Governor District 9213

A Day of Care, A Lifetime of Hope for Children with Cerebral Palsy



Last month, the Rotary Club of Sonde carried out a Medical Assessment Exercise for children living with Cerebral Palsy at the Cerebral Palsy Centre in Bukerere.

The initiative aimed to provide professional medical evaluations, practical guidance, and reassurance to families caring for children with special needs.

The exercise attracted an overwhelming response, with more than 40 children brought to the centre by their parents and caregivers. Due to time constraints, only 15 children were assessed during the initial session by Pediatric Neurologist Dr. Stephen Byarugaba. Recognising the importance of ensuring every child received attention, a follow-up assessment was organised for those who could not be evaluated during the first session.

On Saturday, 24th January 2026, Dr. Byarugaba returned to the centre to complete the assessments. A further 15 children were evaluated, bringing the total number of children reviewed to 37.

Each assessment was conducted with care and professionalism, offering parents valuable insight into their children's conditions and clear advice on how best to support their development and wellbeing.

Following the exercise, Dr. Stephen Byarugaba began compiling a detailed medical report outlining the individual needs of each child and recommendations for care. Many of the children were recommended for wheelchairs and other mobility devices to support movement and daily functioning.

In addition to the medical assessments, Dr. Byarugaba donated duvets to the centre, which will be officially handed over when school reopens. Parents expressed deep gratitude for the medical support, meals provided, and the compassion shown by the Rotary Club of Sonde, describing the exercise as both timely and life-changing.

Restoring Hope for the Children

Following Dr Byarugaba's report, this month, the Rotary Club of Sonde, in partnership with Mulago Referral Hospital, conducted an assessment of 14 children with cerebral Palsy. Orthopaedic technician Seth Mafabu conducted the exercise, which will see them receive wheelchairs to improve mobility.
#RotaryEyamba
















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Wanale Mountain Climbing Challenge 2026: A day of Grit, Glory and Rain



On 14th February 2026, adventure seekers and fitness enthusiasts gathered in Mbale for the much-anticipated Wanale Mountain Climbing Challenge. The event, hosted by Rotary Club of Mbale City, brought together teams and individuals determined to conquer the scenic yet demanding slopes of Wanale Mountain.

Representing the Rotary Club of Sonde

represented by AP Connie Magomu Masamba, Rtn. Susan Nafuna, Rtn. Max Mike Ayoti, and myself, Rtn. Jennipher Namukwaya. Together, we embraced the challenge not only as an adventure but also as a show of solidarity with fellow Rotarians and the Wanale community.

An Energetic Start at the Cricket Grounds

The day began with excitement and high spirits at the Cricket Grounds in Mbale.

By 8:25 a.m., participants had assembled, stretching, taking photos, and sharing words of encouragement.

Shortly after, the climbers officially set off, embarking on the 6.5-kilometer ascent to the summit.

The climb, though relatively short in distance, proved to be physically demanding. The steep terrain tested endurance, strength, and teamwork. Some climbers maintained a steady pace, while others pushed themselves harder, determined to be among the first to reach the top.

But for me, the steepness and length of the climb quickly became clear. After that first stretch, I decided to boda climb—using a motorcycle to continue up the mountain. Even on the boda, the journey felt incredibly long. The winding path, rough terrain, and continuous ascent made it clear why reaching the top of Wanale Mountain is considered an achievement.



Racing to the Summit

By around 10:00 a.m., the first team triumphantly arrived at the summit, greeted by cheers and breathtaking panoramic views of Mbale and the surrounding landscapes. One by one, other teams followed, each celebrating their achievement in their own way. The sense of accomplishment at the top was undeniable—participants had conquered not just the mountain, but their own limits.



At the summit, activities were underway to mark the occasion. Laughter filled the air, and participants took photos to commemorate their victory. Despite the physical strain of the climb, the mood r

emained vibrant and celebratory.

The Deeper Purpose Behind the Climb

While the physical challenge was significant, the true meaning of the event was beautifully explained by the Immediate Past President (IPP) of the Rotary Club of Mbale City, Rtn. Deborah Siago.

DShe reminded us that the climb was intentionally designed to give participants a real-life experience of what the natives of Wanale Mountain endure every single day. For the children living in the mountain communities, this steep and demanding path is not a one-time adventure—it is their daily routine. They climb up and down the mountain each day simply to access education.

It is only after undertaking such a climb that one truly understands the magnitude of their struggle. The slippery paths, the long distances, and the physical exhaustion we felt in just one day are realities these children face continually, often in all weather conditions.

Understanding the Fundraising Drive

Rtn. Deborah emphasized that this experience helps participants appreciate the Rotary Club's fundraising drive to build a school closer to the community. The goal is to ease the daily burden on the children, reduce the risks associated with the long climb, and make education more accessible.

Climbing Wanale Mountain allowed us to move beyond sympathy to understanding. It transformed the fundraising initiative from an abstract cause into a deeply personal mission. We did not just hear about the children's challenges—we felt a glimpse of them ourselves.

Rain Clouds Over Celebration

However, the weather soon took an unexpected turn. While participants were still at the top, rain began to pour, gradually intensifying and disrupting the day's planned activities. The once-clear paths quickly turned muddy and slippery, raising concerns about the descent.

A band that had accompanied the event demonstrated remarkable dedication by trekking up the muddy road in the rain, determined to entertain and energize the crowd. Their commitment was admirable, as they braved the challenging conditions to keep the spirit of the event alive.

Yet, as the rain continued, many participants began to leave earlier than planned. Fear of navigating the mountain in wet and potentially dangerous conditions prompted several climbers to start their descent. Safety became the top priority as the trails grew increasingly difficult to maneuver.

Stranded by the Rain

The situation became even more challenging as the rain intensified. The muddy road made it nearly impossible for boda bodas to come up the mountain. As we stood there pondering how we would return to our different destinations in Mbale City, uncertainty filled the air.

That is when Rtn. Millicent Bulafu of the Rotary Club of Kira stepped in and truly saved the day.

The "Airforce One" Rescue

With remarkable generosity and leadership, Rtn. Millicent Bulafu provided what we fondly referred to as her "Airforce One." This vehicle became our lifeline on the slippery mountain. It transported Rotarians from the Rotary Clubs of Kira, Sonde, Bwebajja, and even Mbale safely down the treacherous road.

At a time when even boda bodas could not navigate the muddy terrain, her intervention ensured that many of us made it down safely. Her act of kindness and quick thinking embodied the true Rotary spirit of service above self.

My Trophy of Mud

When I returned home, I realized I had carried with me more than memories. My Wanale climbing shoes, covered in thick mud, felt like a trophy. They told a story of resilience, rain, teamwork, and purpose. A photo of those mud-covered shoes will always hang on my wall—a permanent reminder that I conquered Wanale.

That single image represents more than just a climb. It represents stepping out of comfort, embracing challenge, and ticking an item off my bucket list.

A True Spirit of Fellowship

Despite the rain disrupting the planned activities, the Wanale Mountain Climbing Challenge was a powerful display of resilience, fellowship, and unity among Rotarians. From the triumphant climb to the dramatic descent, and finally the timely rescue, the day was filled with unforgettable moments.

Above all, it was a reminder that beyond the physical challenge of climbing a mountain, the strength of Rotary lies in looking out for one another—especially when the road becomes slippery and uncertain.

An Adventure Worth Trying

If you have not yet climbed Wanale Mountain, it is truly an adventure worth trying. It tests your strength, stretches your perspective, and connects you to a meaningful cause. And if you missed this year's challenge, do not worry—next year is not far.

Wanale is waiting.



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Rotary Club of Sonde Equips Youths with Soap-Making Skills

The Rotary Club of Sonde recently conducted a hands-on soap-making training aimed at equipping young people with practical vocational skills. The training brought together youth from Kyaliwajala, Sonde, and Bukerere for a dynamic session focused on producing everyday household products such as liquid soap, hair conditioner, and bleach.

More than 40 young people took part in the workshop, learning not only the technical steps involved in production but also the mindset required to turn these skills into income-generating ventures. In communities where youth unemployment remains a pressing concern, such initiatives create pathways toward self-reliance and entrepreneurship.

For many participants, the experience was transformative. One trainee shared, “This training has opened our eyes to new ways we can create an additional income as young people”.



making business.” Another added, “I have learnt a lot tday like how to make liquid soap, jik, hair conditioner and shampoo. This will help me to create an additional source of income” The gratitude expressed throughout the session was evident, with one participant noting, “Thank you Rotary Club of Sonde for this initiative — when you empower the youth, you empower the entire community”

Beyond teaching production techniques, the initiative embodied Rotary’s commitment to vocational service and sustainable community impact. Rather than offering temporary relief, the Club chose to invest in skills that empower individuals long after the training ends.

Through projects like this, Rotary Club of Sonde continues to demonstrate that when communities are equipped with practical knowledge and opportunity, lasting transformation becomes possible.



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Celebrations

Rc Sonde Congratulates its Honorary member, Dr CA Vijay Narayan Kewalramani on his appointment to the Joint Audit Committee of Rotary International and The Rotary Foundation for the term 2026-30

A truely well deserved honour for you and the District

Wishing you all the best success

PDG Dr. Ashes Ganguly
District Governor 2018-19



RC Sonde celebrates the life of Jaaja Maria Nakchwa Kasujja who went to be with the Lord.

Jaaja Maria is a grandmother to PN Alex Patrick Ssemanda and was laid to rest on Thursday 28th January at Kalungu Masaka. May Her Soul Rest in Peace.



Celebrations












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