

## A New Rotary Year Begins: Join ESRAG in Powering Sustainable Change

Welcome to the first newsletter of the new Rotary year! As we embark on 2025-26 under ESRAG's theme *Stronger Together: Building Foundations, Expanding Impact*, we're excited to explore how sustainable living and circular economy principles can transform Rotary's service to people and planet alike. In this issue, we honor the legacy of dedicated climate leader Geraldine Nicol, spotlight how clean energy and food systems connect to Rotary's mission, and share inspiring stories of local action, from climate justice in Tondo to pioneering Habitat Solar projects. Dive in and discover practical ways you and your club can join ESRAG in making sustainability a cornerstone of Rotary's impact this year.

### Featured Articles:

- *A letter from our Chair, Stronger Together: Join ESRAG in Expanding Our Impact*
- *Sustainable Living: Clean Energy and ESRAG's Vision for the New Rotary Year*
- *In Memory of Geraldine Nicol: Dedicated Rotarian and Climate Leader*
- *Why the Environmental Sustainability Rotary Action Group Supports Maternal and Child Health*
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## Stronger Together: Join ESRAG in Expanding Our Impact

By Ludwig Kalthoff, Chair, Environmental Sustainability Rotary Action Group



Have you ever felt the spark of being part of a truly great team—united by purpose, energized by shared goals, and committed to a collective mission?

That's the spirit fueling ESRAG this year. As your new Chair, I warmly invite you to bring your voice, energy, and leadership into this shared journey. Our theme for 2025-26 is clear and bold:

**Stronger Together: Building Foundations, Expanding Impact.**

Imagine ESRAG as a global team. Our field is the Earth. Our mission: to protect and restore it.

Rotary provides the values and structure. The Board sets strategy and ensures sustainability. But you—our members, volunteers, and leaders—are the changemakers on the ground. From grassroots projects to global advocacy, every action you take is a vital part of our impact.

### What We're Doing Together

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## Sustainable Living: Clean Energy and ESRAG's Vision for the New Rotary Year

As we open a new Rotary year, we enter this season with renewed energy and purpose. With a new leadership team taking the helm, we remain grounded in ESRAG's mission to help Rotarians take action to protect our planet.

Sustainable living is often described as a personal lifestyle choice, using less plastic, eating more plant-based meals, reducing waste, and these actions are important. But sustainable living is also deeply systemic, especially when it comes to one of the most powerful tools for protecting both people and planet: clean energy.

At ESRAG, we increasingly see clean energy as central to Rotary's role in addressing what the United Nations calls the triple planetary crisis: climate change, biodiversity loss, and pollution. Among these, climate change remains one of the greatest threats to human well-being, driving extreme weather, displacing millions of people, and damaging ecosystems worldwide. And at the heart of the climate crisis lies energy, where we get it, how we use it, and who has access to it.

The UN reports that roughly 75% of global greenhouse gas emissions come from energy, primarily from fossil fuels like coal, oil, and natural gas. Yet clean, renewable energy, particularly solar and wind, is now more affordable, more scalable, and more accessible than ever before. This represents one of Rotary's greatest opportunities to make a lasting global impact.

For ESRAG, embracing clean energy is about more than reducing emissions. It's about:

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## In Memory of Geraldine Nicol: Dedicated Rotarian and Climate Leader



We are deeply saddened to share the news of the passing of Geraldine Nicol, a valued member of ESRAG's Board of Directors and Chair of our Climate Roadmap team. Geraldine died on June 26, 2025. Her passing is a great loss to ESRAG, the Rotary family, and the many communities she worked with over her lifetime.

Geraldine was a Rotarian of action. A Ruby Paul Harris Fellow from the Rotary Club of Newlands in Cape Town, she brought decades of leadership experience to Rotary and ESRAG. Her professional life was dedicated to education and development—founding two non-racial teacher training institutions in South Africa and working to improve literacy levels nationwide through her role at the University of Cape Town.

Within Rotary, Geraldine served in many leadership roles including District Governor of D9350, Director of Community Services, and Chair of the Council of Southern Africa (COSA), which she helped expand into a regional council covering 16 countries. At ESRAG, she led the Climate Roadmap team, helping Rotary International recognize the importance of taking action on climate change. Through her work, Rotary leaders and staff increasingly began to see climate solutions as essential to Rotary's mission.

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## Projects

To inspire and take action



# Why the Environmental Sustainability Rotary Action Group Supports Maternal and Child Health

By Laurie Zuckerman

The relationship between environmental sustainability and maternal and child health is undeniable. As the world grapples with the tri-fold crisis of climate change, biodiversity loss, and pollution, women and children face disproportionate health risks that demand urgent attention. The Environmental Sustainability Rotary Action Group (ESRAG) recognizes the importance of addressing these interconnected challenges. Here's how environmental sustainability and maternal and child health initiatives are intertwined.

### The Disproportionate Impact on Mothers and Children

The adverse effects of climate change, biodiversity loss, and pollution are not felt equally across populations. Women—especially pregnant women—and children are particularly vulnerable. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), "Pregnant women, babies, and children face extreme health risks from climate catastrophes that warrant urgent attention... the effects of climate events on maternal and child health have been neglected, underreported and underestimated." [WHO, 21 November](#) The demands of pregnancy and early childhood development heighten their susceptibility to environmental hazards such as heatwaves, air pollution, and waterborne diseases.

Furthermore, women play critical roles in securing food, water, and fuel for their households, often bearing the brunt of climate-related stressors. During periods of drought or flooding, they work harder and longer to meet basic needs, often at the expense of their health and safety as well as the health and safety of their children.

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## Habitat Solar: A Powerful Rotary Project for Clean Energy and Community Impact



As Rotary clubs look for tangible ways to support clean energy and sustainable living, few opportunities are as inspiring, and achievable, as ESRAG's Habitat Solar initiative. Through a unique collaboration with Habitat for Humanity, Rotary members are helping to bring solar energy directly to the homes of families who need it most.

### Why Habitat Solar?

Energy is essential for daily life. Yet many lower-income families face rising utility costs that strain their finances and limit their stability. Adding solar power to Habitat homes not only reduces the carbon footprint of new construction but also ensures long-term affordability for homeowners by significantly lowering their monthly energy bills.

By integrating solar into new Habitat builds, Rotary clubs can create a triple win:

- Clean energy that reduces greenhouse gas emissions.
- Economic relief that improves family financial stability.
- Stronger communities that are more resilient and sustainable.

### How Rotary Clubs Can Get Involved

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# A Green Thread in Tondo: Rotary Unites Generations for Climate Justice

By Amil Senoron

A significant discussion on "Who's Left Behind in the Climate Justice Discourse?" took place on April 27, 2025, at McDonald's on J. Abad Santos Avenue in Tondo, Manila, featuring Timothy James Cipriano from Philippine Normal University and attended by members of Interact, Rotaract, and the Rotary Club of Luntiang Maynila Prime.

This wasn't just an ordinary meeting. It was a convergence of generations and community spirits, brought together by the Rotary Club of Luntiang Maynila Prime, joined by the vibrant energy of Interact and Rotaract members. At the heart of the discussion was a voice from the Center for Transformative Education at Philippine Normal University that of Timothy James Cipriano.

Mr. Cipriano, with his expertise in transformative education, guided us through a crucial conversation. Climate change isn't just about melting ice caps and rising sea levels; it's also a matter of justice. It's about understanding how the impacts of a changing climate disproportionately affect certain communities, often those who have contributed the least to the problem.

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# Agriculture's Hidden Climate Impact - A Wake-Up Call for Rotary Action

By Dawn Angela Byford

How much of climate change is actually driven by agriculture? According to Australian climate scientist Gerard Wedderburn-Bisshop, it may now be as high as 60% - surpassing previous estimates. As co-chair of ESRAG's Plant-Rich Diet Task Force, I recently sat down with Gerard for a powerful conversation about what this means for Rotary's environmental work.

In the interview, Gerard explains how land use change, deforestation, methane emissions, and food system inefficiencies are vastly underestimated in traditional climate accounting. The good news? Addressing these emissions through plant-rich solutions offers Rotarians an immediate, affordable, and high-impact pathway to action.

Why it matters to Rotarians:

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## July 9: Simple Solutions for Complex Global Issues with Nancy Economou

Nancy shares how pairing durable solar lights with financial literacy can break the cycle of poverty. Through Watts of Love, she shows how safe, sustainable light helps families save, invest, and transform communities—proving simple ideas can spark global change. [Register.](#)

## July 16: Textile Stewardship and Legislation with Joanne Brasch

This talk will cover Senate Bill-707 (Newman) and how it aims to shift California's textile economy from linear to circular. Dr. Brasch will also highlight CPSC's work in textile stewardship through pilot projects, education campaigns, and grant-funded initiatives. [Register.](#)

**July 23: Partners for environmental project on ecosystem in Zimbabwe with Guity Javid and Brian Gower** This talk will cover regenerative Agriculture, tree planting and ecosystem services. [Register.](#)

## July 30: Promoting a peaceful coexistence with sharks with Dr. Sara Andreotti

Join Dr. Sara Andreotti as she dives into shark conservation, behavior, ocean safety tips, cutting-edge research in South Africa, and the eco-friendly SharkSafe Barrier, protecting both sharks and swimmers for a safer, wilder ocean. #SharkConservation. [Register.](#)



## Climate Action in Africa: A Conversation with Richard Kirundi

Richard Kirundi of ESRAG's Climate Solutions Task Force shares how Rotary clubs in Africa are leading grassroots efforts to fight climate change. From tree planting to climate education, Richard offers inspiring examples of how local solutions create global impact. Don't miss this important conversation that shows how every Rotarian can contribute to climate resilience. [Listen here.](#)

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