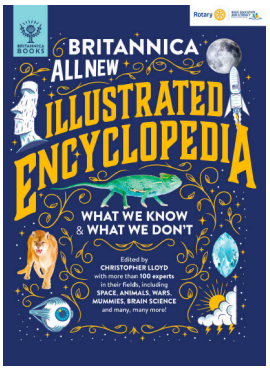
September 2021 Newsletter
Celebrate Literacy Month!

Literacy Month takes on even greater importance for Rotarians this year, as we come to see the the profound impact of the pandemic on education and literacy. Since March 2020, more than 100 countries closed schools for extended periods of time, leaving more than a billion students out of school - and many schools have yet to reopen. As a result, there is great concern that many children will not return to class once schools are reopened because of economic impact, increased pregnancies, general disengagement from education. Yet we know that before the pandemic 773 million youth and adults could not read and write and 250 million children fail to acquire basic literacy skills (UNESCO) Despite gains made in the last two decades to improve literacy, school closings during the COVID pandemic threaten to reverse positive trends made toward greater school participation as a result of extended periods of time when children and youth not been able to attend school.

BELRAG is supporting three initiatives for Rotarians to get involved in education programs in their own communities. Every BELRAG member is strongly encouraged to share these projects with their own club and clubs in their district as opportunities for Rotarians to show our commitment to literacy and education.



Access to books at home and in school promotes a love of reading and better performance in math, sciences and other subjects. BELRAG and RILM (Rotary India Literacy Mission) are partnering with Encyclopedia Britannica to offer Rotarians a special edition of *The Illustrated Encyclopedia*. This single volume book, full of engaging photos and graphics, is designed to inspire the curiosity of learners, age 8-108. Endorsed by RI President Shekhar Mehta and specially published for Rotarians, this is a tremendous resource for classrooms, libraries, after school, and adult education programs. BELRAG will provide teaching activities for each chapter to assist teachers and parents help engage students and guide them to learning more on the topics presented. Illustrated Encyclopedia



Literacy opportunities in every community BELRAG Literacy Awards is an annual opportunity for Rotarians to showcase their community literacy projects. Four outstanding projects will be awarded $400 USD each - with at least one award going to a Rotaract project. These awards are intended to promote local community literacy projects - reinforcing BELRAG's belief that every Rotary Club can and should be involved in actively supporting literacy in their own community. Applications are due by 30 Sept. Literacy Awards



Quality Early Childhood Literacy is the focus of Together We READ, the partnership between BELRAG and Save the Children. We are pleased to announce Community Engagement grant opportunities for Rotary Clubs in the USA. Up to ten grants of $5000 to $10,000 each will be awarded to clubs engaged with community partners to support high quality early learning programs. School readiness, family literacy, access to quality books and learning resources, increasing community awareness of the importance of early literacy programs, or building capacity fo educators and community to support healthy learning development are examples of projects that these grants can support. Community Engagement Grants

More information about these projects is at www.BELRAG.org

BELRAG Annual General Meeting

Many thanks to all who participated in the BELRAG Annual General Meeting. It was a lively group with lots of suggestions of how to strengthen BELRAG. Congratulations and appreciation to the Rotarians who comprise our 2021-22 Officers and Board of Directors.

Executive Committee

Chair	Carolyn Johnson, PDG	RC Yarmouth USA
Vice Chair	Nancy Leonhardt, PDG	RC West Little Rock USA
Secretary	Courtney Doldron	RC North York Canada
Treasurer	Michele Bois-Gilbody	RC Freeport USA
Chair Emeritus	John Thorne, PRID	RC Hobart Australia

Members At Large

Sophie Bamwoyeraki	RC Kasangati Uganda *(Cadre Technical Advisor)*
Kamal Sanghvi, RI Director	RC Dhanbad India *(RILM Liaison)*
Ashok Mahajan, PRID	RC Mulund India
Joan Littleford	RC Whitby Canada
Marie Josephine Kora Thama	RC Cotonou Airport Benin
Brenda Parsons	RC Orpington Crofton England
Rachel Thwaites Williams	RC of St. Lucia St. Lucia Virgin Islands

BELRAG is seeking Rotarians and Rotaractors to become involved to help expand our outreach and impact. Opportunities to become involved include:

- **Newsletter**: help identify great Rotary stories of impactful projects - local or international. An editor is needed to oversee the design and layout of the newsletter
- **Website**: oversee updating our website so that it remains current. No tech expertise is needed (we have a great webmaster to post the information) - someone to regularly review the site, share new information to be posted and move dated information.
- **Social media:** help keep develop and support BELRAG social media - share our good work!
- T**echnical expertise**: join a topic-focused teams to provide technical advice to Rotary BEL projects and to share stories of program best practices. Teams are needed to collaborate on topics such as early literacy/education, technology to support learning, students with disabilities, adult literacy, mentoring underperforming or out of school youth, girls education, library support or development, professional development for teachers.

To get involved, contact Carolyn Johnson cfj2@icloud.com

Ixil Book Project: Learning to Read in Our Mother Tongue



The William M. Botnan Experimental School serves approximately 130 preschool – sixth grade Mayan children, all of whom speak Cotzal Ixil as their first language. There are approximately 36 children in kindergarten and first grade. HELPS International partners with CONALFA (The Guatemala National Literacy Training Committee) and the community of Santa Avelina in supporting this experimental dual language (Cotzal Ixil and Spanish) school. Cotzal Ixil is an oral language and one of twenty-three indigenous languages of Guatemala. The challenge to teach literacy in Cotzal Ixil is multiplied by the lack of Ixil print material and societal pressure to forego the indigenous language altogether. Since 2009, the Cotzal Ixil Bookmaking Project is an effort by the Mayan teachers and first language Cotzal Ixil speakers to write and illustrate books for emerging readers. The goals of the project are as follows:

1. Produce quality, culturally appropriate books for emerging readers in Cotzal Ixil to promote early literacy in the indigenous language and increased success in second language acquisition.
2. Develop indigenous teachers' identity as writers and their written expertise in Cotzal Ixil.
3. Preserve the vibrant culture represented by the language, Cotzal Ixil.

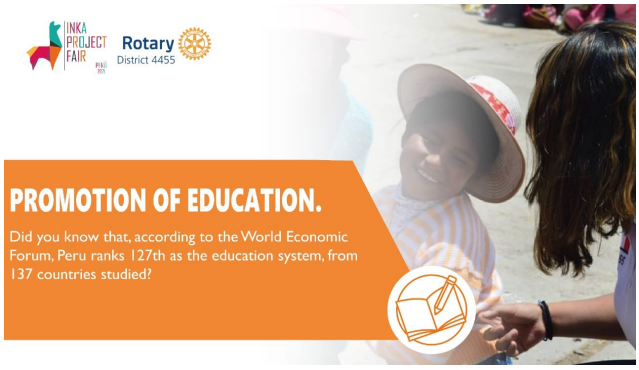
During the Guatemala civil war, missionaries translated Cotzal Ixil into written form. When this bookmaking project began, the only print available for teaching was primers written by missionaries for use with adults. As of July 2021, teachers will have written and illustrated 70 books for beginning readers. The books are targeted for early grades, but all teachers, K-6, participate in the bookmaking workshops; therefore, all children at the school ultimately benefit as their teachers become more competent as writers and in teaching writing. Throughout the process of book writing, teachers debate, question, and work through the issues of standardizing their language. The teachers are thus positioned as Cotzal Ixil language experts. Additionally, through this process, they are developing a new identity as writers since writing has not been part of the oral tradition of the community.
The teachers write and illustrate the books, but the process of publishing the books relies upon approximately 100 hours of volunteer service. To keep the costs of publishing low, recycle mat board is repurposed, cut to size, with covers hand-glued. All pages and covers are hand-punched for coiling and volunteers' hand-coil all books. We spend approximately $2,500 a year to have the books printed on high-quality UV coated paper to preserve the vibrant colors over years of use. Many of the books are published electronically through the Pacific University, Oregon, website, *CommonKnowledge*. We now publish 55 copies of each title for The William M. Botnan Experimental School and they are made available to the public school in Santa Avelina and for a small public school in San Cotzal.

The goal of the project is to publish 80 books. This provides approximately one title per week for kindergarten and first grade emergent readers. Since the presence of emergent reading books in Cotzal Ixil, second grade reading scores have improved, demonstrating the importance of learning to read in one's own language.

Lynne Mischley *lynnemischley@gmail.com*

Midland Morning Rotary Club *989 430-5049*





Peru Projects Fair - District 4455

September 18-24.

www.rotaryinkaprojectfair.org

The D4455 Projects Fair aims to promote friendships, contribute internationally between Rotary clubs in Peru and other parts of the world and celebrate the 200th Anniversary of Peru. Learn how your club can partner with Rotarians in Peru to make a difference in education opportunities for our country.

For more information:
info@rotaryinkaprojectfair.org

How is your club involved in supporting literacy and education projects? Share your stories through the BELRAG newsletter. Articles should be 500 words and include a photo or two. Send to: Carolyn Johnson at cfj2@mac.com

Foundational literacy and numeracy (FLN) needs to be the basic starting points of a child's education upon which all other learning is built. Even prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, an estimated 617 million children and adolescents around the world were unable to reach minimum proficiency levels in reading and mathematics – though two thirds of them were in school. The ongoing impacts of the COVID-19 crisis only worsened this situation, particularly for young women.



The quality, appropriate, and scalable uses of technology has and can help mitigate some aspects of this educational crisis, particularly as we look at post-COVID-19 recovery efforts.

For this year's Symposium, our 11th annual, we are calling for and will feature FLN builders from across the globe sharing good practice initiatives, promising research, and convening impactful networking around EdTech To Accelerate Foundational Literacy and Numeracy (FLN), particularly in low-resource -developing country context.

We will explore untraditional formats to maximize knowledge-exchange and networking among presenters and participants. These will include: virtual gallery walks, unconference sessions, and a series of dynamic research sessions co-hosted with our partners at the EdTech Hub. These formats will be particularly useful for attendees of policymakers, donors, practitioners, researchers, and other EdTech entrepreneurs who already have a high level of expertise. Representing 22 countries, the presenters will showcase their work in a variety of participatory formats including gallery walks, lightning talks, panels, plenary sessions, virtual exhibits.

Ripple Effect: 20 Years of Peace Building Through Education in Guatemala

In 1999, Kim Hannam, a Canadian flower importer was approached by a Guatemalan farmer saying he "needed a school" for the area children. Kim, with the help of his Senior Sunday School class and Rotarian Larry Penner, built the school. Kim thought if Rotary could end Polio, just imagine what "Rotary" could do to end poverty through education. Together with the Rotary Club of Winnipeg West the Ripple Effect Program was born. One man, one idea, one Rotary Club.



In 2009, the Ripple Effect Program became a Rotary International District 5550 Program and transitioned to the leadership of chair, Gord LeMaistre and 10 members of the Canadian Ripple Effect Committee. What set the initiative apart in 1999 and the early 2000's is the focus transitioning from "project" to "program". The REP transitioned from focusing on projects to a greater understanding that is not about the school building, it is about the community and the partnerships, friendships and collaboration. It is not about the school desk; it is about the child who makes use of it and how human lives can be changed because of Rotary. The steering committee is committed to reducing poverty and building peace in the communities we support. We provide educational opportunities and the hope for a brighter future for children living in challenging environments.

Project components of the program include building or renewing school infrastructure, providing school furnishings, school supplies, books, and computers, safety and security measures, recreational equipment and playgrounds, focusing on Grades K to 6. Training teachers, parents, and students in the use and care of computers is an important component with the installation of the computer labs. Health & hygiene training is a component of the installation of washrooms.

Since 2006, the Ripple Effect Scholarship Fund has helped increase the number of students who progress to middle (grades 7-9) and high school (grades 10-12). The program provides a child with access to quality education, who without support would not be able to attend school beyond grade 6.

REP Teacher's Scholarship Program has awarded scholarships to primary school teachers and recent high school graduates to attend the University of Valle de Guatemala in Sololá. The recipients commit to attend classes every

Saturday for 10 months per year for 3 years to obtain their teaching degree. This affords the opportunity to work during the week and apply their new teaching skills in the classroom.

Since 1999, the Ripple Effect Program has built or refurbished over 100 schools, awarded 598 Middle and High school Scholarships, 12 Teachers Scholarships, directly benefitted over 50,000 students and invested over 3.7 million dollars in education in Guatemala.

Brenda's Story
Brenda's dream was to be a special needs teacher as she has a brother with special needs. In 2017, with the support of 3 years of Ripple Effect Scholarships, Brenda graduated with a B. of Ed. with an average of over 90%. In 2018, she earned a Masters Degree and is currently working on her PHD, both at her own expense. Brenda is now working as Director of a school which is teaching over 300 teachers on how to teach special needs students.
This is truly a multiparty program which encompasses 6 R.I. Districts, more than 60 Rotary Clubs in Canada, United States, and Guatemala, the Canadian Government, The Rotary Foundation, the Guatemalan Government, and municipalities and communities in Guatemala.

Gord LeMaistre, RC Kenora
glemaistre1@hotmail.com
facebook: https://www.facebook.com/RippleEffectProgram
Phone: 807-548-5390

10 Ways You Can Support Literacy in Your Community

1. Volunteer to be a tutor for a child or adult.
2. Read to children at schools, libraries, and other community locations.
3. Read to seniors who maybe alone or have vision loss.
4. Read to your children. Ask them to read to you.
5. Dedicate one-hour (or ½ hour) every day to reading.
6. Create incentives for older siblings to read to younger siblings.
7. Donate to a literacy program.
8. Build and stock a Little Free Library in a local neighborhood. Restock a Little Free Library near you.
9. Donate new or like-new books for children in low-income communities.
10. Get involved with BELRAG and learn more ways to support basic education and literacy in your community!

RIP Shekhar Mehta Launches the Britannica Illustrated Encyclopedia on his 1st day in office



BELRAG has collaborated with the Publishers of Britannica Encyclopedia in bringing out an Illustrated Encyclopedia as a resource for General Knowledge for the school children at a very affordable cost. This is a gem of a book, a must for every school child (and the child in every adult). An excellent presentation of a mighty Encyclopedia- amazing how brilliantly abridged, while retaining its essence. The information and the pictures in every chapter is followed by an interesting quiz which could act as a ready reckoner for all ages. Having realized the importance of an Encyclopedia as a learning tool for the all round growth of school children in India , RILM has desired to have this book as a study material in all the Libraries being set up by the Rotary clubs in India.

Looking for information or resources about Rotary BEL projects? Be sure to check the BELRAG website. You can find links to webinars, information about projects, examples of exemplary projects of Rotary clubs around the world. As a member of BELRAG, you can request expert advice or support for grant projects your club is considering. Be sure to keep your membership current by renewing it though the website.
www.BELRAG.org

International Literacy Day 8 Sept
Literacy for a human-centered recovery: Narrowing the digital divide



COVID-19 has disrupted the learning of children, young people and adults at an unprecedented scale. It has also magnified the pre-existing inequalities in access to meaningful literacy learning opportunities, disproportionally affecting 773 million non-literate young people and adults. Youth and adult literacy were absent in many initial national response plans, while numerous literacy programmes have been forced to halt their usual modes of operation.

Even in the times of global crisis, efforts have been made to find alternative ways to ensure the continuity of learning, including distance learning, often in combination with in-person learning. Access to literacy learning opportunities, however, has not been evenly distributed. The rapid shift to distance learning also highlighted the persistent digital divide in terms of connectivity, infrastructure, and the ability to engage with technology, as well as disparities in other services such as access to electricity, which has limited learning options.

The pandemic was a reminder of the critical importance of literacy. Beyond its intrinsic importance as part of the right to education, literacy empowers individuals and improves their lives by expanding their capabilities to choose a kind of life they can value. It is also a driver for sustainable development. Literacy is an integral part of education and lifelong learning and a central to a human-centred recovery from the COVID-19 crisis.

ILD 2021 will explore how literacy can contribute to building a solid foundation for a human-centred recovery, with a special focus on the interplay of literacy and digital skills required by non-literate youth and adults. It will explore what makes technology-enabled literacy learning inclusive and meaningful to leave no one behind. By doing so, ILD2021 will be an opportunity to reimagine future literacy teaching and learning, within and beyond the context of the pandemic. (UNESCO)

Happy School Projects of RC Jaipur Gurukul



Alone we can do so little; together we can do so much. Helen Keller In present times, we all understand the need for technology in the field of education, especially for the young ones. But there is a section of society, where the children are unaware of the joy of learning through digital platforms. We are extremely glad that RCJG installed ICT resources, both hardware and software to enable e-learning for the children of Haziawala Govt. School. We are grateful to PDG Dr Ashok Gupta, for donating a Smart TV for the students. We are hoping that with modern teaching pedagogies, the learning process will surely be interesting and enjoyable for the little ones.

- Online Classes were conducted for the students of Haziawala Govt School.
- Tree Plantation Drive at Govt. Schools.
- Tree Plantation Drive at Government School (Haziawala & Sanganer, Jaipur.
- The Library Project.
- Installation of Indoor and Outdoor Play Station at Govt. School

"One child, one teacher, one book, one pen can change the world." - Malala Yousafzai To empower young lives through literacy, on the occasion of World Literacy Day, Rotary Club of Jaipur Gurukul, donated a small library for the students of Haziawala Govt. School. This will ensure that the students have access to quality reading material, both English and Hindi. The club will continue adding more books, educational charts, projects etc. which the students and teachers can use as educational aids.

The Club installed an Indoor and Outdoor Play Station at Haziawala Govt. School as Sports is an essential aspect of holistic education. Facilities for sports like basketball, football and badminton were installed.

Prof. Princy Thomas, Ph.D, Asst. Prof. Dept. of Business Studies IIS (Deemed to be University). Jaipur