

'OXYGEN FOR LIFE' PROJECT LAUNCHED TO TACKLE MORTALITIES

By Nelson Kiva

The Rotary International president, Francesco Arezzo, has hailed the Government of Uganda for its support towards life-changing Rotary programmes across the country.

Arezzo, who concluded a two-day official visit to Uganda on Saturday, emphasised it was in the best interest of Rotary International to ensure that humanity is free from disease, poverty, deprivation and conflicts, among others.

He lauded the four-dimension collaboration involving Rotary, the Government, development partners and the community in delivering pro-people projects.

"I found Rotary in Uganda vibrant, vital, connected with the community, partners and the local administration," Arezzo said.

The Rotary leader made the remarks shortly after presiding over the chartering of 16 new Rotary clubs on Saturday. This was during a membership gala dinner at Speke Resort Munyonyo in Kampala that summed up his visit in Uganda.

The new clubs added about

ROTARY PRESIDENT HAILS COLLABORATION WITH GOVT

PHOTO BY SIMON PETER TUMWINE



Francesco Arezzo holds an accolade as [L-R]: Emmanuel Katongole, Anna Maria Criscione (Arezzo's wife), Dr Aceng, Christine Kawooya (Rotary District governor of D214), Geoffrey Kitakule (Rotary District governor of D9213) and Francis Frederick Tsubira, the Rotary Foundation trustee designate, look on. This was at Speke Resort Munyonyo in Kampala on Saturday. (Scan image using Vision Digital Experience to watch video)

600 members to the Rotary fraternity in District 9214 and 9213.

"From July 1, 2026, you will have two trustees on the board of trustees. You will also have a board director, the president of the international committee for the peace centre and the international president. This is your moment in Africa," Arezzo said.

The health minister, Dr Jane Ruth Aceng, who represented Prime Minister Robinah Nabbanja, commended Rotary for being a dependable development partner of the Government of Uganda.

"Your work strongly complements our national priorities in peace building and conflict prevention; disease prevention, treatment, water, sanitation and hygiene; maternal and child health; plus basic education and literacy. I reaffirm the Government's commitment to continuing collaboration with Rotary in transforming lives and building resilient communities," Aceng said.

Arezzo, who was accompanied by his wife, Ann Maria Criscione, jetted into Uganda on Friday morning. He visited Rotary-supported projects in Kampala and Wakiso districts and met Rotary and government leaders, among others.

At Kawempe Hospital, Arezzo who was accompanied by Dr Aceng and the entire Rotary leadership in Uganda, launched a \$500,000 (sh1.7b)

IMMUNISATION

Rotary International President Arezzo – who participated in the immunisation of children before commissioning Rotary Immunisation Centre - Jjanyi in Kajjansi town council, Wakiso district on Saturday – encouraged parents to immunise their children, saying the disease is still endemic in some parts of the world.

"Africa has been polio-free for four or five years, but the disease is still endemic in other two countries, Afghanistan and Pakistan. If we don't finish it there, the virus will arrive when you don't expect it," Arezzo said.

Peace Talemwa, the past district governor of District 9214, informed Arezzo that the centre was as established through the joint effort of dfcu Bank, plus the Rotary clubs of Kajjansi and Kampala Blue Hearts.

During the function, Zone 22 Rotary International director-elect, Emmanuel Katongole, said the club has supported the immunisation of about three billion children across the world.

Rotary-supported 'Oxygen for Life' project to strengthen maternal and child health.

The hospital director, Emmanuel Byaruhanga, said they handle about 550 women daily, including at least 150 inpatients and 400 outpatients which strains the 200-bed capacity facility.

Aceng paid tribute to the Rotary for boosting the Government's efforts to ensure that Ugandans are healthy.

"Rotary, thank you for this very good project. Many of you are aware that this facility has the highest production capacity of babies; 22,000 babies per year. And you are all aware our population adds 1.5 million babies every year. So, our fertility rate is high, at 4.5 babies per woman. So, having this project here, Oxygen for Life, is extremely useful and critical, because it comes to save lives so that every mother can walk home with a baby," Aceng said.

She said Uganda's maternal mortality is still high at 183 per 100,000 and neonatal mortality rate at 22 per 1,000.

"So, a project like this is most welcome, especially at this time when we are looking forward to reducing our maternal mortality to 70, and neonatal mortality to 10, hopefully in the next two to three years," Dr Aceng said.

MAKERERE UNIVERSITY

While visiting Makerere University Rotary Peace Centre, Arezzo rallied everyone to work for world peace.

"The peace centre is probably the highest point of our job. Rotary International is a peace machine, and this peace centre is our most important realisation in this field. Every year, they have a lot of young students who attain degrees in peace. They are our ambassadors of peace. They have this great responsibility. We have to explain to the world that peace is the most important core value," Arezzo said.

Makerere University vice-chancellor Barnabas Nawangwe said the institution is privileged to host the only peace centre in Africa.

BLOOD BANK

At Nakasero Blood Bank, which is also supported by Rotary, the Uganda Blood Transfusion Services (UBTS) executive director, Dorothy Kyeyune, said out of the 500,000 units of blood needed by the country annually, they are only able to realise 400,000 creating a shortfall of 100,000.

"We need blood every hour, every time, every moment, every minute," Kyeyune said, adding that 60% of the blood goes into treating anaemic children.