

Rotary announces president for 2015-16; first Sri Lankan ever to lead organization

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News Release

For immediate release

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EVANSTON, Ill., USA (Dec. 23, 2013) — K.R. “Ravi” Ravindran, a business leader from Colombo, Sri Lanka, will be the 105th president of Rotary International – a global network of 1.2 million volunteers dedicated to tackling the world’s most pressing humanitarian challenges.

[Ravindran](#), a member of the Rotary Club of Colombo, will begin his one-year term on 1 July 2015 as the first Sri Lankan to hold Rotary’s highest office. Ravindran says a top priority will be to strengthen clubs by attracting men and women committed to improving communities worldwide through volunteer service.

From supporting local food pantries to providing clean water in remote villages, Rotary clubs join forces to carry out impactful and sustainable projects at home and abroad. And Rotary members often are both first-responders and re-builders when major disasters strike, because Rotary clubs are present in every corner of the world.

After the devastation of the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami, Ravindran led Rotary’s recovery efforts by helping to raise US\$12 million to rebuild 22 schools, enabling nearly 15,000 children to resume their studies. “The tsunami could take away schools, homes, possessions, and even loved-ones, but it would never be allowed to take away the spirit of children,” said Ravindran.

Ravindran was also involved in many other tsunami-related projects in Sri Lanka, Indonesia, India, and Thailand that were supported by Rotary’s Solidarity in South Asia Fund for long term recovery. Rotary clubs around the world contributed nearly US\$6 million to the fund. The projects include housing developments, orphanages, water and sanitation systems, solar

oven technology, community-based credit unions, health centers, and the replacement of destroyed fishing trawlers.

As president, Ravindran will oversee Rotary's top humanitarian goal of eradicating the paralyzing infectious disease polio. In 1988, Rotary helped launch the [Global Polio Eradication Initiative](#) with the WHO, UNICEF, and the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Since then, Rotary club members worldwide have contributed more than \$1.2 billion and countless volunteer hours to the polio eradication effort.

Overall, the annual number of new polio cases has plummeted by more than 99 percent since the 1980s, when polio infected about 350,000 children a year. Only 223 new cases were recorded for all of 2012. More than two billion children have been immunized in 122 countries, preventing five million cases of paralysis and 250,000 deaths. Polio today remains endemic in only three countries, Afghanistan, Nigeria and Pakistan, although "imported" cases in previously polio-free areas – such as the Horn of Africa -- will continue to occur until the virus is finally stopped in the endemic countries.

As Sri Lanka's chair of Rotary's polio eradication efforts, Ravindran led efforts to eradicate polio from Sri Lanka. His country became one of the first in Asia to become polio-free in Asia. The PolioPlus task force which he headed consisted of representatives from Rotary, UNICEF and the Sri Lankan government. The partnership successfully negotiated a ceasefire with the northern militants to allow polio immunizations to continue during scheduled National Immunization Days.

Ravindran is founder and CEO of Printcare PLC, a publicly listed company and global leader in the tea packaging industry. He also serves on the board of several other companies and charitable trusts. He is the founding president of the Sri Lanka Anti-Narcotics Association, the largest antinarcotics organization in Sri Lanka.

A Rotarian since 1974, Ravindran has served Rotary as a director and treasurer of Rotary International and as a trustee of The Rotary Foundation. He has been awarded The Rotary Foundation's Citation for Meritorious Service and Distinguished Service Award and the Service Award for a Polio-Free World.

About Rotary

Rotary brings together a global network of volunteer leaders dedicated to tackling the world's most pressing humanitarian challenges. Rotary connects 1.2 million members of more than 34,000 Rotary clubs in over 200 countries and geographical areas. Their work impacts lives at both the local and international levels, from helping families in need in their own communities to working toward a polio-free world. For more information, visit Rotary.org.