

REPORT ON RI CONVENTION, ATLANTA ,2017

RI Convention ,2017 -“Rotary brings the world to Atlanta” was the theme which greeted nearly 40 thousand visitors to Atlanta (Hot Lanta to US friends). It was at the Georgia World Congress Center in Atlanta. Rotary International’s 8th Convention took place in Atlanta in 1917 -Rotary Foundation was then established with its first cash contribution of \$ 26.50. One hundred years on today these assets have grown to nearly \$ 1 billion and over \$ 3 billion had been sent on humanitarian projects and scholarships.

Interesting speakers at the Convention included Bill Gates who commented on the progress towards elimination of polio in partnership with Rotary. “That is what is so exciting about Rotary’s 30-year fight,” Gates told the crowd. “You are not only eradicating one of the worst diseases in history. You are also helping the poorest countries provide citizens with better health and a better future.” Gates Foundation/Rotary partnership will provide \$ 450 million during the next three years.

Rajshree Birla from India donated \$ 1 million for GPEI.

James Quincey, President/COO of Coca Cola emphasised the need to have strong partnership between business and communities represented by Rotary. Other features/events included presentations on ending slavery /human trafficking, Rotary Foundations centenary celebration party, 3 Km Walk to end Polio .

RI President Elect Ian Risely highlighted three strategic priorities – diversity (need for more women and young members), enhanced humanitarian services and improvement of public image and awareness of Rotary’s work. He wanted Clubs to report every year amount of cash raised and hours given(volunteering efforts) for Rotary’s cause.

Sam Owori, RI President Nominee said, “Our organization has made landmark strides globally in polio eradication, health, water, literacy, and other concerns, and today we stand tall at the threshold of great possibilities. As a result, we should acknowledge and exploit Rotary’s capacity and power to change the world, and I invite you all to join me to propel our Rotary ship into the orbit of relevance, visibility, and sustainability.

Rotary affords us an incredible potential to serve humanity. But truth must be told. In the process of doing good, we are the biggest beneficiaries, because our lives change. We become better people and enjoy that intrinsic satisfaction to which we cannot put a price. It is true that One Profits Most Who Serves Best”.

CDC (Center for Disease Control) in Atlanta – The tour and a meeting on the 9th June 2017 was organised by Rotarian Doctors Fellowship specially the two Johns. It was an excellent meeting on status of Polio and future initiatives. We were welcomed by Dr. William Schluter, Director of Global Immunisation Division and Dr. Deblina Datta, President Elect of Emory-Clifton Rotary Club. Speakers were Dr. Stephen Kochi from CDC and Prof Walter Orenstein from Emory University School of Medicine. We also visited the Emergency Operations Center (this deals with all domestic and global health responses in emergencies), CDC Museum (much of the exhibits relate to public health improvement milestones in conquering infectious and other diseases) and the library named after Stephen Thacker which houses 97,000

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titles in print or electronic format, in areas of public health and leadership /economics. Martha Knuth, the Librarian offered to help anyone to access materials in the library.

We all received a commemorative mug. I was surprised to find a Department for Maternal and Child Health exists there - possible collaboration is being explored.

Booth - – Our Calmed Booth (#2621) was visited by many interested Rotarians including senior leaders (President Elect GBI Denis Spiller, RI president Nominee Sam Owori) and old Rotary friends. Support from Rtn. Elaine Craven and Rtn. Mak Oak (Dist. 1130) throughout the Convention was superb. Additional help for the Booth and Breakout sessions was given by Rtn. Ramona Delmas and Rick, Rtn. Neelima Kaushal and Paul – all from the US. Also helpful were PDG Jan Lucas Ket (Paediatrician from the Netherlands) and Milou who shared our Booth with their RAG, Healthy Pregnancy Healthy Mother. Rtn. Prakash Gupta, one of our regular supporter was there to help too. A big thank you to all the friends who helped to run the Booth.

I also visited Rotarian Doctors Fellowship Booth and Rotarian Action Group on Population Development (RIFPD) booths, when I had some free time.

It was a pleasure meeting RI President Nominee Sam Owori and his aide John Smarge. He is interested in supporting a Calmed programme in Uganda.

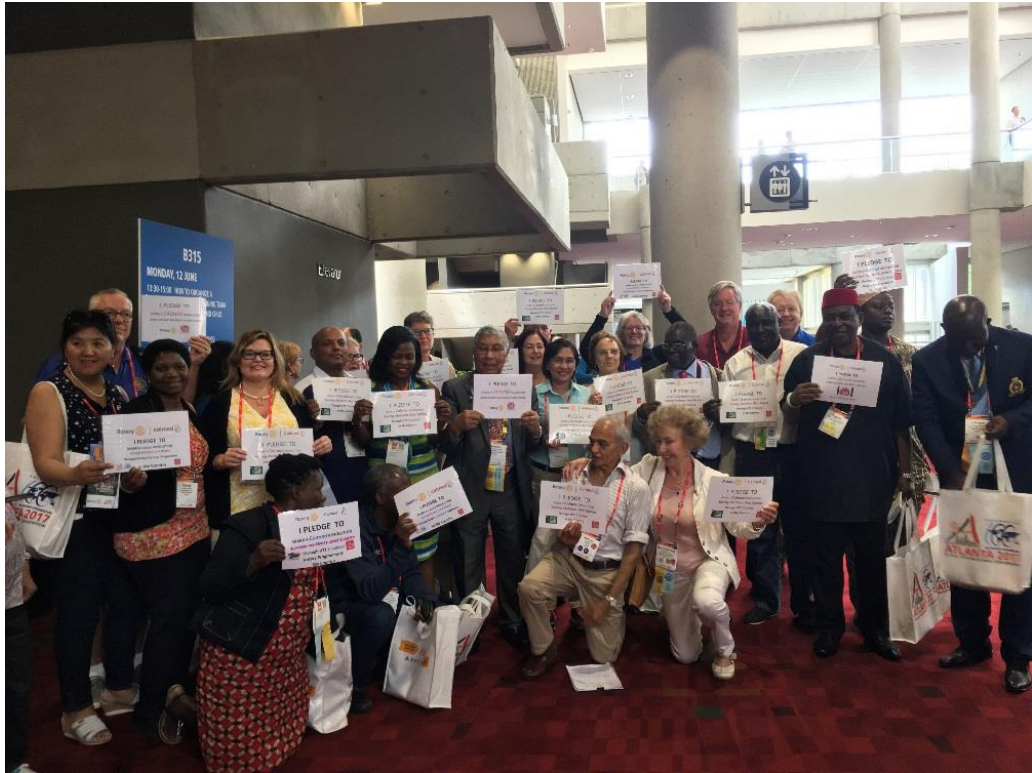
Break Out sessions -I moderated two breakout sessions on Calmed VTT – with attendances of about 100 and 12 respectively- the low attendance on the second was because of lack of publicity by RI and the time slot being on the last day. Calmed received well deserved publicity – thank you to the whole Team. Many contacts were established – we are following these individuals' and organisations' useful collaboration for the programme.

One eminent speaker was Prof Owen Montgomery from Drexel University, Philadelphia – he flew to Atlanta just for the day His experience of VTT exchange and distance learning received considerable interest. We would like to have his support for future initiatives including the MCH Academy concept. We are talking about extending training materials for simulation – the concept of a “virtual labour ward.” A big thank you to Prof Montgomery.



RIBI President Elect Denis Spiller with Rotary friends at the Booth

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Rotarians show support for Calmed at the Breakout session



Prof Owen Montgomery at the Booth with Elaine and Mak

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Other Meetings - I attended a meeting of the RI Committee for Global Networking Group. We met the new Committee and old Committee members working on raising the profile and impact of Fellowships and Rotarian Action Groups. I also attended several meetings of the Rotarian Action Group on Population Development as Medical Director. I participated as a Moderator at the Cadre Advisers seminar, organised by the Rotary Foundation. I met many old friends and made new ones at the Alumni Association reception.

Rotarian Doctors Fellowship dinner at the Einstein's Restaurant was, as is traditional, a great occasion to meet old friends and make new ones. I attended the Host Hospitality evening and shared fellowship with members from Rotary Clubs of Alpharetta, Milton-Winward and Sandy Springs, all in District 6900 just outside central Atlanta.



Prakash Gupta and I – yes there was nobody about, except the staff member who took the picture !

RFPD and IFRD- one of the topics for discussion (my favourite) was responding to queries and requests from Rotarians about RFPD and IFRD – organisations I am involved with. Of course, I did not hesitate to highlight the importance of global partnership and hands on efforts in promoting programmes on maternal and child health through these two bodies. It was a pleasure to mention that non-Rotarians can now join RAGs and Fellowships – a way of introducing our volunteers to Rotary. The Global networking groups on our part will benefit from hands efforts and advocacy two important resources for humanitarian programmes.

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Members of Global Networking Groups pledging support for Calmed

This was my 21st RI Convention attendance, full of fun and fellowship – I have already registered for the next convention in Toronto! I am hooked !

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