



NEWS RELEASE: The Impact of Rotary Volunteering— 47 Million Hours a Year and Counting

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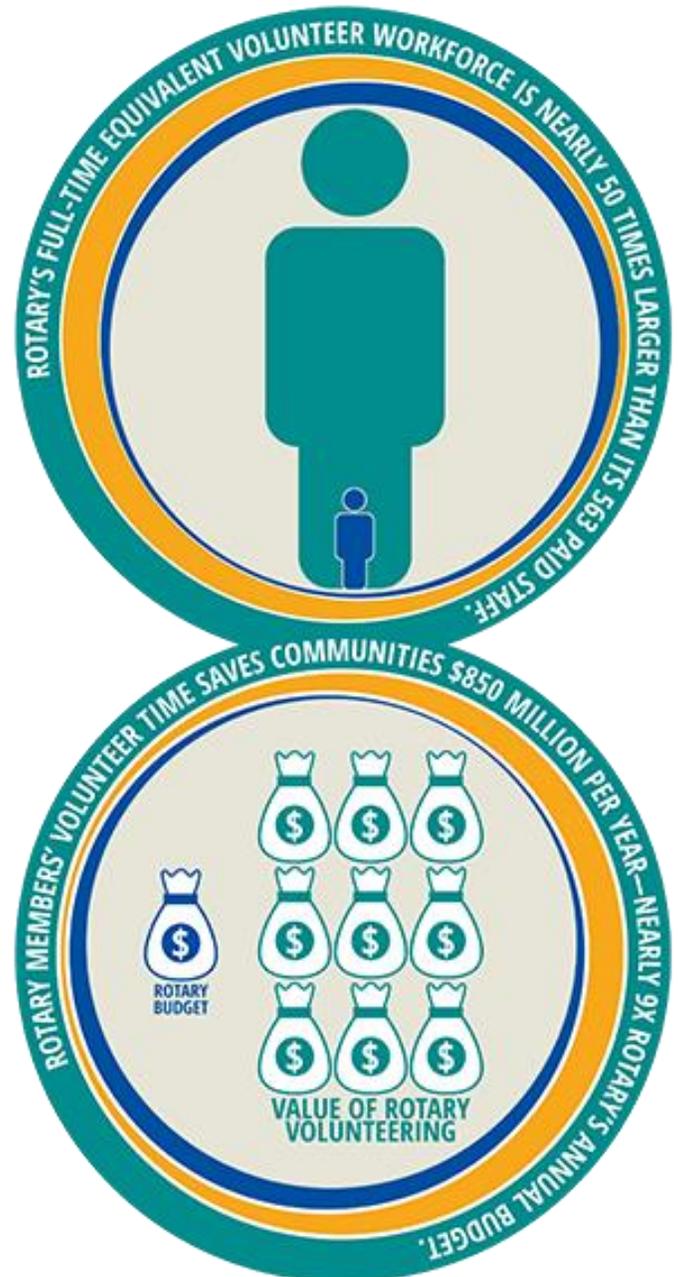
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According to a [new study](#) released today by the Johns Hopkins Center for Civil Society Studies, with just 563 paid employees globally, Rotary International annually mobilizes volunteer effort equivalent to nearly **27,000 full-time paid workers**. What is more, this study reveals that the efforts of Rotary volunteers **save communities an estimated US\$850 million in service costs per year**.

[The Scope and Scale of Rotary Volunteering](#) presents 10 key findings that powerfully demonstrate the significant renewable resource of volunteer effort that service organizations like Rotary are generating. For a world challenged to meet a demanding set of Sustainable Development Goals in the face of withering environmental catastrophes and limited governmental and philanthropic resources, the lesson from this report is clear: **volunteer service may provide an enormously valuable contribution toward the achievement of the ambitious goals that the international community has set for itself.**

This ground-breaking new report, undertaken by the Johns Hopkins Center for Civil Society Studies with support from [Rotary International](#) is the first systematic, empirical analysis of the extent of volunteer activity generated by a major global service organization using the definition of volunteer work and survey methodology outlined in the International Labour Organization's [Manual on the Measurement of Volunteer Work](#).

"By applying these internationally-sanctioned tools, we now have the first solid, empirical data on the considerable scale of international volunteer effort stimulated by a leading global service organization and the value of the services the resulting substantial army of Rotary volunteers contributes to the health, education, and welfare of communities across the world," noted [Dr. Lester M. Salamon](#), director of the Johns Hopkins Center for Civil Society Studies and lead author on this report. "Rotary is to be commended for subjecting its activities to such rigorous and objective measurement and for honoring the strictures that such scientific data-gathering imposes. We hope their example will inspire other organizations to do likewise."



“We are proud to be the first global membership organization to conduct an empirical analysis of our volunteers’ impact using Johns Hopkins University’s systematic methodology,” said [John Hewko](#), General Secretary and CEO of Rotary International. “This is just the beginning of using the most innovative tools of measurement to capture and enhance our impact. As we better understand the vast contributions of volunteer work, we can mobilize this remarkable but often undervalued resource to better the world and allow it to thrive in the years to come.”



[• Click here to download the full report •](#)

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A few Q and A’s with [John Hewko](#), General Secretary and CEO of Rotary International, and [Lester M. Salamon](#), Director of the Johns Hopkins Center for Civil Society Studies and lead author of the Rotary study.

Why did Rotary decide to study the size, scope, and impact of its members’ volunteer work? Why did you reach out to Johns Hopkins Center for Civil Society Studies to undertake the study?

John Hewko (JH): As a membership organization made up of people of action in virtually every country, who use their professional and leadership skills to identify and address challenges in communities, we know that we’re making a positive impact throughout the world.

We’ve helped protect more than 2.5 billion children from polio. Each year, The Rotary Foundation—our charitable arm—provides more than \$250 million to end polio and support sustainable projects and scholarships that promote peace, **fight disease, provide clean water and sanitation, support education, save mothers and children, and grow local economies.**

What we haven’t had until now is solid data to prove the scale and economic value of our members’ collective volunteer service. As volunteer organizations are facing increasing pressure to prove their impact and quantify their social outcomes, we approached Johns Hopkins after we learned about their systematic method using UN and ILO standards to measure the amount and value of volunteer service.

Why did the Johns Hopkins Center for Civil Society Studies choose to partner with Rotary on this study? What was the advantage of using the UN and ILO methodologies?

Lester Salamon (LS): Volunteers are a unique renewable resource for social and economic problem-solving. Yet the contribution that volunteers make has long been over-looked in official statistical systems around the world, which

essentially estimated the value of volunteer effort as zero. But our Center's work measuring the scale and impact of the nonprofit sector around the world over the past 30 years documented that volunteer effort accounts for nearly half of the enormous full-time equivalent workforce of the world's nonprofit organizations. And while the economic value of such unpaid work is hard to gauge precisely, it seemed clear that zero is not the right figure. Armed with this insight, we approached the Geneva-based International Labor Organization (ILO) and ultimately persuaded officials there that the existing international statistics on work were highly misleading because of their failure to capture, and value, the work of volunteers. In response, ILO officials enlisted us to help formulate a consensus international definition and way to measure and value volunteer work, which was ultimately captured in an official ILO *Manual on the Measurement of Volunteer Work* approved by an international conference of labor statisticians in 2008 and published in 2011. Since then, we have worked with statistical agencies around the world, and with statistical officials at the United Nations Statistics Division, to implement these procedures in [official economic statistical systems](#).

When Rotary approached us about this study, we saw it as a unique opportunity to apply these methods on an organizational level. We felt that generating the first empirical data on the amount, character, and value of Rotary volunteering could not only strengthen Rotary's work in a variety of ways but also demonstrate to other organizations, and to policy makers and citizens, the value of systematically measuring this important renewable resource for social and economic problem-solving around the world. And Rotary proved to be an effective and supportive partner in this effort.

What did Rotary learn from the results?

JH: We now have proof of the massive scale of our volunteer efforts, and a better understanding of the societal issues our members are addressing. The study provided a conservative estimate of more than 45 million hours of volunteer effort generated by Rotary members in a typical year. Johns Hopkins estimated the economic value of those hours, and if communities had to pay for the services Rotary volunteers provide, it would cost them around \$850 million a year.

Did any of the findings surprise you? If so, why?

LS: Several things surprised me as a result of this study. First, I was previously unaware of the considerable global reach of Rotary. Second, I was surprised to learn that Rotary members outside of the U.S. and Europe were even more involved in Rotary-sponsored volunteering, volunteering on average for more hours, than members in the more developed regions. This makes clear that volunteering is a truly global phenomenon and that no single country, or region, or religious community, has a monopoly on selflessness or individual initiative for the common good. Finally, I was surprised to see the evidence of the impact that a service organization like Rotary can have in stimulating volunteer effort. From the evidence we compiled, it became clear that the volunteering rate among Rotary members was substantially higher than that recorded in general population surveys we have examined around the world.

How does Rotary hope to utilize the findings going forward? What are the implications for Rotary's future efforts and outreach?

JH: This data is providing us with a valuable baseline to grow from as our members undertake projects that are larger, scalable, sustainable and more impactful. We're now able to tell a clear and more compelling story about who we are and the value we bring to communities throughout the world—and why it's important to invest time, resources and expertise into volunteer service.

What do you think the implications of this study are for gaining a better understanding of the role volunteer work plays or can play in addressing the [Sustainable Development Goals](#)?

LS: The central take-away from this project, as of our other work in this field, is that volunteering is a form of "work," that it produces services as well as physical outputs that are measurable and that are quite enormous in scale. In fact, even conservatively estimated, the value of gifts of time outdistances the value of monetary gifts internationally by a factor of two to one. While it may be unwise to conclude from this that either of these philanthropic resources can substitute for

governmental involvement in social, economic, and environmental problem-solving, it seems equally unwise to ignore the substantial contribution that such philanthropic resources can make, as we have tended to do until the kinds of data reflected in this project have come into view.

About the Johns Hopkins Center for Civil Society Studies | [email](#)

The Johns Hopkins Center for Civil Society Studies is a leading source of ground-breaking research and knowledge about the third sector, social investing, and the tools of government. Working in collaboration with governments, international organizations, investment innovators, and colleagues around the world, the Center encourages the use of this knowledge to strengthen and mobilize the capabilities and resources of the public, nonprofit, and for-profit sectors to address the complex problems that face the world today. The Center conducts research and programs that seek to improve current understanding, analyze emerging trends, and promote promising innovations in the ways that government, civil society, and business can collaborate to address social and environmental challenges. The Center is directed by Dr. Lester M. Salamon and is part of the Johns Hopkins Department of Political Science in the Krieger School of Arts and Sciences.

About Rotary | [email](#)

Rotary brings together people of action from all continents and cultures who deliver real, long-term solutions to the world's most persistent issues. Each year, Rotary members contribute millions of dollars and volunteer hours to promote health, peace and prosperity in communities across the globe. Through volunteering, they make lifelong friendships that transcend political, cultural and generational boundaries and foster global understanding and respect. Learn more at rotary.org.

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